

Days For Girls report for the St. John UMC Charge Conference

Submitted by Mary Werner, November 30, 2020

Periods Don't Pause for Pandemics!

Days for Girls Mission: Creating a more dignified, free and educated world through access to lasting feminine hygiene solutions.

The South Anchorage Chapter of Days for Girls (DFG), has partnered with Days for Girls International to produce personal hygiene kits for young women all over the world. We are committed to providing DFG kits to improve quality of life, and to educate and bless both recipients and donors. Internationally, DFG has reached over 1.8 million women and girls in 144 countries. This year, Days For Girls stepped up to add the **Masks4Millions** campaign. Over 3,500 volunteers have sewed over one million washable face masks in addition to the DFG kit components during the Covid-19 crisis. DFG has established 150 enterprises in 28 countries, where local women are trained to produce DFG kits and provide menstrual health hygiene training to their communities. Please check out daysforgirls.org for more information.

2020 Local Activity: As with everyone else, 2020 has been a challenging year for our South Anchorage DFG Chapter. With Covid-19 shutdowns of churches and other work spaces at supporting businesses, we have had to cancel our regular group sewing events. Despite this there are still individuals who are sewing at home. To facilitate this, we have recast our monthly group 'sewing day' at Anchorage re:MADE (first Thursday of every month from 4-8pm) as a time when people can pick up patterns and fabric for sewing at home, or turn in completed components.

In late 2019 we were able to send 92 DFG kits to Jalapa, Guatemala, and 50 more kits with Proyecto Fe, which runs a Christian school and clinic in the rural Lake Atitlan region.

In January 2020, the St. John South Africa Mission team took 80 DFG kits to give to a start-up enterprise outside of Cape Town. It was a wonderful surprise to realize the Days For Girls coordinator for South Africa is Melani Wilson, the wife of one of St. John's former youth pastors.

Once Covid-19 struck, there were no scheduled travel opportunities or missions to other countries to deliver kits. However, in July we were able to partner with Alaska Medical Missions to send 138 kits and 100 PODs (Personal Objects of Dignity) to a medical clinic in Haiti in a container load of medical supplies. The Haiti clinic was happy to receive them, and had some of their staff take the free Ambassador of Women's Health training to conduct the distribution. 70 kits for the Lumongo Project, which supports a school in Kenya, will be delivered next year when travel restrictions are lifted.

There has been some interest in washable feminine hygiene products as part of local community service during the Covid-19 crisis. We have reached out regarding this to the Hope Center and participated at Food Bank distributions on a limited basis. Another, practical application we'd like to pursue is to include DFG PODs with community emergency preparedness supplies. If anyone has any ideas about this please contact us for more information.

Acknowledgements: We are grateful to all our sponsors, and especially St. John UMC and United Methodist Women, for their support in the forms of providing facility for events, service volunteers, fabric and supply contributions, and financial support in these efforts. Thanks for all you are doing!

As advocates for the Days For Girls International and Ambassadors for Women's Health, we offer training, event coordination, resource identification and kit production for distribution on humanitarian service trips all over the world. If you know of a possible distribution opportunity, let us know. Please address comments or questions about this AMAZING program to the South Anchorage Days For Girls Chapter co-leaders, Allison Smith and Mary Werner. Email: sanchorageak@daysforgirls.org

Our "asks" include:

Skilled sewers and non-sewers to help prepare kit components and pack kits.

(Hopefully soon) People who are traveling out of the country, and are willing to bring a suitcase of Days For Girls kits to an established recipient of this humanitarian aid.

A large metal cabinet at St. John that can be locked, and is deep enough to store sewing machines, sergers and supplies to replace the plastic one we are using now.

(Again, hopefully soon) People who are comfortable speaking in public to go out into the community and present Days for Girls to different groups

Grant writers and fundraisers to help raise funds for our efforts.

Support of computer literate people to provide email, Facebook and google docs support.

People to help keep track of financial and in-kind donations and thank you correspondence.