

Unificationist Kathy Winings and IRFF bring Christmas in February to tornado survivors

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Recent tornado damage in Kentucky (Photo courtesy of NBC News)

"We're going to be having Christmas in February," says Dr. Kathy Winings. "Gifts for about 5,000 people affected by this disaster, as well as personal cleanup kits, bedding kits, basic food kits and other things for them to start to rebuild."

Communities devastated by a powerful cluster of tornadoes that tore through Western Kentucky on Dec. 10 are still picking up the pieces almost two months later. Dr. Winings, director of the International Relief Friendship Foundation ([IRFF](#)) - a nonprofit founded by the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon - quickly sprang into action to bring aid to the overlooked and underserved areas of the state.

"We have two very large trucks filled with rebuilding materials," she says. "Supplies for immediate, basic needs are available as well as gifts. Winter is one of the worst times for a disaster and we've gone to the hardest hit areas that were not getting support."

A massive tornado reportedly caused catastrophic damage to entire towns and thousands of homes across the western part of Kentucky two weeks before Christmas. Extreme weather then struck again New Year's Day, this time with tornadoes in southern and central Kentucky. State lawmakers quickly extended Gov. Andy Beshear's [state of emergency](#) declaration for the deadly tornadoes through April 14.

"This was a 200-mile stretch of tornado, with four or five of them that struck many places," says Dr. Winings. "It spread to some of the most economically depressed parts of the state so we wanted to respond. These are depressed areas that don't always know how to get help and often have migrant communities."

A team of IRFF volunteers has settled in Bowling Green as Dr. Winings oversees relief efforts. "People fled their homes, they scattered, so it's been hard," she says. "We're providing immediate needs, recovery, and rebuilding. We aim to address their unmet needs because it easily takes a month or two for FEMA to respond to such severe damage."

IRFF, which Dr. Winings has directed for more than 30 years, is an international sustainable development agency established in 1976 through the vision of Rev. and Dr. Moon. "This is what we were created to do," says Dr. Winings. "We were designed to demonstrate what it means to live for the sake of others."

To date, IRFF has supplied relief to tens of thousands of communities worldwide. Partnering with Christian Disaster Response (CDR), they have provided hot meals, clean water, and other essential needs while sending volunteers to directly aid those most affected by various disasters.

"We demonstrate the example that we have been taught by our founders," says Dr. Winings, whose team recently met with Senator Rand Paul as he surveyed the damage in his district. "We are very visible and have transformed people's hearts and minds. We've heard from people we helped decades ago from hurricane relief and other disasters. People remember us; they don't forget this kind of help."

"Unless you've seen it, it's hard to imagine how bad [the damage] really is," Senator Paul reportedly told a local [news outlet](#) before praising the community for supporting each other.

Dr. Winings and IRFF volunteers are helping the people of Kentucky alongside other organizations, including the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC), World Clergy Leadership Conference (WCLC), and different chapters of the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) who have donated "gifts of the heart" boxes.

Still, Dr. Winings says anyone can help - through financial donations, recovery kits, or volunteering.

"We want people to feel they can give," she says. "And there are different ways to do that when you don't necessarily have money to give. Like our founders, just think about what you can give and work with other agencies - that's how we make a difference and double the work that we do."

Dr. Winings said Christmas gifts will be distributed over the course of a week in February but an exact date has not been determined.

You can donate, send a gift box, or volunteer with IRFF's tornado relief efforts [here](#). And stay tuned for an update to this story.



INTERNATIONAL RELIEF FRIENDSHIP FOUNDATION

Donate

Help Now

Donate

In the wake of worldwide catastrophic natural disasters , IRFF is partnering with Christian Disaster Response (CDR) to assist in the recovery process for those who have been affected. We place a special focus on the areas that are often invisible to the civic and governmental agencies and consequently do not get served.

We invite the public to contribute and donate to help those in need during these devastating disasters. All donations will go to support those in the affected areas - providing hot meals, clean water, and other essential needs, as well as sending volunteers to directly aid those affected most by these disasters.

A \$50 donation can support one volunteer for one day and \$25 donation is enough to buy supplies for one disaster relief kit. Every little bit helps!

We have raised \$6,016.00 !





Disaster Relief Fund

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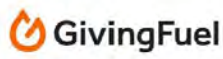
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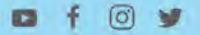
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