

But what's your impact?

We were very grateful to receive a small grant from the City of Spokane's Community, Housing & Human Services department in the last application cycle. We were even offered a chance to receive feedback from members of the panel who judged our application. After some pleasantries, a panel member told us that while our application accurately listed the many functions we perform, we could have done a better job of relating the impact our work makes on those who benefit from it. She explained that panel members want to see a clear proof of impact on those receiving our services. She said we may have received a larger grant if the panel had better seen the true impact of our work. I was feeling a bit chastened, but I knew she was right! We could have done a better job of stating the impact of our work! So, with that in mind, let's talk about our impact on those we serve.

We provide good quality clothes to people who, for various reasons, need a bit of help. What if that person is a young man who needed a pair of black slacks to start work at a local restaurant or a young woman who needed a set of scrubs to begin working as a home healthcare aide. Both of those situations happened recently. I think you'll agree that the impact on them was profound—they were able to work and hopefully to improve their lives and the lives of those they love.

We provide new and gently used household items, including various kitchen and housewares. Yesterday I personally handed a beautiful new blanket to a woman who had recently arrived in America from Bhutan. She was obviously grateful as she smiled and thanked me in English. What's the impact of that blanket? It may be the first new item she's ever received. It'll certainly provide comfort to her and her family, especially when our colder temperatures return next fall.

We provide hygiene items to our clients, including basic necessities like toilet paper, shampoo, and soap. We also provide each client with oral care supplies including toothbrushes, toothpaste, and floss. These items are hard to buy on a very low income, and unfortunately a child might go without brushing his or her teeth if not for our help. So what's the impact of providing these items to a child? Better oral health, and in turn, better overall health while growing into adulthood.

What's the impact of those 12 diapers? They might just keep that child healthy. Studies have shown that children left in wet or soiled diapers can develop rashes or serious infections. A dry diaper makes a big impact on a child in need.

Finally, we're about to embark on our 4th annual School Shoes for Kids drive, where we hope to collect enough shoes and funds to provide new back to school shoes and socks to 750 K-8 kids. The shoes will be distributed at our Outreach Center the week before District 81 resumes classes. What's the impact of a new pair of sturdy shoes on a child? Plenty! That child will look and feel the same as his classmates on the first day of classes because someone was kind enough to help provide him or her with a wonderful gift—a gift that brings basic human dignity. Now that's an impact!

Blessings!

Mark Kinney

