

As Seen In...



Patti Piatt is no Imelda Marcos.

Unlike the former first lady of the Philippines, Piatt prefers to let a pair of shoes wear out before purchasing another.

But by the end of August, Piatt is hoping to collect more than double the number of shoes Marcos is reported to have owned. Piatt, a volunteer with Faith in Action, plans to gather 7,500 used pairs of shoes, and if she's successful, Faith in Action will receive \$3,000.

Faith in Action is a national nonprofit program that pairs volunteers with seniors or the disabled who need services, such as light housekeeping, shopping, transportation or visitation.

About 200 volunteers serve the same number of clients in the local Faith in Action, which is headquartered at TRIPIL Services, 69 E. Beau St., Washington. TRIPIL provides office space and Internet and telephone service to Faith in Action, said Candace Bernier, director of Faith in Action.

However, its steering committee has challenged Faith in Action to raise 100 percent of its operating cost, so money raised from the shoe collection will go toward those expenses.

Piatt heard about Funds2Orgs, which is based in Orlando, Fla., while working at Washington Church of Christ on Allison Avenue, where she is a secretary.

Funds2Orgs is headed by Wayne Elsey, a former footwear executive and founder of Soles4Souls. Elsey uses recycled items to aid economies of developing countries by providing jobs while reducing consumer waste.

Funds2Orgs provides fundraising strategies to nonprofits. Shoes that are collected are taken to a hub, then sold to vendors who clean and repair the shoes and resell them, creating a business that helps lift families out of extreme poverty.

"I'm just really impressed with the whole concept," Piatt said, calling it a "win-win" for everyone involved.

As coordinator of the shoe collection, Piatt is asking for assistance from area churches and other organizations. But her passion for the fundraiser has taken her to local garage sales, and she has stood outside stores passing out hundreds of fliers. She also posted the shoe drive on Facebook.

The response has been positive, with shoes being collected by acquaintances as far away as New York and Ohio. One woman, who overheard her talking about the collection drive outside a department store, went into the store and returned with two new pairs of shoes for Piatt.

A member of her church was able to get a Guardian storage unit, which will hold the footwear until a 54-foot truck arrives Aug. 31.

Anyone interested in participating or who may have shoes to donate can call Piatt at the church at 724-222-9017, or drop off the shoes after 2:30 p.m. Monday, Wednesday or Friday at the church.

"My goal is to make it as easy as possible. If you've got one pair or five pairs, I'll take them," she said.

And if you think that collecting 7,500 pairs of shoes is an impossible task, Piatt has so far collected nearly 3,000 pairs of shoes, which is proof a woman can never have enough shoes.

To volunteer with Faith in Action, call Candace Bernier at 724-223-5115, ext. 204.