

WaterStep seeks shoe donations

Sheldon S. Shafer, The Courier-Journal 3:24 p.m. EST February 24, 2015

WaterStep seeks to fill a tractor trailer with new or used shoes that the non-profit agency will sell to raise money to finance potable-drinking water projects in developing countries.

WaterStep, which is based in Louisville and works to promote healthy living with the consumption of safe drinking water, is asking for the local community's help to reach its goal to fill the large trailer with shoes by March 22 — World Water Day.

An estimated 22,000 pairs of shoes are needed to meet the goal, WaterStep officials said, urging in a news release that "businesses, churches, schools, families and individuals are asked to host shoes drives and donate the collected shoes."

WaterStep's shoe program not only generates funds for the organization, but it also keeps tons of waste out of landfills by repurposing the shoes.

For information on sponsoring a shoe drive, people can call (502) 567-7463, or they can visit waterstep.org to find a list of any of several dozen shoe drop-off sites being set up around the city. People can search by ZIP code. Any size, style, and condition of shoes is accepted.

Another alternative is to drop off shoes from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. March 22 at the WaterWorks Museum at Louisville Water Tower Park during a special World Water Day event. Attendees can learn about water around the world, with a special focus on Uganda.

WaterStep is preparing for its next major water project in the Kaabowa village of Uganda, where about 1,300 villagers are forced to spend large portions of their small incomes on medicine and transportation to distant hospitals as a result of waterborne illnesses.

WaterStep officials said that worldwide, nearly 750 million people lack access to safe drinking water, and waterborne disease is a leading cause of death in many developing countries.

In 1992, the United Nations created "World Water Day" to focus attention on the global issues related to the need for safe drinking water.

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WaterStep, founded in 1995 and headquartered in Louisville, is a 501(c)(3) organization that works to empower communities with training and technology to provide safe, sustainable water and hygiene solutions. To learn more, call (502) 568-6342 or visit waterstep.org.