



Photos provided
Jean Esper opens a bag of donated shoes. The shoes will be sorted, paired, and checked carefully before being transported to WaterStep.

Shoe drive held to fund two WaterStep purification systems

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The seventh annual WaterStep shoe drive was held on Tuesday, June 17, at the River of Life Church in Springfield.

Jean Esper, organizer of the drive, said that although she didn't meet her goal for this year's drive, "we did fairly well." Eper said she believes changing the shoe drive from Saturday to Tuesday may have reduced the number of donations. She said the change was made because the only day WaterStep could send a van to pick up the shoes was Tuesday.

In addition to Tuesday's shoe drive, Esper has WaterStep shoe collection boxes scattered across Marion and Washington counties where shoes can be dropped year-round. Esper and volunteers, mostly members of Bethlehem Baptist Church then process the shoes. Processing includes checking shoes to be sure they are clean and useable, pairing them, and bagging the shoes for transport to WaterStep headquarters in Louisville.

WaterStep then sells the shoes and uses the proceeds to build water purification systems. The systems are sent around the world to provide clean drinking water in third-world countries where clean water is not available and in the event of natural disasters. WaterStep puri-

fication systems have been used across the United States following earthquakes, hurricanes, etc. and recently in Kentucky following the numerous tornados and severe flooding.

Esper explained that every 300 pairs of shoes she collects funds one water purification system. Esper and her team collected over 600 pairs of shoes on Tuesday, enough to fund two much-needed purification systems.

Since becoming involved with WaterStep, Esper says she has become more aware of the need for clean water and the effects of dirty water on the health of those forced to drink it. She often speaks about the diseases contracted by drinking contaminated water and how many children die in under-developed countries as a result of drinking unclean water.

Esper said she would like to thank River of Life Church for allowing her to use their facilities for the shoe drive. She also wanted to thanks a long list of individuals and businesses who donated time, money, and shoes to her campaign to provide clean drinking water around the world.

She encourages everyone to continue dropping lightly used or new shoes in the collection boxes as she has already begun collecting shoes for next year's drive.



A WaterStep volunteer loads bagged shoes into a van for transport to WaterStep headquarters in Louisville.

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