



Saving the world one sud at a time



Soap saves lives.

But every day, millions of half-used bars of soap and tiny shampoo bottles end up in the trash at hotels.

Step in Clean the World, an international not-for-profit organization, which is in Toronto recycling discarded toiletries and shipping them to ravaged parts of the developing world where a lack of hygiene results in fatalities.

The World Health Organization says proper hygiene would have prevented the deaths of 3 million children in 2015.

Clean the World has established relationships in the past few years with about 300 small and large hotels in the GTA.

One of its world-wide automated recycling centres is in Montreal.

The collected soap is shredded, boiled with antibacterial agents and pressed into new bars of soap for redistribution.

Kishoor Vipulanathan, 24, has been organizing the Clean the World efforts at the Hilton Garden Inn Toronto Airport for the past 18 months.

"All our housekeepers recycle the soap. We get a sense of satisfaction that it can be saving lives in the world. People are dying because of hygiene so it makes sense," he said.

Vipulanathan and his staff at the Garden Inn have counterparts at 5,000 hotels around world who are involved in the program.

He said that each month, up to 10 bins — the size of an average workplace recycling container — are filled with used hygiene products.

In 2016, Garden Inn collected about 225 kilograms of what would have been waste, which was turned into 1,500 bars of soap. Clean the World distributed about 38 million bars last year.

Vipulanathan and his staff are the front-line ambassadors of the program, said Pierre Daigneault, Canadian head of operations for Clean the World in Montreal.

“The distribution of these products to impoverished people prevents millions of hygiene-related deaths each year,” Daigneault said.

“This is helping people in poverty, but there is an incentive to help the environment as plastics and chemicals aren’t going to landfills.”

Toronto’s Globalmedic packs up everything they need when they head out on humanitarian missions.

“We give out water purification units and we can have room in our kits. We don’t want to waste space and could always use soap to take along with us,” said Rahul Singh with Globalmedic, who is interested in helping distribute the free soap from Clean the World.

Often, Clean the World Canadian operations gives its free soap locally to places like homeless shelters.

Toronto street nurse Cathy Crowe said she would prefer the soap to go to developing countries as many shelters have soap budgets.

She noted there are also many poor GTA families who could benefit from the soap through a food bank.

The Daily Bread Food Bank in Toronto only asks for food donations even though there is a need for personal hygiene items, said executive director Gail Nyberg.

“We could use soap and would happily accept soap. I have racking space, a warehouse. I could take it. A shelter only has so much room and we could distribute (the soap) to the shelters we supply.”

Clean the World does work with local Canadian food banks and shelters.

The organization also works in 115 countries and operates through hotel recycling program fees, cash donations and grants.

It’s estimated 1.8 billion people don’t have access to proper sanitation.

In Canada, the small Clean the World staff is working to establish a corporate challenge program where companies work to put together hygiene kits for those in need.