

## Charities seek relief synergy

Strategy: Pool strengths to aid Mitch victims

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Two major relief organizations in Greater Cincinnati are seeking to join together on relief efforts in hurricane-ravaged Honduras.

Seven volunteers with Cincinnati-based Shoulder to Shoulder Inc. left Saturday for a four-day fact-finding mission in the Central American country.

The team is searching for a warehouse center in Honduras where Shoulder to Shoulder and Matthew 25: Ministries of Loveland can store and distribute supplies shipped from Cincinnati.

More than 6,000 people were killed and another 1.4 million left homeless in Honduras after Hurricane Mitch pounded Central America in October. More than 11 million people were left homeless in the region.

"What we're trying to understand is the best way we can act to demonstrate our support for victims of the hurricane," Wayne Waite, president of Shoulder to Shoulder and a Dayton attorney, said Friday before leaving for Honduras.

"We'll be investigating how we can provide additional medical support, spiritual support and also investigating the feasibility of housing construction."

Matthew 25 has shipped 10 trailer-sized containers of supplies to Nicaragua in the past week. Two containers leave for El Salvador on Monday.

By the end of the year, 700 tons of food, clothing and other supplies will have been shipped to Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador from the Cincinnati area, said the Rev. Wendell Mettey, founder of Matthew 25. The group still needs dry milk.

### HOW TO HELP

- **Matthew 25: Ministries** is accepting donations for food, medicine and clothing for Central America. Call (513) 561-1339 or write P.O. Box 526, Milford, Ohio 45150. The drop-off collection site is at the old Ford transmission plant, 4000 Red Bank Road in Fairfax.
- **Shoulder to Shoulder Inc.** can be reached at 853-4350.

Matthew 25 and Shoulder to Shoulder want to coordinate to help meet the massive need that lies ahead.

Shoulder to Shoulder has relief and medical connections in Honduras through its 6-year-old clinic. Matthew 25 has experience in shipping from the Cincinnati area to distribution sites in Nicaragua. Matthew 25 began its operations in Nicaragua in 1992. Before the hurricane, it worked with 300 organizations there to distribute food and other goods from its warehouse sites.

They want to set up the same network in Honduras with the help of Shoulder to Shoulder's contacts.

"Our hope is that we could mobilize the religious community in Greater Cincinnati area . . . to further support us here and have Shoulder to Shoulder be the group in Honduras that works to set up the process," the Rev. Mettey said.

In addition to finding a warehouse, the Shoulder to Shoulder volunteers will spend the next few days tracking the distribution of goods from the first container sent from Cincinnati through their organization. They'll also investigate what additional medical and housing supplies are needed.

Connecting the efforts between Honduras and Cincinnati will be the job of Cincinnati-based Chiquita Brands International and its fleet of ships. Chiquita lost almost all of its banana crop in Honduras, where it grows 10 percent of its total banana production.

The company has sent the region 10,500 tons of food, clothing, bedding and medical supplies collected in donations across the country, said Joe Hagin, vice president of corporate affairs. Keeping the help coming could be a problem.

"It's a long-term problem, and for all the companies that operate down there, one of the long-term challenges is going to be how do we keep the focus on it," Mr. Hagin said.