

Interview with IPTV

Kenneth M. Quinn: Iowans Send Aid to Southeast Asia

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Former US Ambassador to Cambodia Kenneth M. Quinn describes the response from Iowans to the plea for aid to refugees in Southeast Asia in 1979.

And we had these bags full of money and checks. And so we got a bank stepped forward and said, "We'll help you. We'll take the money. We'll count it." ...got a CPA to come on board with us and to take over the handling and the accounting of the money so that everybody would feel good about it. And it just kept coming and coming.

And the rabbis and the bishops and the ministers were all speaking in their churches and taking up special collections. And schools started doing projects. And we had organizers out in major cities who were helping us in spreading the word.

And I went around the state. I had a slide show. And I'd show it to people, and wherever you went it was this incredible reaction of Iowans filled with the ecumenical message from the Pope's visit of...and one more time coming together across political lines, ethnic lines, religious lines, everything that might divide us to respond as a state, to respond as Iowans to this incredible need.

And so we sent food and medicine to the Thai border, Cambodia that arrived on Christmas day of 1979. You know, probably could not be more perfect timing. We also sent through UNICEF into the interior of Cambodia to orphanages and Prey Veng all the way on the other side of the country.

And I think in the end we took in...people kept giving money and people kept volunteering to go as doctors and nurses. But we took in probably close to \$600,000. And we sent food on multiple occasions and medical people. And probably it lasted a couple of years in all this.