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## Orphan shoe drive calls for public to step up

By Andre Bowser  
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*J.J. Wong, a chiropractor assistant, top left, Krystal Smith, office manager, top right, and owners Nichole and Dr. Tony Rodriguez display shoes donated at Infinite Healing Center in Mesa. Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2009.*

*Tribune*

Starting out with baby steps, organizers of a Mesa shoe drive for orphans hope that an avalanche of support will garner new shoes for needy soles.

Christmas fundraisers hope donations improve [<http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/story/147772>]

Nichole Clark, a certified hypnotherapist and co-owner of Infinite Healing Center, a health and wellness business that started collecting new shoes for orphans as part of an international drive that gathers millions of shoes for needy children, said she was hoping that the community would step up.

"We want to work with children who are less privileged so that they know they're loved," said Clark, who

along with her husband, chiropractor Tony Rodriguez, has partnered with the international charity Shoes for Orphan Souls or SOS. "Because it is the holiday season, we hope that people will donate."

The center's office manager and resident donation wrangler, Krystal Smith, said daily she sees anywhere between 20 to 30 people, including patients and merchants. "I make them all feel guilty about giving," she joked.

In truth, Smith said, patients have promised they would return with donations even before their next scheduled visit to the health and wellness center. That's important with the deadline for the shoe drive fast approaching on Dec. 12. So far, the donations are thin, with less than a dozen brand new shoes and socks collected in a variety of children's sizes.

Rachel Garton, director of Shoes for Orphan Souls, said her group has seen fewer donation drives this year because of the economy's troubles compared with last year's 1,200 drives across the country.

"We really hope to finish out the year with 1,000 drives," Garton said.

Once the local drives are done, it is the responsibility of the drive's coordinators to ship the donated items to Shoes for Orphan Souls' warehouse in Dallas, Garton said.


From there, Garton said the donations can go anywhere in the world.

For example, a group of 30 volunteers was expected to arrive in Peru Saturday to distribute about 10,000 donated shoes to orphans there, Garton said.

"Next year, we hope to deliver shoes to border towns in Arizona on the U.S. side," Garton said, acknowledging that some of the organization's donations find homes on the feet of U.S. orphans, as well. Garton said last year about 18 percent of the shoes donated were distributed to orphans in the U.S.



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