

McMasters, Bill and Jean

Aid to Vietnam Via Belleville

Because a young Belleville couple wanted to adopt a child, youngsters victimized by the Vietnam war will find their plight eased in coming weeks.

Without fanfare, individuals, groups and even corporate business, have been responding to appeals of Bill and Jean McMaster to extend help to children in war-torn South Vietnam.

Clothing, toys, food, baby formula by the caseload, have been mounting up in the McMaster home at 123 South John St. Next month, it will be part of a big shipment flown out of Canadian Forces Base, Trenton. Its eventual destination will be a nursery near Saigon, caring for youngsters whose lives have been ravaged by the conflict.

"People have really risen to the situation — and we're quite thrilled about the response," said Mrs. McMaster as she helped her husband sort through boxloads of donations Sunday.

The project was first conceived when the McMasters decided to adopt a Vietnam war orphan and had joined Families for Children — a Montreal group of adoptive families formed to help children in need of homes or adults hoping to adopt.

The number of Canadian children needing homes is on the decrease and there's a growing interest in adoptions from overseas.

The McMasters — who have a 22-month-old son of their own — say while they are interested in also adopting a Canadian child, they've felt

there's an immediate need to aid youngsters in areas of conflict like Vietnam.

However, at the time there were difficulties about getting Vietnamese children into Ontario. So they opted for Korea — and are now completing visa details to secure adoption of a four-year-old Korean boy. (One reason for adopting him is that he's deaf — and the McMasters are both teachers in that field. Bill, 28, is on staff at the Ontario School for the Deaf).

Families for Children also supports the war nursery run by Rosemary Taylor, an Australian nurse, in South Vietnam, and the Belleville couple thus became involved in the project.

Back in Belleville, they began circulating requests among their friends.

"It's been snowballing in the past two months," says Bill McMaster. "We started with our friends, asking them to hang onto any used baby clothes they had."

The appeal spread by word of mouth. Not only individuals got involved.

Soon community and church groups in Belleville, Trenton, Carrying Place were inviting Jean to talk on the project.

They made tapes on their home cassette and shipped them to groups in Deep River and Bradford — centres too distant to canvass personally.

Clothes started arriving. The women of the senior citizens' Bridge St. East housing complex, did sewing repairs where needed. A church girl's group polished shoes and replaced laces.

Dominion food chain sold them cases of food — at less than cost without saying so, says Jean.

Mead Johnson donated big quantities of baby food formula and vitamins.

Neighbors offered space in which to store the mounting stockpile.

Students at Nicholson Catholic College set aside a week in which they donated different items each day, then raised \$50 with a dance.

Cash donations have totaled about \$400, half of which the McMasters hope to spend on medical supplies — smallpox vaccine, injectable vitamins, if they can secure the necessary doctors' prescriptions in time, they say.

But time is running out. The McMasters have to ship the crates and boxes containing their appeal's response to

Montreal by Saturday. There it will be packed in special airlift containers along with goods harvested by Families for Children. After that, it's transferred back to Trenton for overseas shipment.

"We've a lot more than we expected," says Bill, stacking more boxes in the hallway of his home. "People have really risen to the situation . . . and pitched in, once they heard the story."

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