



NORTH
AMERICAN
MENNONITE
RELIEF SALE
BOARD

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SOUNDING BOARD

Newsletter of the North American Relief Sale Board

March 2006

Coordinators' Report

The number one reason that people give for attending Relief Sales is the "Mission of MCC" and the benefit that the funds bring to so many in need. During the Market Survey work that we did last year this reason was #1 at all 10 sales that were surveyed. People like the food, and they like the quilts, and they like the fellowship – but the mission of MCC is the most important issue to them.

How many times have people asked me: "What is MCC doing for the poor here in North America?" This year Hurricane Katrina has made that question even more pertinent. In addition to working very closely with MDS, MCC has provided the following material aid: 86,640 cans of meat, 14,366 blankets, 12,000 health kits, 8,438 school kits, 255 mattresses, 53 sets of furniture and 500 gallons of cleaning spray.

As we begin to plan and start preparing for this year's sales, we can do it with the confidence that MCC is open and responsive to needs both far and near. MCC is ready to help regardless of the situation or location.

Doug & Harriet Berg
North Am. Menn. Relief
Sale Coordinators

RELIEF SALE MARKET RESEARCH – FINAL REPORT

During the past 18 months, 10 Relief Sales have permitted us to conduct surveys of their attendees. Surveys were conducted at 6 established rural sales and 4 new urban sales. The final results of these surveys were presented at the NAMRSB board meeting this past November in Houston. Our survey results showed that there was a significant difference between those attending the new sales versus the old sales. However, one interesting constant was that people enjoy the experience of attending relief sales and 25% of those surveyed attend more than one relief sale per year!! Another constant was how enthusiastic people were when telling their story of their connection with relief sales.

We would encourage you to consider taking your own survey of those who are attending your sale. People enjoy being asked their opinion and it will give a good picture of how folks perceive your sale and MCC.

If you would like a copy of our final report, please contact us -
E-mail - Daheberg2@aol.com or Phone (814) 445-6945.

Have you viewed the new Interactive Relief Sale Map at <http://sales.mccsale.org/>. Thanks to David Godshall, Kansas Menn. RS!

For updates on MCC's response to world events, go to www.mcc.org.



www.mcc.org/reliefsales
Children's Activity Manual for Relief Sales is Updated and Now Online!
Please share this message with your committees:

An updated Children's Activity Manual is now available online at the above address. You may browse through the pages and print any of the information.

Topics include Auctions for Children, Activity Centers, Carnival Games, Hands-On Activities, International Games, Penny Power, Listening Centers and Promoting Children's Activities.

This manual presents great aids in not only providing ways for children to have fun at your relief sale, but also to learn about needs around the world at the same time. Offering youth activities at the sale is a good way to attract young families to your event.

A manual was provided to each Relief Sale in 2002. You may wish to insert the updates into the binder. If you would like a printed copy, please contact the Bergs. Local MCC offices should also have the manual which you may borrow. Thanks for spreading the word and *let's have fun!*

Important Items to Note:

***2007 Relief Sale Biennial Workshops will be held on April 12 & 13, 2007 in Kansas.** The 2007 Kansas Mennonite Relief Sale will be held April 13 & 14. Mark this on your calendars now.

***Date change for Oregon Mennonite Festival for World Relief: 2006 - October 7** Please help spread the word.

***Relief Sale volunteers are invited by MCC East Coast to a gathering at the Welcoming Place in Akron, PA on March 31, 2006.** Tours of the MCC facilities will be conducted and a round-table relief sale discussion will be held. An extra bonus will be attending the Pennsylvania Relief Sale's 50th sale on March 31 & April 1. Lodging will be available at the Welcoming Place. For further information and a registration form, contact Bergs.

Did you know? - MCC publishes a magazine for youth. The free "Hello" magazine may be obtained in bulk or for individuals at your MCC offices. The magazine highlights the same country as the corresponding issue of "a Common Place".

Book Sales: Special discounts are available to Relief Sales for MCC fund-raising. Have you considered having books available for sale at one of your Relief Sale tables or fund-raising events? The MCC cookbooks and also quilt books by Myra Harder and Cori Derksen are available at a 50% discount. Perhaps you would have a donor who would like to make their contribution the purchase of the books for resale. All books have a 30 day return policy. Details and order forms will be sent to Relief Sale Chairmen.

Funds raised for MCC through Relief Sales have increased each year. Thanks for the wonderful response of Relief Sales in helping to meet the needs through MCC which continue to multiply each year. The imagination of Relief Sale volunteers in contriving new ways to raise funds has been exciting to witness. From mud volleyball to motorcycle rides to auctioning cornmeal mush baked in the shape of MCC letters - the sky has been the limit! Make sure you include all of your activities in your press releases - people are attracted by fun.



Relief Sales have raised \$466,800 Cdn (\$405,539 US) in 2005 with their Penny Power project.

Your change will make a difference!

Water project supplies and now Food Basket project supplies are available at the MCC provincial/regional offices. www.pennypower.org is experiencing a growing process - check periodically for updates.

Utilize the 55 cents plan - ask 5 people in your congregation to provide a full or partial match for your congregation's contribution (one of them will say "yes!") and watch for a 5% increase in your relief sale's Penny Power total. This just makes "cents". Questions - contact the Bergs.



Best Wishes to the new Idaho Menn. Relief Sale on May 6, 2006 in Nampa, ID!

Check out their new web site periodically for updates -

www.idahomrs.org. Any donation of items to their sale would be appreciated. The deadline for their auction listing is April 15. Contact - Rick Bollman rlbmenco@hotmail.com PH (208) 378-8109.

Publicity (or public relations or PR) is not only free, but has more credibility than advertising - according to current marketing research. PR allows you to tell your story indirectly through third-party outlets, primarily the media. The media can include newspapers, church papers, newsletters, sale booklets, radio or TV.

You need to create a niche that does not compete with other events to attract an audience. Such a niche peculiar to relief sales is the offer of an entertaining time that families can participate in together and they can also help in doing good for others by using their dollars wisely.

Discuss with your committees a unique story you would like to present. Do you have a story about an older person, a young person or a group that would be of interest? Do you have an extra-special item on your auction - a unique marble roller or a vintage quilt with a story? What about foods - do you have a family hosting a booth or a group that is doing something special or of large proportions? What about volunteers responding through MCC to a current need in the news, such as natural disasters or assisting war refugees?

Contact your local newspaper and get the name of your area reporter. Tell them of the great story you have for them and follow-up with details, including names and phone numbers of persons to interview. Be sure to include all of the information about your sale, including web sites and brochures if available. Ask them how they would like to receive the information - FAX, E-mail, mail.

As stories develop year-round, contact the media. This will also help in establishing a presence in people's minds. Do not send stories only immediately prior to the sale. Be sure to follow-up with more stories after the sale - maybe something unique or exciting that happened the day of the event.

Sales still need to advertise and funds need to be allocated for this - but Publicity is priceless!



The Heifer Sale - Ontario Mennonite Relief was held in a new location in Listowel, Ontario. Chairman Clarence Diefenbacher stated "We could do all of the planning we could, but the weather is out of our hands. Reminds us sometimes we claim the credit too quick, it is in God's hands."

The sale was scheduled for Friday Feb. 17 but due to a blizzard the roads were closed and the event was rescheduled for Monday Feb. 20. 98 heifers had been hauled to the new auction facility Wednesday and Thursday and were taken care of by the facility until the sale could take place since no one could travel.

Many phone calls, radio announcements and a weekend newspaper article alerted the buyers of the change of date for the 25th heifer sale. Results greatly exceeded the previous year.

Heart blocks - making a difference! People with a loving heart, including those from six different countries, have been creating heart blocks to be made into wall hangings and quilts to be sold



at relief sales. Read the March issue of the "Love, Joy, Piece" newsletter for more details. A traveling heart quilt will also be available to relief sales in 2006-2007. Contact the Bergs for further information.

Relief Salers Comments

Credit Card Comments: 1) We allow credit card transactions for any item from Silent Auction and the main auction floor which are in the same room and have people process their purchases at the cashier's office. Usually multiple items are purchased at the same time referencing the bid number. *Terry Catlin, Chair, So. Cal. Festival & Sale, Upland, CA*

2) We have used credit cards in the Twin Cities for 5 years. I go through the bank that I have a checking account with and get 2 machines for the month of the sale. I get wireless units so I don't have to deal with the expense of a phone line. Also with wireless you can use it any where such as the food lines or Artisan Markets. We get people from Canada and I don't have to worry about the exchange rate as the bank does that. If I would not have the CC option I know that we would lose sales. It is also safer then taking checks which have been known to bounce. *Vern Schultz, Treasurer, Twin Cities MCC RS, Minneapolis, MN*

Marketing: At our sale in Houston, about two-thirds of the dollars spent come from non-Mennonites. Our approach to attracting people focuses on two things-- advertise and educate. Our sale expenses every year are around \$7,500 US (\$8,485 Cdn) and about 60% goes for advertising. We use direct mailing of sale

brochures to our mailing list that we have developed, also radio spots on NPR and classical music stations. (We have obtained better response from classical stations than from Christian stations.) We also place display ads in several sections of the major newspaper and a couple of other publications. All advertising includes the web site address.

Free publicity in the form of articles or event listings is great but can be hard to get in a major media market. We have found that it usually requires taking the time to get familiar with the publication or media outlet, sending out well prepared materials and taking the time to follow up with the contact person. If you don't make the extra effort to become known, you will blend in with all the other folks that want publicity for their cause or event.

We've found that people will come to the sale because of the merchandise and perhaps some vague notion about who Mennonites are but not necessarily because of the cause we support.

This presents an opportunity to convert them into MCC supporters. We try to expose them to some information about what MCC is and does so that they will feel good about where they are spending their money, be more likely to be generous with what they spend, and more likely to become customers that will return in subsequent years.

A few of the things we have tried include placing the MCC information booth in a prominent, high traffic location; preparing and distributing a "Guide to the Sale" that includes a map on one side and brief MCC stories on the other side; MCC posters on the walls; putting cards with stories of MCC's work into bags along with customers' purchases; and a continuous Power Point slide show.

The overall spirit of the sale is important, too, and plays a major role in making the sale an enjoyable place to be. It is good if our volunteers can avoid being stressed out and irritable and instead make it evident that we all come to serve with joy and thanksgiving. All the sales I have attended do a good job of being enjoyable.

Different cities will need different approaches and the things we've tried may not work somewhere else. It may require trial and error to figure it out. We've had lots of trial and error and will continue to try new things. *Roxie Voran, Chair, Texas Mennonite Sale & Auction for World Relief, Houston, TX*



The following story was submitted by Larry Muff, Chair, Upper Midwest Relief Sale, Minot, ND

For many, the experience of grief and loss causes a self-protective paralysis, pulling them into a haven of quiet contemplation, a place to safely process the changes that have ripped at the emotions. Not so, though, for Glen Birky. When his precious wife, Erma, was taken home, he found that carrying on her passion for the work of MCC was a bit of healing salve, as well as a way of honoring her memory.

It was a few weeks after Erma's death that I caught up with Glen at a pie social hosted by our congregation, Strawberry Lake Mennonite. I asked what he had been doing, curious about how a man of faith deals with this sort of crisis in life. He responded with, "Betcha can't guess what I've been doing!" I chuckled and said "I'd guess he had been quilting" since I knew he had often helped Erma with her quilting endeavors.

"Nope," he said, "But you're close!" Then he told me this story. "Erma always loved making MCC kits. When the memorial money came in I got the idea that the best thing to do with it was to make kits in her memory! So, in answer to your question, I've been sewing bags for MCC kits."

"No kidding?" I said in surprise as a grin played across his face. For a moment I had this mental image of Glen with his man-sized fingers, struggling with the sewing machine.

"Yep, in fact, I finished sewing my one hundredth kit, just before I came here! And, when I get home, my daughters and daughters-in-law are coming to help me sew the drawstrings. I'm not so good at making them!" A wry smile worked its way from the corners of his mouth up to his eyes. "They also bought the items to put in the kits, so this evening the rest of the family will come over. We'll have supper together and then we'll pack the bags!"

He grinned at me but the grief in his eyes brought a lump to my throat. "Erma would've loved it! Everyone together and fifty health kits as well as fifty school kits all ready to go. Hopefully, the \$800 US (\$905 Cdn) left over will be enough to pay for the shipping too." A satisfied grin spread over his face as he reached for his coffee cup. We sat in silence for a moment. "Wow, Glen," I said, "I'm so glad I got to hear this story. Thanks. I can't think of a more wonderful way for a family to carry on the legacy of a loved one."

