



Heart & Sole

Comfort Socks' Organizer
Theresa Tese



“We long to provide the secure and comfortable feeling that putting on new pair of socks can give someone who feels lost or forgotten by this world.” — Theresa Tese

STORY BY DAWN LEE WAKEFIELD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEITH KETCHUM

What holiday gifts made you smile this year? X-Box. PlayStation. Lionel trains? Woo hoo! Socks and underwear? Awww. Thanks, Aunt Vera.

Growing up, the gifts we used to laugh at were the practical underwear and socks. However, if you asked Theresa Tese what gifts she liked receiving most this year, it was socks — about 9,000 pairs of them.

The Supply resident began her quest for socks in October 2008. Tese had everything she could possibly want — a loving husband, a beautiful family and a comfortable home — yet something was missing. She knew that she would never really feel complete until she was giving back and involved.

New to the South Brunswick area, Tese prayed and turned to Bible scriptures that made her think about feet, many among the masses, walking for miles in the wilderness. Then she thought of homeless men and women with ragged shoes and no socks for their feet. She remembered as a child how good it felt to come in from the cold and put on a pair of freshly laundered socks. She felt warm, secure and safe. She said out loud, “SOCKS! That’s what I can do to help bring comfort to those in need.”

Socks seem like such a simple item, but the gift of them has brought comfort to many across the country who’ve been the recipients of Tese’s labor of love. That October, Theresa began her first sock drive. New Life Christian Fellowship pastor, Rev.

Bobby Norton, and congregants welcomed the idea and began helping. Comfort Socks collected almost 500 pairs in 90 days.

Comfort Socks found willing supporters among area businesses, such as Nationwide Insurance, Angelo’s Pizzeria and Bistro, Walmart and from Rick and Jan Noyes of Beach House Harley-Davidson. Tese’s husband, Joe, used his talents as a web designer and developer of Internet virtual tours (tese.com) to bring life to www.comfortsocksonline.org. The Teses’ son Joseph, Jr. created videos for YouTube to help spread the word about this family-based charity.

Tese tells a story of a Comfort Socks volunteer at Angelo’s Pizzeria, who was waiting on a customer who had been gifted with an expired coupon to another establishment. The man was clearly down on his luck. The restaurant owner gave a free meal to help, and offered conversation, but received no response. Toward the end of the meal, the owner asked, “Would you by any chance like a new pair of socks?” Incredulously, the man replied, “Do you mean it?” and tears began streaming from his eyes. Upon receiving the socks, the gentleman said, “I can’t believe someone actually cares whether or not I have a new pair of socks.” That moment remains a memory for both men. Giving is receiving.

By November 2009 Tese’s team had collected and bought 8,355 pairs of new socks. These were donated to homeless



Above: We take them for granted, but socks are a simple comfort item that we wouldn’t want to do without.

Below: Theresa Tese’s Comfort Socks organization donated nearly 9,000 pairs of socks to the homeless in 2009.



shelters from North Carolina to New York City, from Encino, California, to Key West, Florida.

Eighty percent of Comfort Socks' current requests are for men's socks. The preferred sock type is 100 percent cotton crew, low-cut or heavyweight socks in both men's and women's sizes. A signed agreement between any homeless shelter and Comfort Socks assures that the socks reach their intended recipients.

A talented businesswoman, Tese has reached agreements with Fruit of the Loom for generous wholesale prices on new sock purchases. For just a \$25 donation, Tese can make 50 pairs of new socks available. The need for new socks is ongoing, and Tese projects that she'd like to provide 2,000 pairs each month in the future.

Tese receives calls from individuals and organizations wanting to help. Already planned for 2010, a local elementary school is holding a week-long event, with everyone encouraged to bring new socks to school. UNCW Athletics will be participating in a sock event sometime in February, and nationwide, people are planning events daily. The webmasters of Google have watched the exciting growth of www.comfortsocksonline.org and recently awarded Tese a coveted AdWords grant to help people find her organization on the Internet.

It took one volunteer seeking inspiration to give back to her community to start a chain reaction of caring and giving that resulted in more than 9,000 pairs of socks being donated to the homeless in 2009.

As you make your New Year's resolutions for 2010, take a moment to think of the warmth and caring you could share with someone less fortunate. Get your school involved, or your Boy Scout or Girl Scout troop. Hold sock drives or a car wash for socks. It's as simple as a pair of socks, and it can mean the world to someone who has lost hope. 🌍

If you want to help:

To join in Comfort Socks' goals for 2010, make checks payable and send to:
Comfort Socks
P.O. Box 477
Supply, NC 28462

You can also donate online via Visa, Mastercard, debit card or online check at www.comfortsocksonline.org. All gifts to this 501(c)3 organization are tax-deductible.

If you have AMEX points, each 1,000 points donated will yield a \$10 contribution to Comfort Socks.



Here: Tese at the Comfort Socks headquarters in Supply.