

December 17, 2014 CDC Ebola Response Update

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Larry Thomas] Just two weeks ago, a group of CDC employees started “Operation Care Package,” a campaign to donate small treats and gifts to CDC staffers deployed to West Africa over the holidays. Kerry Stephens is coordinating Operation Care Package.

[Kerry Stephens] So those working in West Africa are on the front lines of the Ebola battle, and they don’t get to take a break for the holidays. It was important to me and my coworkers to do something to let them know we appreciate their dedication and sacrifices, especially during the holiday season.

[Larry Thomas] Kerry asked CDC employees in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali, and Ghana to email their wish lists.

[Kerry Stephens] They asked for things like energy bars, jerky snacks, instant coffee mixes, and hand lotion – apparently their hands were getting very dry from all the hand washing. But the most surprising request was the overwhelming plea for toys. So many of our deployed employees are parents, and they wanted to do something in the spirit of the holidays for the children affected by Ebola.

[Larry Thomas] Kerry and her team started out with the goal of filling a few boxes. Donations poured in from CDC employees. They also encouraged local school children to write cards and letters. What they ended up with was more than one ton of food, toiletries, toys, and 500 cards and letters. Each country received at least one box containing a signed note from CDC director Dr. Tom Frieden.

[Kerry Stephens] It was so heartwarming to see how many employees responded, and I hope that the well wishes are felt by our colleagues in West Africa.

[Larry Thomas] Operation Care Package has at least two shipments scheduled for delivery to West Africa by Christmas -- but the donations keep coming in – so more may be planned in the New Year.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.