

# How an LDS calling led to a charity that gives color coordinated kits for the needy

By [Lee Benson](#)

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SALT LAKE CITY — Some very nice ladies could use your help.

That is, if your definition of very nice means helping out victims of domestic abuse and refugees who have made their way to Utah from war-torn lands.

On a daily basis.

For 10 straight years.

Meet the women of Hearts Knit Together, a charity Mother Teresa might have started. The women (and a few men) of the charity assemble rescue kits full of life's essentials for those in need.

When a battered spouse nervously walks into a shelter, herding her children ahead of her; when an immigrant from Somalia or the Congo steps into the land of the free but doesn't yet feel at all free, the Hearts Knit Together kits are there to greet them and let them know someone cares.

They contain everything from shampoo and deodorant to hand-knit hats and scarves to books and writing supplies and quilts and soccer balls. Men get men stuff, women get women stuff. Kids don't just get kid stuff, they get kid stuff specific to their age. A 3-year-old girl gets dolls and crayons. A 7-year-old gets everything Spider-Man or Superwoman. A 14-year-old boy gets Jazz gear and John Stockton's autobiography.



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Each one includes a note of welcome and encouragement. And they're all color coordinated.

It's like your mom packed them.

The founder and driving force behind this operation is a woman who wears a perpetual kind look named Linda Simmons. Ten years ago, Linda and her late husband, Boyd, accepted a call to serve an LDS inner-city mission in Salt Lake City to help out at a congregation of mostly older single women.

To keep busy and be of service, many of these women would knit scarves and hats that they would then donate to the homeless shelter.

Observing all this, Linda noted the endless procession of women seeking asylum from domestic abuse, many of them arriving on the run in the middle of the night with no more than they could stuff in their purse. She learned that Utah has 16 domestic abuse shelters stretching the length of the state from Logan to St. George.

Her heart went out to these victims. When their inner-city mission was over, she and Boyd kept those single LDS sisters knitting and greatly expanded the outreach so that each one of those 16 shelters would be provided not only with hats and scarves but other essentials useful when starting over.

Later, seeing a similar need at refugee placement centers, where people also arrive on the run from abuse, she included refugees in her plan. That included escapees from polygamy.

In 2008, the year Hearts Knit Together began, they distributed 200 rescue kits. In 2017 they distributed 5,700.



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Over the years, dozens of like-minded, good-hearted women — such as Linda’s neighbor Maxine Rasmussen, who does much of the nonprofit’s paperwork out of her office at home — caught the same vision as Linda. Some 32 of them volunteer on a regular basis at the warehouse. Nobody gets paid, in dollars anyway. No one ever has. No one ever will.

A visit to the warehouse is not unlike entering Santa’s workshop. Donated goods that pour in from a diverse variety of sources — companies, Eagle Scout projects, church groups, community organizations, school humanitarian drives, you name it — get sorted, categorized and assembled into the kits.

It’s remarkable, Linda and her volunteers like to note, how often they find themselves looking for a specific item — say an Elmo coloring book for a 3-year-old’s kit — and boom, there it is.

“We don’t believe in coincidences, we believe in little miracles,” says Linda. “They happen all the time.”

One big miracle up to now has been the free rent the charity has enjoyed — first at Destination Travel in South Jordan and for the past five years at 2200 S. State in South Salt Lake, where ASA Insurance has provided 4,000 square feet of warehouse space and Axis Insurance 500 square feet of storage space.

Therein lies the problem. A new paying tenant is moving in on the first of March.

ASA Insurance has told Linda it’s her own fault. She’s provided so much service out of their building that now they’re being blessed.

The women of Hearts Knit Together have found another location on Bangerter Highway. At 7,438 square feet, the space is bigger — the good news. But the bad news is it will cost about \$4,000 a month in rent. That’s a relative bargain, but still ...

“We could really use a miracle,” says Linda, who can be reached at [linda@heartsknittogether.org](mailto:linda@heartsknittogether.org).

If it looks like a coincidence, so be it.



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