

Orphan Grain Train †

Relief for Human Need Worldwide

OGT Spotlight *Iowa West Branch*

Established:

1993

Branch Manager and Background:

Sharon Irwin

I had retired as City Clerk at the end of 2010 and was considering places to volunteer. I stopped on my way home from Mission Central one morning to leave off some clothing and stayed to help during the rest of the morning. I've been volunteering here ever since. I feel that the Lord was preparing me for the management position of Iowa West Branch for over sixty years. I have always had a heart for mission work. I also am the prayer chain coordinator and do volunteer typing for Mission Central.



Location & Hours of Operation:

417 Main Street Ida Grove, IA.

Every Tuesday morning from 8-11 a.m. March through October and from 9-noon November through February. We work at other times for special groups to come and volunteer.

History and Year Established:

I believe, the Iowa West Branch has the distinction of being the first branch to be started with Orphan Grain Train. It was started in 1993 by Pastor Donald Winterrowd and the Lutheran Laymen's League. They started by working in the garage of Bob Wilke in Battle Creek, Iowa. When they outgrew that, they moved to a building in Battle Creek and then to a building on Main Street in Ida Grove, from there they moved to the site that we are still at today. Herman Jensen from Ida Grove was instrumental in getting the two buildings for the branch. They started out

with an old bread truck that they painted and used to deliver items to places in the area.

Elroy and Barb Koch were managers for over 22 years. I, Sharon Irwin, took over as Branch Manager in the Fall of 2016. My husband, Jerry, is the warehouse manager.

Elroy Koch had a trucking company, so when they were managers, they made trips to Texas and to North Dakota with needed supplies at different times. Most of our large shipments now are international.

What local or community organizations do you work with to provide goods?

Iowa West Branch provides seasonal clothing, hygiene supplies, shoes and boots and bedding to Siouxland Soup Kitchen in Sioux City, IA and Beacon of Hope, men's shelter in Fort Dodge, IA. We also provide needed items to the St. Augustine Indian Mission in Winnebago, Nebraska. We get many items to GoServ Global for air transport to Haiti. They have been able to fly into Les Cayes, Haiti. We help local school districts with backpacks, school supplies and extra clothing. We also give to individuals who come into our facility looking for clothing help for a new job, etc.

Favorite shipments or deliveries?

The first shipment we sent to the Women for Justice in the Republic of Georgia is probably one of the most memorable. They sent us hundreds of pictures and when we saw pictures of some of the homes and the stories, it cemented why we do what we do! We are so blessed in the United States. We have had so many miracles at Orphan Grain Train, Iowa West Branch. You just need to always remember to let go and let God. He is in charge and everything is in His time and His way, not ours.

Challenges you have faced?

A current challenge that we are facing since Covid is the number of men that we have volunteering. We need more men. There are some things that the women aren't strong enough to do.

What else would you like to share with others?

I enjoy speaking at LWML rallies and other organizations. Through these contacts it is amazing, how I can make other contacts to help individuals or groups in need in our area or wider. We have been so blessed with financial donations from Ladies Groups, churches and individuals. The LWML has also been very kind to our branch.

When groups ask what our branch needs as an ingathering, we have found, "Be careful what you ask for" because the Lord gives us bountifully!

Pictured above is Sharon and Jerry Irwin; Iowa West Branch Manager and Warehouse Manager. Also pictured are some of the dedicated volunteers that help with the sorting, packing and loading of shipments. Thank you everyone!



Orphan Grain Train

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Contact Us

