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Ralph Schmidt (L), Orphan Grain Train's Director of Donor Advising and Michael Reilly stand in front of OGT's first shipment of aid delivered to Maui. Michael let us use his warehouse for temporary storage and drove a truckload over to Lahaina the following day that was shared with many families.

Compassion for Maui

On August 8, wildfire began at about 3 p.m. in Lahaina, Maui. Fueled by severe drought conditions on the west side of the island, the winds reaching 80 miles an hour sent embers racing through the city in a matter of a few hours igniting homes block by block, creating havoc among the city's population as residents fled the inferno. Lahaina has only one road entering it. Consequently, residents and visitors, all trying to leave at the same time, were caught in a massive traffic jam. Some escaped. Others left their cars and began running for their lives. Some, trapped between the fire and the ocean, jumped into the ocean to escape the flames and were rescued by the Coast Guard. Some didn't make it.

In a matter of hours this once proud city, formerly the capital of the kingdom of Hawaii was reduced to ashes. Here and there a building survived, but over 2200 structures were destroyed, 98 people lost their lives and 31 are still counted as missing. Damage is estimated at close to \$6 billion dollars.

Orphan Grain Train sprang into action. Immediately information was sought as to what was needed, and I was sent to Maui to coordinate on the ground efforts, arriving just 10 days after the fire. Having been to Maui many times, I was very familiar with the island and Emmanuel Lutheran Church which had a satellite location in Lahaina.

Compassion for Maui

After I arrived, I drove to Lahaina and it was an eerie feeling. I've driven that road many times. Much of it runs along the ocean and normally there are many cars parked there with surfers, swimmers and campers readily visible. On this drive, there were very few of them. When I reached the outskirts of Lahaina police cars were blocking the entrance. As I traveled along the highway that is on a ridge overlooking the town, I saw the charred ruins of what a few weeks earlier was a thriving tourist mecca. Walls were being erected to prevent passersby from seeing everything. About every 500 feet a police car was stationed to prevent anyone from pulling off the road to take pictures.



Ralph Schmidt is with Chris Lallo, leader of the distribution center in Lahaina. They are getting ready to disburse food to many residents in need.

After passing most of the town I found the site where aid was being distributed. A temporary center was set up in the parking lot of a shopping center that the fire unbelievably spared. No electrical service was working, so the stores were all closed, leaving the parking lot available for truckloads of supplies for the survivors of the blaze. About 2,000 people a day were coming looking for food and hygiene items. Volunteers staffing this center were doing a great job moving cars through as they loaded up with food and other products. I talked with the head of the distribution center to find out what was needed and two days later a plane carrying twelve pallets of food and hygiene products arrived in Kahului, sent from OGT. I had arranged for temporary storage in a warehouse owned by one of the church members. The plane was

scheduled to land at 2:10 p.m., and the next day, two trucks delivered the goods to the distribution center where they were warmly received.

I also distributed \$5,000 worth of gift cards to families who lost everything. A \$250 gift card doesn't go very far, but for these families, it was all they had and they were very grateful. One of the pictures shows some of the families who received the gift cards.

What has OGT done since this initial shipment, and what will we be doing? This will be a very long process. The cleanup of Lahaina alone is anticipated to take at least a year because of all the toxic ash that is present. Plans to rebuild will take time. Many people were without insurance or underinsured because of the high prices



A young lady that has three children and lost her home received a \$250.00 gift card to ease some of the burdens.

on Maui. On an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean it will take even longer. There are only so many tradesmen living on the island, and bringing in skilled laborers from other places is frightfully expensive. It is estimated that it will take at least five years to rebuild. But even then, Lahaina was the historical center of Maui, and while buildings can be replicated, a large part of history has been irretrievably been lost.

A week before I wrote this article, a container of Mercy Meals, various foods, and other supplies arrived in Maui, second OGT shipment. Shipping takes longer than airlifting it, but costs far less. One might ask, "Why not just send money so people can buy food?" Like everything on Maui, food is expensive because most of it needs to be shipped there. So, we will be shipping food and hygiene items for a long time to come. By the time you receive this newsletter, two more containers of food and aid from Wisconsin Branch will arrive and there will be more shipments for as long as necessary.

What can you do to help? Your gifts designated for Maui relief will enable OGT to send more to these people who have lost everything. On November 28, there will be a special day of giving – Giving Tuesday. Thrivent will be matching fifty cents on every dollar that is given for Maui relief. But to qualify for the match, gifts must be given through the Thrivent website, www.Thrivent.com. And this is a one day only event which Thrivent is making available to OGT.

Finally, pray for these people. Pray to the Lord of compassion. The loss of lives, the loss of homes, the loss of pictures and other memories have been devastating. There is much uncertainty about where people will live for the next several years. Temporary housing has been provided by government funding, but that is only for a couple of months. People are grieving and our prayers, our aid, and the spiritual counsel that our church can give will help bring comfort and solace to many in great need. This is what OGT is all about.

Written by Ralph Schmidt, Director of Donor Advising



*Ralph Schmidt with many families that lost everything and holding gifts cards from OGT.
Giving hope to some feeling hopeless.*

Expanding Aid to Orphans

Caring for orphans and destitute families continues to be a high priority for Orphan Grain Train, for Adopt an Orphanage, and for supporters of Reehl Ministries.

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Orphan Grain Train and the fore mentioned entities briefly paused activities in Russia. As a result of the on-going war, bringing money into Russia continues to be a little difficult. At present, we are doing it primarily through the Ingrian Church in Finland and Russia. The Ingrian Church is a partner with the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod and Orphan Grain Train. They have also facilitated the Adopt an Orphanage and Reehl Ministries programs.

Earlier in October, leaders of the Ingrian Church visited with us here at Orphan Grain Train. The purpose of the visit is for them to share with us how they intend to enable and manage the Adopt an Orphanage and Reehl Ministries orphanage care that is funded by Orphan Grain Train. We intend to continue reaching as many orphanages as physically possible. A renewed emphasis will be placed upon sharing the Kingdom that Jesus talked so much about everywhere He went. Simply put, Kingdom Conversation is all about the Gospel, with Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

The plan to continue the work in Russia is firmly in place, the details are being developed with Ingrian pastors; Rev. Evgeny Raskatov & Rev. Oleg Belezhenko.

Rev. Ralph Schmidt, Director of Donor Advising for Orphan Grain Train, met in Germany with Bishop Serge Maschewski of the Lutheran Church of Ukraine to make plans for helping an Adopt an Orphanage program in Ukraine. At the recent Lutheran Church Missouri Synod convention in Milwaukee, this body of Lutherans was identified as having "Sister Church" status with the LCMS. That makes them of one theological mind with us. They preach the very same Gospel that we preach. A letter of agreement will confirm our relationship with that body of believers making them good candidates for orphanage help.

We are already working with Christians in the Odessa and Kherson regions of Ukraine, providing for the support of Seventy "Family Orphanages." These are husbands and wives who are taking in orphans from across Ukraine. These orphans have often lost both parents in the war. The "Family Orphanages" advantage is that it provides a Christian setting of love and discipline that allows young people to understand family life and enables them to also become good parents someday.

While in the region, Rev. Ralph Schmidt visited the leadership of the Latvian Lutheran Church to pave the way for continued support in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia.

Several survival shipments of food, clothing and other provisions are on their way to the port of Hamburg, Germany and from there continue 1,000 miles overland to Odessa. These shipments will continue as long as the need exists.

May I say here, how very grateful we are for your early and continued support of these mercy activities. We continue to seek to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, our Redeemer and Teacher.

Your Friend in the Lord,

Rev. Ray Wilke
President, Orphan Grain Train

Grant Schmidt
Vice President, Orphan Grain Train

Expanding Aid to Orphans

Omelchuk Family

There are 8 children in the family, 5 of whom are over 18. The mother died of a heart attack about 8 years ago. Before the war broke out, 7 children lived with their father in Kherson. Since the war, the family has been split up and the father remains in Kherson, which is now de-occupied from Russian control but is still in the front line. He is a deacon of a church with very limited finances. He does what he can for his children but finances are tight, especially since the war. Two of the children were able to go to the U.S., and two other children live with their own families. Katya, who is 22 years old, took her youngest sister Julia and moved to Ivano-Frankivsk in Western Ukraine. Soon her two brothers Sasha and Igor, age 17 & 15, who have been in the occupied city of Kherson, joined Katya where it is safer. Financially the situation is very difficult for the four siblings. Katya works at Tavriski Christian Institute, in the media department. She was grateful for the financial assistance they received from OGT to prepare Julia for school with supplies, and help with basic needs of food, household items, rent and utilities. What blessings for this family that endures hardships and loneliness from this war!



Skyba Family

Tetiana is a widow with two daughters, ages 3 & 6. She lost her husband about 6 months ago in the city of Bachmut. He is a hero; he pulled a commander off the battlefield and saved his life. He and many others were killed when a missile hit the building they were sleeping in. Tetiana is depressed and very traumatized. However, she knows she has to stay strong for her girls. She was appreciative of the financial assistance to fix her bathtub faucet and be able to buy her daughters shoes, coats and clothes. Please remember this family in your prayers.



Tatiana Family

Semienova Tatiana's husband was killed in the war. Her son holds the photo of his father with a note saying "Thank you for your support. God bless you." The boy has health problems and hormone deficiency. Tatiana was relieved to receive financial assistance to help purchase needed medicine and new shoes and clothing, as he has outgrown his clothes.



Bohomaz Family

This family of three adopted four boys and lives in western Ukraine. Three of the boys have vision problems and one has dental issues that require surgery soon. Iksana and her husband are strong people, and they wanted to help support children and to offer a happy childhood and life. The boys were thrilled to receive new clothes, school supplies and backpacks for school. Some of the monies will also help with medical expenses.

OGT Receives Exceptional Ratings Again

Orphan Grain Train's strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency have earned it another 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator. This is the 12th consecutive year that Orphan Grain Train has earned this top distinction. Orphan Grain Train is also a good steward with your hard-earned donations. We are evaluated as having marketing and administrative expenses only **1.8%** of total contributions, meaning **98.2%** of all donations are used for mission related expenses. We have once again received 100% on Accountability & Finance ratings.

Orphan Grain Train is honored and blessed to have received such high ratings from Charity Navigator. We couldn't have received this top rating without you. Thank you for trusting us with your contributions, time, and talents. Your trust and support mean so much to us at Orphan Grain Train. You can find more information about our rating at www.CharityNavigator.org.



Relief For Cattle

At the beginning of August, northeast Nebraska had several days with temperatures over 100°, nights not cooling under 80°, and high humidity causing continual stress on cattle. Several died. Orphan Grain Train was asked to help with spraying down cattle using our 6,000-gallon water tanker. OGT Logistics filled the tanker several times at Norfolk's water department hook-up site and sprayed cattle at feedlots to relieve them of the extreme heat. We were grateful when the heat wave broke and the cattle regained their strength. Another way that OGT blesses others and comforts His creatures.



It's that time of year.....Use your IRA.....

.....to help build the Kingdom through assisting Orphan Grain Train with fulfilling its mission and outreach such as aid to Maui wildfire disaster; shipping international aid -119 shipments completed to a total of 71 countries (2 new countries were added this last fiscal year). 155 full semi loads were distributed to domestic locations; 5.4 million mercy meals were shipped worldwide - this past fiscal year! All this couldn't have been done without the blessings of the Lord and your gifts. I am just giving you the tip of the iceberg as more detail information can be found in the Fall newsletter shipping chart. Making a gift with your Required Minimum Distribution from your IRA will be a great blessing to many we serve throughout the world. The deadline for giving a gift from your IRA for most people is December 31. Please prayerfully consider giving a special year end gift to the servant center to help furnish the interior of the building currently under construction. Anytime of the year, you can pray about a planned gift to Orphan Grain Train through your Will or Trust or naming Orphan Grain Train as beneficiary to a Life Insurance policy or a CD. **Thank You.....**so much for your gifts this year. It is a great blessing that through your generosity and warm hearts Orphan Grain Train is able to do so much worldwide spreading the love of Jesus Christ! If you have any questions regarding a specific gift or planned gift, please contact either Ralph Schmidt (260-452-4207 rschmidt@ogt.org) or me, Tom Watson (402-940-2007-text or call; twatson@ogt.org) May God richly bless you this season of the birth off HIS son, Jesus Christ.

Youth Sewing Room

Frannie George with Trinity Navajo Bible Church in Thoreau, NM was thrilled to receive six sewing machines with supplies from Orphan Grain Train. These were shared with the Rincon Marquise facility in Rincon, NM, a small town of 375 people in the middle of nowhere. The facility just reopened for students to use since closing for COVID. Trinity Navajo Bible Church hired an instructor for 20 days to teach students how to use the machines, cut and sew patterns, and one day was used to teach hand sewing for mending clothes. The students were thrilled to sew aprons, curtains and other items to sell and use the money for a cookout. Along with the lessons were daily devotions using Prayers of Portals, donated by OGT. For winter break, they are planning quilting classes with Bible studies and other sewing opportunities. The students love learning to use the machines! I might add, some students would catch the bus at 5:00 am for a 60-mile trip to attend school and the youth program.



At Rincon Marquise facility in Rincon, NM., students are thrilled to learn to sew various items to sell and raise money for events. The sewing machines with supplies were donated by OGT.

For Unto Us A Child Is Born

This will be the last Orphan Grain Train newsletter for 2023. As we come to the end of another year, we would like to thank everyone for his or her support, contributions and volunteer time during this past year. Orphan Grain Train would not be able to feed the hungry, clothe the needy or help those affected by natural disasters if it was not for your support. *Thank you!* We also want to 'thank you' for your continued support, especially to help those less fortunate this Christmas season.



We would like to wish everyone a safe and blessed Christmas with a Christ filled New Year.

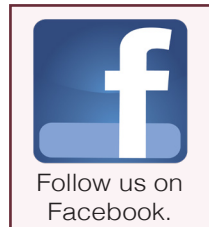


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Charity Navigator
has given Orphan Grain
Train "4 Stars", which
is their highest rating.



Ralph Schmidt, OGT's Director of Donor Advising was in Maui for the arrival of our first shipment of food and aid. Learn more about the conditions and needs of many families from Lahaina on pages 1-3.