

Delivering the gift of sight in Honduras

When a friend asked Joyce Tolle to go on a medical mission to Honduras, the McPherson, KS Branch 1171 letter carrier didn't think she had any useful skills to offer.

"What am I going to be able to do?" Tolle asked. "I'm not qualified like those doctors and nurses and pharmacists. But I found out all you really need is a willing heart."

The friend had asked Tolle several times to go on the Honduras trip and, nearing retirement age, Tolle finally said yes. "I'm still walking on my route as a city carrier, and I thought if I wait until I can't walk, I won't be able to do this," she said.

Tolle went on the trip, sponsored by the Florida-based non-profit Catholic group Friends of the Missions, in February and she found just as much fulfillment there as the medical professionals. "I decided to do whatever they needed me to do," she said. "I ended

up giving out reading glasses."

Honduras is one of the poorest countries in Latin America. Nearly two-thirds of its residents live in poverty, many of them in isolated villages far from access to medical care or even to simple eyewear.

Tolle joined 19 volunteer medical professionals—doctors, nurses, pharmacists and a dentist—to provide care for Hondurans who couldn't afford or had little access to medical, dental or vision care. Traveling from village to village with the medical staff, Tolle set up a table in each village outdoors where there was enough light to test the glasses while the doctors and nurses saw patients in schools and other public buildings. In just over a week, the mission served more than 2,500 patients in rural villages across the country, and Tolle distributed more than 1,000 pairs of glasses.

Tolle helped Hondurans with poor eyesight try on different glasses, which were

donated by pharmacies and other stores in the United States, until they found a pair that worked for them. One at a time, people with vision problems attempted to read a Bible verse in Spanish, trying different glasses until the words were clear.

Even those who were illiterate—about one in every four—wanted glasses to wear for tasks such as threading a needle or removing a splinter.

The crowds that came looking for help demonstrated the extent of the unmet medical needs in Honduras. "One day, we had to close the gates before noon because there were already more than 800 people waiting to be helped," she said.

Though she relied a little on her high school Spanish, Tolle needed an interpreter. Like Tolle, her interpreter, George, was making the best of his skills—in his case, because he was blind. George was essential to explaining to Hondurans how to choose the right glasses, Tolle said, and to use the donated glasses properly.

Glasses weren't the only thing Tolle delivered to the Hondurans. When she wasn't distributing eyeglasses, Tolle helped the medical staff however she could—for example, by counting out pills for the pharmacy. And she brought special treats for children such as crayons, coloring books and clothing, along with Fruit Loops breakfast cereal—a favorite among Honduran children.

Tolle said she learned much about how Hondurans live, like the wages a Honduran man in a rural village can earn for a day's work in sugar cane fields. "It could buy me one simple meal of vegetables, rice, beans, goat cheese and tortillas," she said. "But he'll never be able to take his family to eat in a restaurant.



Joyce Tolle with a boy she befriended in Honduras

Honduras is located in Central America between Nicaragua and Guatemala.



“It was a very emotional trip, but you realized that every day we have is precious,” Tolle said. “I knew that before, but this made it tangible.”

She said more Americans should travel to countries like Honduras to gain perspective on how fortunate we are.

“I think anyone who is upset about life in the U.S. should go out of the

country and see how most of the world lives,” she said. “They’ll understand the opportunities we have, and that we’re so abundantly blessed here.”

Tolle, a carrier for 25 years, brought the good feelings from her mission back to her route in Kansas.

“I realized that every person is made by God and deserves respect,”

she said, “and I could give the people on my route, everyone I see, some value by giving them attention and service. That’s what we should do; we’re the Postal Service.

“God doesn’t give us everything we need so we can just sit around,” she said. “God expects us to live dangerously.” **PR**

75 million pounds: Impressive results for 2017 Food Drive

On July 12, NALC President Fredric Rolando announced that the grand total from this year’s 25th annual national Letter Carriers’ Stamp Out Hunger® Food Drive was 75 million pounds. Combined with last year’s record of 80.1 million pounds, that makes a two-

year total of 155 million pounds—the highest back-to-back total in the drive’s history.

“It’s an honor to be able to help people in need by leading an effort that brings out the best in so many Americans,” Rolando said.

In the quarter-century since it began,

the annual food drive has collected almost 1.6 billion pounds of food.

A number of NALC branches reported their local collection totals for the Saturday, May 13, drive after last month’s *Postal Record* went to press. Those branches, in branch number order, are listed below.

Br. 4, Nashville, TN	404,000
Br. 14, Louisville, KY	70,202
Br. 28, St. Paul, MN	257,150
Br. 40, Valley View, OH	271,444
Br. 62, Chattanooga, TN	114,894
Br. 73, Decatur, GA	185,000
Br. 114, Duluth, MN	67,611
Br. 124, New Orleans, LA	119,853
Br. 129, Baton Rouge, LA	67,390
Br. 136, West Monroe, LA	8,496
Br. 154, Marietta, OH	15,000
Br. 176, Baltimore, MD	91,687
Br. 197, Shreveport, LA	76,383
Br. 205, Fargo-West Fargo, ND	34,087
Br. 262, Battle Creek, MI	31,525
Br. 270, Macon, GA	47,000
Br. 307, Urbana, OH	1,500
Br. 368, Goldsmith, IN	3,400
Br. 419, Knoxville, TN	110,116
Br. 434, Ann Arbor, MI	90,103
Br. 466, Lafayette, IN	44,387
Br. 516, Greenville, MS	1,371
Br. 536, Rome, GA	24,000
Br. 546, Columbus, GA	65,348
Br. 647, Coshocton, OH	2,400
Br. 648, Van Wert, OH	4,600
Br. 689, St. Augustine, FL	30,001
Br. 701, Missoula, MT	7,250
Br. 711, New Philadelphia, OH	4,840
Br. 715, Beloit, WI	18,750
Br. 728, Eau Claire, WI	156,793
Br. 776, Owatonna, MN	3,680
Br. 858, Enid, OK	23,173
Br. 893, Moundsville, WV	4,300
Br. 914, Lake Charles, LA	73,337
Br. 932, Alexandria, LA	42,676
Br. 943, Le Roy, NY	1,000
Br. 958, Waycross, GA	5,660
Br. 968, Livingston, MT	2,400

Br. 997, Athens, OH	3,500
Br. 1042, Muskogee, OK	24,000
Br. 1052, Easton, MD	3,072
Br. 1068, Dublin, GA	12,000
Br. 1079, Greeneville, TN	2,993
Br. 1145, Greenwood, SC	10,000
Br. 1222, Port Washington, WI	5,139
Br. 1230, Griffin, GA	200
Br. 1243, Cloquet, MN	9,750
Br. 1342, La Grange, GA	6,040
Br. 1374, Gulfport, MS	81,274
Br. 1402, Murfreesboro, TN	9,900
Br. 1424, Oak Hill, OH	2,058
Br. 1425, Havre, MT	4,800
Br. 1484, Puyallup, WA	49,466
Br. 1595, Stillwater, OK	21,900
Br. 1606, Raymond, WA	1,565
Br. 1642, Yuma, AZ	15,320
Br. 1680, Corvallis, MT	1,500
Br. 1692, Millport, AL	2,937
Br. 1698, Glasgow, MT	899
Br. 1725, Clinton, OK	5,085
Br. 1760, Lafayette, LA	24,160
Br. 1765, Kanab, UT	1,500
Br. 1995, Cleveland, TN	18,000
Br. 2173, Woodward, OK	4,800
Br. 2223, Hammond, LA	16,534
Br. 2241, Pascagoula, MS	19,756
Br. 2339, Salem, UT	4,824
Br. 2342, North Bend, OR	2,800
Br. 2417, Nogales, AZ	675
Br. 2464, Houma-Thibodaux-Lockport, LA	40,000
Br. 2527, Wynne, AR	1,025
Br. 2533, Lancaster, SC	10,010
Br. 2580, Douglas, WY	6,500
Br. 2821, Spanish Fork, UT	7,507
Br. 2912, Lebanon, OR	5,853
Br. 2935, Montesano, WA	1,290
Br. 3006, Nicholls, GA	2,895

Br. 3203, Commerce, GA	2,400
Br. 3204, Conrad, MT	665
Br. 3277, Grangeville, ID	1,608
Br. 3365, McRae, GA	2,350
Br. 3367, Panama City, FL	18,500
Br. 3369, Lyons, GA	3,600
Br. 3393, Woodruff, SC	400
Br. 3504, Cochran, GA	7,500
Br. 3574, Cedar City, UT	5,104
Br. 3578, Monticello, GA	20
Br. 3607, Enterprise, OR	1,072
Br. 3815, Morgan City, LA	11,248
Br. 3823, St. Clairsville, OH	2,000
Br. 3844, Borger, TX	3,200
Br. 4015, New Castle, DE	12,399
Br. 4093, Barrigada, GU	4,117
Br. 4118, Prosser, WA	1,255
Br. 4132, Lynden, WA	10,000
Br. 4191, Hazlehurst, GA	4,814
Br. 4223, Kingstree, SC	1,100
Br. 4323, Marrero, LA	8,729
Br. 4405, Arvada, CO	79,350
Br. 4416, Reedsport, OR	1,873
Br. 4489, Ponchatoula, LA	2,720
Br. 4500, Pendleton, OR	882
Br. 4617, Bossier City, LA	19,451
Br. 4797, Myrtle Point, OR	1,500
Br. 4975, Williamston, SC	4,800
Br. 5177, Ellijay, GA	2,500
Br. 5529, Madison, NC	8,070
Br. 5957, Lake Alfred, FL	3,250
Br. 6013, Inverness, FL	12,500
Br. 6069, West Helena, AR	1,100
Br. 6070, Decatur, GA	1,148
Br. 6075, Mountain Home, AR	10,400
Br. 6119, Metairie, LA	27,368
Br. 6377, Mandeville, LA	79,864
Br. 6423, Chesterfield, SC	10,000
Br. 6551, Havana, FL	3,200