

Unification missionaries in the 1970s needed a humanitarian program - IRFF UK

Naokimi Ushiroda
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Photo courtesy of IRFF UK

"All of our Unification missionaries during the 1970s saw we needed a humanitarian program, which is how the International Relief Friendship Foundation came about through True Parents," recalls Mr. Edward Hartley, who has served as CEO of the IRFF UK chapter for nearly a decade.

"We were told by True Parents to go out and serve, as there is a lot of restoration from the past," says Mr. Hartley. "It's a pleasure for me to be part of this, and we're looking to grow with more volunteers from the U.S."

[IRFF UK](#) was established in 1980 to create opportunities for sustainable development, community welfare, and social progress in the areas of education, health, and economic sustainability. Mr. Hartley, who joined the nonprofit in 2000 as its bookkeeper, then became a trustee, points out that while IRFF has a worldwide presence, each chapter helps its national community differently.

In the U.S. and elsewhere, the nonprofit centers on relief work after natural disasters. In February, Unificationists banded together to [aid tornado victims](#) throughout Kentucky. But in the UK, the focus has

long been cultivating prosperity in impoverished African communities.

"IRFF UK is a little different to the spiritual side of our movement," says Mr. Hartley. "It's really the third blessing in action - empowering people to stand on their own two feet and take direction."

The Destiny Junior School in Uganda, which is sponsored by IRFF, touches Mr. Hartley personally as a parent and grandparent. "Looking at how the kids are doing, it feels like they are your own kids," he says. "It's very much a heart connection to reach out and empathize with other people's situations."

IRFF UK also operates a Mobile Medical Team which serves Ugandan villagers, and the Shine project in South Africa that teaches English to children. The WAIT Uganda program, which educates youth about abstinence, and a program providing female health and support are other key projects. Mr. Hartley says donations, and the Tricycle Charity Shop at the heart of the nonprofit's fundraising campaign, have enabled IRFF UK to directly support 10 projects in five African countries, as well as Sri Lanka. The charity also channels funds to other places like Senegal and Sierra Leone.

The UK chapter is now looking to expand with new positions and more volunteers from the U.S. Even though the nonprofit seeks practical solutions to poverty, suffering and disease, Mr. Hartley says it's a huge undertaking for his close-knit team of seven. "We're an intergenerational group, and we all have specific roles and feel passionately about why we're doing this," he says. "But we have the desire to do a lot more. That's the heart of our team."

Mr. Hartley says generating more donations through the IRFF UK [website](#) is another important area of focus. "Our projects in Gambia and Ghana will be needing more income very soon," he says. "All of our other projects are either partially funded or using general funds from the charity shop. This is why we are searching for volunteers to strengthen our service to others."

IRFF UK seeks to fill various roles - a volunteer coordinator, fundraisers, a social media and marketing assistant, researchers for markets and methods, a customer relations manager, and, eventually, a trainee country coordinator.

"We need people who can work with our team and bounce ideas off each other," says Mr. Hartley. "The charity is about helping the public, but it's also about continuity and management as we reach out to the diaspora of our African nations and explore what's possible in doing this incredible service work."

You can donate to IRFF UK [here](#), and submit all work inquiries to irffuk@gmail.com.

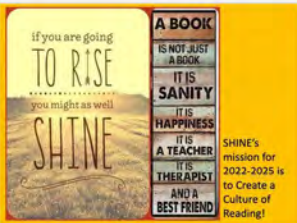
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IRFF UK at a Glance

Our Vision

The International Relief Friendship Foundation, (IRFF) is dedicated to the purpose of finding practical solutions to the global problems of poverty, suffering and disease while promoting opportunities for long-term sustainable development for communities in need.

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Midwest

Tornado Aftermath: Unificationists Aid Kentucky



Recent tornado damage in Kentucky (Photo courtesy of NBC News)

“We’re going to be having Christmas in February,” says Dr. Kathy Winings. “Gifts for about 5,000 people affected by this disaster, as well as personal cleanup kits, bedding kits, basic food kits and other things for them to start to rebuild.”

Communities devastated by a powerful cluster of tornadoes that tore through Western Kentucky on Dec. 10 are still picking up the pieces almost two months later. Dr. Winings, director of the International Relief Friendship Foundation ([IRFF](#)) – a nonprofit founded by the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon – quickly sprang into action to bring aid to the overlooked and underserved areas of the state.

“We have two very large trucks filled with rebuilding materials,” she says. “Supplies for immediate, basic needs are available as well as gifts. Winter is one of the worst times for a disaster and we’ve gone to the hardest hit areas that were not getting support.”

A massive tornado reportedly caused catastrophic damage to entire towns and thousands of homes across the

western part of Kentucky two weeks before Christmas. Extreme weather then struck again New Year's Day, this time with tornadoes in southern and central Kentucky. State lawmakers quickly extended Gov. Andy Beshear's [state of emergency](#) declaration for the deadly tornadoes through April 14.

"This was a 200-mile stretch of tornado, with four or five of them that struck many places," says Dr. Winings. "It spread to some of the most economically depressed parts of the state so we wanted to respond. These are depressed areas that don't always know how to get help and often have migrant communities."

A team of IRFF volunteers has settled in Bowling Green as Dr. Winings oversees relief efforts. "People fled their homes, they scattered, so it's been hard," she says. "We're providing immediate needs, recovery, and rebuilding. We aim to address their unmet needs because it easily takes a month or two for FEMA to respond to such severe damage."

IRFF, which Dr. Winings has directed for more than 30 years, is an international sustainable development agency established in 1976 through the vision of Rev. and Dr. Moon. "This is what we were created to do," says Dr. Winings. "We were designed to demonstrate what it means to live for the sake of others."

To date, IRFF has supplied relief to tens of thousands of communities worldwide. Partnering with Christian Disaster Response (CDR), they have provided hot meals, clean water, and other essential needs while sending volunteers to directly aid those most affected by various disasters.

"We demonstrate the example that we have been taught by our founders," says Dr. Winings, whose team recently met with Senator Rand Paul as he surveyed the damage in his district. "We are very visible and have transformed people's hearts and minds. We've heard from people we helped decades ago from hurricane relief and other disasters. People remember us; they don't forget this kind of help."

"Unless you've seen it, it's hard to imagine how bad [the damage] really is," Senator Paul reportedly told a local [news outlet](#) before praising the community for supporting each other.

Dr. Winings and IRFF volunteers are helping the people of Kentucky alongside other organizations, including the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC), World Clergy Leadership Conference (WCLC), and different chapters of the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) who have donated "gifts of the heart" boxes.

Still, Dr. Winings says anyone can help – through financial donations, recovery kits, or volunteering.

"We want people to feel they can give," she says. "And there are different ways to do that when you don't necessarily have money to give. Like our founders, just think about what you can give and work with other agencies – that's how we make a difference and double the work that we do."

Dr. Winings said Christmas gifts will be distributed over the course of a week in February but an exact date has not been determined.

You can donate, send a gift box, or volunteer with IRFF's tornado relief efforts [here](#). And stay tuned for an update to this story.

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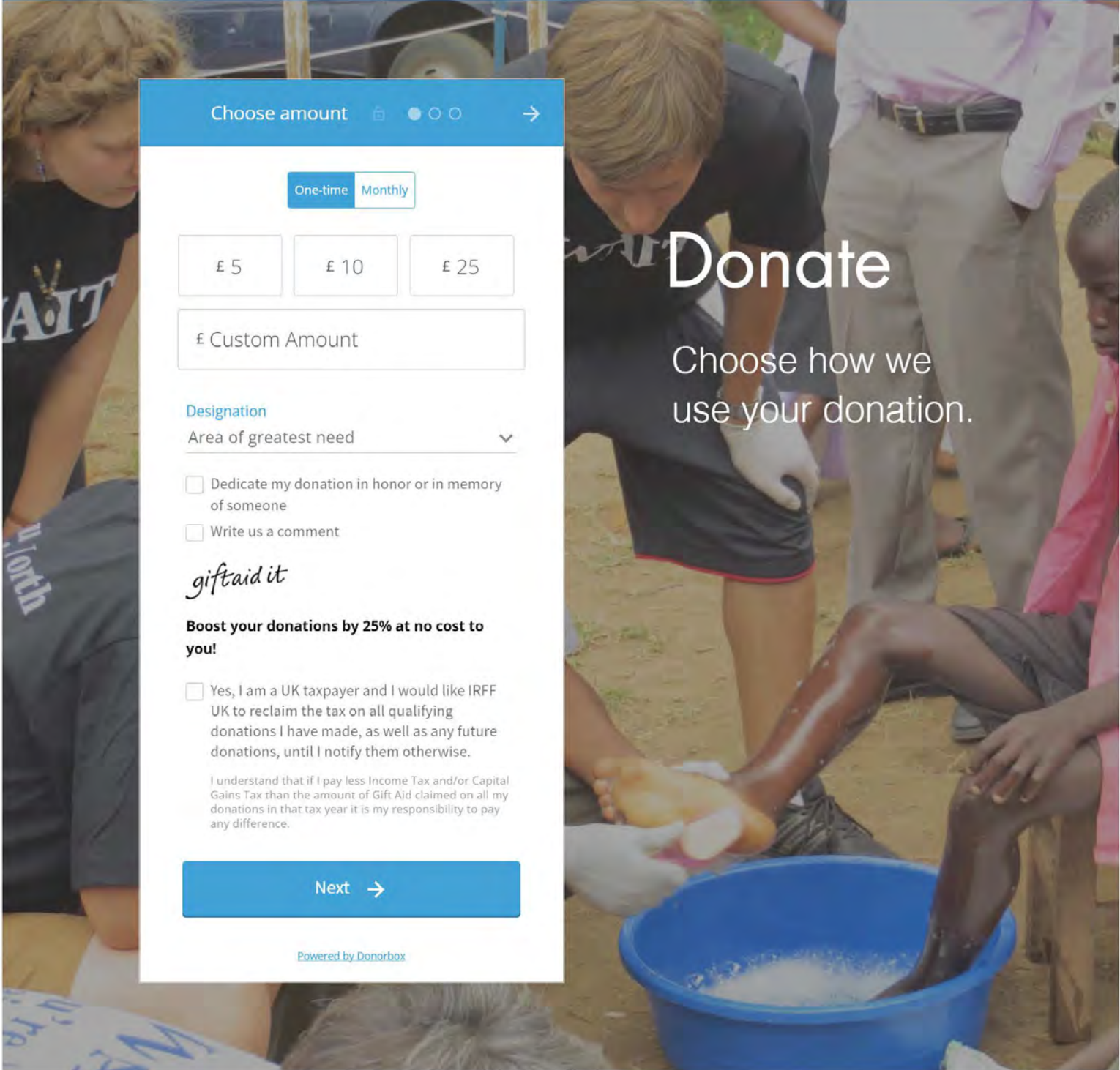
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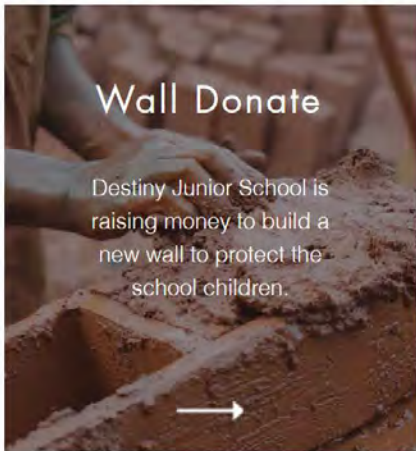
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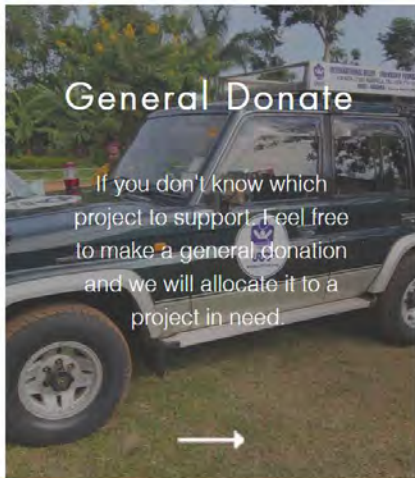
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