Even grandma does her part for Haiti relief

By Matt Chittum
BEDFORD -- Betty Pagans drove 15 miles to do her part. The Goodview grandmother dropped off two cases of bottled water Friday at a food-and-water drive at the Bedford Walmart to help victims of the earthquake in Haiti.

"It's a very little thing," said Pagans, 53. "If you've got a hundred bucks, you give that. But if you've only got six bucks, you get water."

To Pagans, and many others who want to help, writing a check or donating online doesn't seem substantial enough. They want to do something more.

"You can't get on a plane and fly there," Pagans said. "For a grandmoth-
er, you do the water."

Pagans was part of a steady flow of donors who showed up in the Walmart parking lot for the aid effort spearheaded by Spirit FM, God's Pit Crew and World Help.

Dave Clark, program manager and morning show host for the Christian music station, arrived at 6 a.m. for the start of the drive and found donors there waiting.

By lunchtime, donors had dropped off more than 300 cases of bottled water and a vast variety of food and other sundries -- canned tuna and Vienna sausages, soups, cheese puffs, rice cakes, fig bars, crackers, cookies, granola bars, pretzels, hand sanitizer, wipes and diapers.

"Everything from baby food to Ensure," Clark said. Add to that nine pallets of gallon-jugs of water, and most of a tractor-trailer was full. Clark said he hoped all the goods can be in Haiti by the end of next week.

This was only one of more than a dozen collection points for the drive across Southwest and central Virginia.

"We've got water all over the place," said Bishop Delmar Jackson of Abundant Grace Assembly in Roanoke, one of the drop-off spots. By Friday afternoon, his church had 300 cases of water and cash donations to buy 500 more.

"Hey, it's blowing my mind," Jackson said.

Close to 100 cases were waiting at Straight Street, a mission for at-risk youth in downtown Roanoke.

With the work force of Danville-based God's Pit Crew and the know-how of the international missionaries at World Help, the drive is a local effort with the rare capability of actually getting the goods delivered to Haiti.

And that seems to have tapped into the desire of people who want to help, but don't feel that itch scratched by a cash donation.

"I just felt compelled to help out and do more than pray," said Jennifer Tuck, 25.

Haiti relief spirit high among Virginians

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