



## Caring hearts in Nebraska, Colorado, Staten Island, N.Y. join together

**By Sheri Hink**

### ***The Wauneta Breeze***

Many of the families impacted by Hurricane Sandy lost everything.

Tinker Raasch of Champion wanted to find a way to send them some holiday cheer from southwest Nebraska and Colorado.

Raasch organized a toy and clothing drive to help those in need.

“I did this because I can and because they need help,” she said. “I just wanted to do something to help. I didn’t like the idea of families losing homes and being without.”

The drive had two main collection stops, Viaero Wireless in Imperial and The Bar in Denver, Colo.

### **Toy collection**

Ray Rodriguez, Raasch’s nephew, and his partner, Phil Villotti, own The Bar in Denver, Colo., which served as the collection stop for most of the toys collected in the venture.

The Bar offered incentives to their customers to bring in new, unwrapped toys for children impacted by the hurricane.

Other Coloradoans gave to the cause. Raasch called upon her trucking friends, Gary Disher, Hi Plains Leasing in Commerce City, Colo., and Laird “Spike” Fuller with Spike Transportation in Broomfield, Colo., all of whom gave, purchased and collected toys for the drive.

Larry Talbott at 21st Century Equipment in Imperial agreed to let Raasch bring the pallets of collected items to their facility to meet with the shipping company. He also had Skip Kelley go shopping within their store for toys for the drive and they donated a large box full of toys.

All-in-all a full pallet of toys were collected for families in New York.



### **Clothing and blankets**

Raasch said the Viaero store in Imperial was quick to agree to house goods donated by those in southwest Nebraska. She noted she’s been impressed with how Viaero always seems willing to help with community projects.

The Imperial collection site garnered mostly clothing for families in New York.

The Chase County Stockmen 4-H Club also stepped up to the call for help and together they made more than a dozen hand-tied blankets for the hurricane victims.

The 4-H members who helped make the blankets included Shandra Johnson, Stevie Johnson, Stephen Johnson, Jasmine Johnson, Keylee Johnson, Regan Gittlein, Brady Gittlein, Jayme Gittlein, Jordan Jablonski, Tristan Jablonski, Taylor Jablonski, Kobe Clevenger, Brooke Schilke and Blake Schilke.

The second of the two pallets was filled with donated clothing and the blankets from 4-Hers.

### **Two pallets en route**

The items collected, weighing in at 200 pounds, shipped Monday to Tim Rosario with Print-n-Tees in Staten Island, N.Y., a business associate of Raasch.

KNOP-TV of North Platte came down to 21st Century Equipment Monday to film the event.

The freight was provided as a goodwill effort by Con-Way Freight based in Aurora, Neb. The company sent one of their trucks from Cheyenne, Wyo., to pick up the donated items.

The two pallets are expected to arrive in Staten Island this Friday.

From there Rosario will use his warehouse to house the items until distributed.

### **Staten Island distribution**

Raasch explained that Rosario is also an EMT and has ties with the New York City Police Department.

Once the shipment is received at Rosario's warehouse, the items will be sorted and toys will be wrapped by spouses of NYPD members.

NYPD representatives will accompany Rosario, who will deliver the items dressed as Santa.

All families impacted by the hurricane are eligible to receive the donated items.