

## Gifts inflate Mitch relief effort

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### Group expands relief mission, considers clinic

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Fresh from their largest relief effort in Honduras, leaders of a Cincinnati nonprofit group are mapping their next step after a deluge of donations lifted them to a new level of aid in the wake of Hurricane Mitch.

Members of Shoulder to Shoulder Inc. will meet Saturday on ways to funnel the funds, food and medical help from Greater Cincinnati into Honduras.

They'll also consider setting up a clinic in the northern village of San Jose where University of Cincinnati physicians treated residents during an April trip.

Shoulder to Shoulder and its partners at University of Cincinnati have staffed a clinic in the southwestern town of Santa Lucia since 1993.

#### "A new level"

But donations from Greater Cincinnati coupled with new ties to Loveland-based Matthew 25: Ministries and Food for the Poor following Hurricane Mitch are allowing Shoulder to Shoulder to expand its mission.

Food for the Poor "will really take us to a new level of help," said Shoulder to Shoulder President Wayne Waite, a Dayton lawyer. "It will allow us to concentrate on expanding our medical services. But it will also require us to obtain additional funds to build the distribution system."

Some decisions involve:

- Two mobile medical clinics in semi-trailers donated from a Texas Christian group. Shoulder to Shoulder, which will supply the clinics, must decide where to put them in the La Lima region.
- Cincinnati-based Chiquita Brands International donated a \$10,000 clinic to Shoulder to Shoulder in the coastal city of Tela, one hour north of El Progreso. However, Shoulder to Shoulder has to decide whether to accept it because operating the clinic could cost the group \$40,000 a year, about what it collected in annual donations before the hurricane hit

in late October and early November.

- An official with Florida-based Food for the Poor agreed during April to send about three or four semi-trailer containers of food and supplies to Shoulder to Shoulder in Honduras. The group needs to find more trucks and vans to transport the food and supplies to communities.

### **Three routes**

During their two-week April trip, when UC doctors and students treated 5,000 patients in San Jose and the northern town of Urraco, Shoulder to Shoulder members cemented three distribution routes for relief.

One is to the southwest town of Santa Lucia; another to more than 30 mountain villages near El Progreso, including San Jose, in the northern state of Yoro; and the third to the city of La Lima.

Six months after the trip, donations from Greater Cincinnati keep coming.

Before the trip, seven semi-trailer containers full of food and medical supplies were sent by Shoulder to Shoulder through Matthew 25 to Honduras.

In the two weeks since the group returned, Mr. Waite said, another eight containers left for Honduras where more than 5,600 people were killed and 1.4 million were left homeless by Mitch.

Also, \$3,400 in donations raised by students at Seven Hills Middle and Upper schools bought enough seeds to supply corn and beans for the village of Santa Lucia for the May planting.

Just this week, Portman Equipment Co. of Greater Cincinnati donated a \$10,000 forklift to Shoulder to Shoulder to help move food and supplies in and out of a warehouse in the northern city of La Lima.

Shoulder to Shoulder set January, 2000 as a deadline to stop sending food to families. That should allow many villages to replant, Mr. Waite said.

After that, donations and money will go to orphanages, homeless shelters or medical clinics.

"We're really focusing on the people that are really destitute and have no other source of help," he said. "I'd like to see us grow to be able to take perhaps more than 20 to 30 (semi-trailer) containers a month."