



East Grinstead & District Lions Club
(International Association of Lions Clubs)
District 105 SE England

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News Release

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Shoebox appeal is abandoned

THE town's Lions have abandoned their annual shoebox appeal because of bureaucracy in Belarus. New rules imposed by authorities in the former Soviet Union republic, forced the charity group to pull out of its annual fundraising efforts.

East Grinstead Lions has sent shoe boxes from the appeal to areas of Belarus for the last two years, including the Gomel region in 2004.

Businesses and residents in the town help the cause by filling the boxes with clothes, school equipment and sports equipment.

For the previous three years they have sent the donations collected to, Romania.

But this year, as the Lions prepared to start their collections, they were told that from now on, each box donated would require the contributor to fill out paper work.

Restrictions

This would include the weight of each item, and the value and name of the manufacturer for each article placed in the box.

Spokesman for the East Grinstead and District Lions Club Jim Miller said: "We can't expect people to do this, there are an awful lot of restrictions.

"Most of the items that go into the boxes are second hand and we would have to go to charity shops to get the items valued."

Mr Miller added: "We can't expect people to do that, it is too much to ask of people.

"If we get 200 to 300 boxes we have to take it all to charity shops and ask them to work out how much it is all worth."

But the red tape, introduced by the Belarus authorities, has not deterred the Lions from wanting to help the people of the country which was hit by the radiation from the Chernobyl catastrophe of 1986 and suffered 70 years of oppression and neglect under Soviet rule.

The Lions group is preparing to send £250 of new school equipment to the country instead of the usual shoe box appeal.

Mr Miller said: "This way we are still doing something, but we will know the value and weight of items we are sending out."

Anyone wanting to donate money to the Lions to help them send equipment to Belarus can contact Mr Miller on 01342 326164.

With acknowledgements to the 'The East Grinstead Courier'.

Editorial extract:

Bureacracy halts lions charity aid

THE town's Lions club is fighting back against bureaucracy to help people across the world who need aid.

The club has been told that in order to make donations of shoeboxes filled with clothes and equipment to the needy of Belarus, they must fill out paperwork itemising every item, its weight and the manufacturer.

It may be a measure to prevent drug or arms smuggling into the former Soviet Union republican state, but it is also stopping genuine help from a world famous fundraising group getting through to those who need it most.

For years our Lions have asked residents and businesses to fill shoeboxes to send across the world. It is a shame that this year red tape has prevented them, but it is good to see committed Lions determined to help others.

East Grinstead and District Lions are sticking to their mission statement, "to create and foster a spirit of understanding among all people for humanitarian needs by providing voluntary services through community involvement and international co-operation".

Let's think about those in countries where aid doesn't always get through and make a special effort to help the Lions keep their promises.

With acknowledgements to the 'The East Grinstead Courier'.