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Nepalese Staffer Uses Oklahoma Standard for Earthquake Relief

OKLAHOMA CITY (May 6, 2015) - The Oklahoma Standard knows no borders, even when those who need service and aid are more than 8,000 miles away. Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center staff accountant Deepa Ghimire, who left Nepal at 18 to continue her education in the United States, describes residents in her adopted home as “family caring,” people who “always try to help or help you reach the people who can.”

Ghimire, who organized a relief drive for victims of the recent earthquake in her home country, is asking for that help now.

The current aid list includes (in order of priority) tents; water purifiers, water-purifying drops and chlorine; thermal blankets; masks; and small flashlights. The organization is also taking monetary donations. Both can be delivered to Oklahoma Contemporary’s State Fair Park location, 3000 General Pershing Blvd., during regular business hours (9 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday-Saturday) through May 18.

Oklahoma Contemporary staff were discussing the Oklahoma Standard — the campaign in which Oklahomans and organizations commit to acts of honor, kindness and service to recognize the 20th anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing — when Ghimire, in tears, mentioned the tragedy in Nepal and that she was working with family and friends on the ground to try to organize supplies. The immediate connection — the chance to give back to others facing destruction and loss — was obvious, and Ghimire’s co-workers quickly volunteered to help. Ghimire put together a list, vetted by those in Kathmandu, and the organization began spreading it via social media that day.

Through simple word of mouth, Facebook and Twitter, word began to get out, and the first shipment (gloves, high-energy food, medical supplies and more) is already en route. Recovery is very slow (some affected areas haven’t yet been reached by rescue crews), and Ghimire is asking her fellow Oklahomans to continue giving.

“Every person who can help can directly affect other people,” she says. “Thousands have already died, and we need to meet the basic needs of survivors.” The efforts also reach further, she said. “Donations can give them hope in this time of need.”

Ghimire’s immediately family survived, and it doesn’t appear the family home in Kathmandu sustained much damage, though it hasn’t yet been inspected for structural problems. A childhood friend lost his life, and the homes of many of her extended family and friends are no longer habitable.

Ghimire knows their stories could’ve been much worse, and she’s determined that her efforts go directly toward those in need. She hears of shipments delayed at airports, wrapped up in red tape. She’s sending supplies directly to contacts she knows personally, and using her accounting background to track them every step of the way.

Spreadsheets log donations, how they're used and when they left Oklahoma. On the other end, recipients note arrivals and how they were distributed. She's using her network in both directions, finding Oklahomans to give and Nepalese to receive. The Oklahoma Standard stretches halfway around the world.

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High-resolution photos of earthquake damage and recovery, taken by Deepa Ghimire's friends and family, are available at <http://bit.ly/OCACNepalearthquake>.

About Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center

Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center is a regional 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization that encourages artistic expression in all its forms through education and exhibitions. Founded in 1989 by businessman and philanthropist Christian Keesee and Kirkpatrick Foundation Director Marilyn Myers, Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center offers contemporary arts exhibitions throughout the year, free to the public, as well as youth art camps, adult art classes, workshops and lectures. Marfa Contemporary is the organization's first regional extension.