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# Making a real difference

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The work of the 2015 winner of the FPA's Future2 Community Service Award has transformed the lives of numerous disadvantaged people right around the world, writes **Alexandra Cain**.

Christopher Moore CFP® from Optimum LifeFocus Financial Planning in Adelaide, is the winner of the 2015 Future2 Community Service Award. The award recognises FPA members who have through pro-bono, volunteering or community service work made an outstanding contribution to improving the circumstances of the most socially excluded or financially disadvantaged members of the community.

Moore and his wife Kerrie's incredible work with their charity, Container of Hope (COH), make him an extremely fitting winner of this award. The not-for-profit organisation sends 40-foot shipping containers full of donated and recycled goods to assist poor and vulnerable communities. The idea is to bridge the gap between needy communities overseas and communities in Australia who have too much.

"It all began five years ago after a couple of short-term missionary trips to India and one

40-foot shipping container sent to Vanuatu. I have since been involved in 24 container projects to various destinations, such as Burundi, Uganda, Israel, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Vanuatu, and South Sudan," says Moore.

"We work in partnership with sponsors who are usually a part of an organisation in Australia or overseas that has a contact with an overseas project in need of items, either for the project or to distribute to a community in need," he explains.

As might be imagined, the process is an involved one. It means raising funds, buying the container, as well as locating, collecting and sorting goods. This is in addition to liaising with the recipients to come up with a wish list of items, loading the container with the assistance of a sponsor, and shipping the container to its destination.

"Items we send vary greatly from 150 kilogram wool bales full of clothing, medical consumables,



*Christopher and Kerrie accept the award from FPA Chair Neil Kendall CFP®*



Almost done! Containers are packed to the hilt

linen and hospital beds and mattresses, to things like toys, books, building supplies and vehicles. The type and balance of goods that go into a container will vary depending on where the container is going, for instance to an orphanage, school, hospital or refugee project. The beneficiary wish list will also determine the items with which the container is loaded. COH attempts to meet the wish list of the recipients if it can, to ensure the items that are sent are actually used. "We also donate the empty container to the overseas project at the project's completion," says Moore.

In the past six months, COH has sent nine 40-foot high cube containers to overseas destinations, mostly in Africa. "We are now in the process of completing another seven new projects. We have a pipeline of a further 20 requests for containers," he says.

COH makes every effort to ensure the container and its contents get to the intended beneficiaries. It relies on contacts Moore has developed through Rotary representatives overseas, as COH is also a project of the Rotary Club of Salisbury and Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS).

### Providing real support

COH's work has allowed it to support widows, orphans and those less fortunate (WOLFs) living in compromised communities overseas.

"COH's mission is to donate items that we have, but don't want or need, but which recipients do need. Two highlights have been

sending a generator to a village in Burundi in Africa, and donating a shipping container in Sierra Leone that became a computer classroom," Moore notes.

Aside from running COH, Moore also helps Australian communities fundraise and collect donated goods, while also donating items to op shops in Australia such as clothing, books, furniture and bric-a-brac. COH shares a warehouse with Rotary Donations in Kind (DIK) which allows for a partnership of item sharing between container projects of both organisations. This helps to broaden the range of items that can be sent; for example, COH looks after clothes and smaller items such as toys, stationary and household items, whereas DIK specialises more in medical equipment and consumables and office ware.

Incredibly well networked, Moore is also the president-elect of the Rotary Club of Salisbury, and is involved in the Rotary Donations In Kind District Committee. He is also a member of the City of Salisbury's Strategic and International Committee and the campaign manager for his local mayor. "I was also selected to be a part of the delegation to Salisbury's sister city of Mobarra in Japan."

If that's not enough, he also provides pro bono services to WOLFs through mentoring and personal support. He has provided financial and personal mentoring to 33 couples and individuals over the past 12 months.

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Thanks Celian, a dedicated volunteer and project leader



## Member profile

When it comes to financial planning clients, money has never been a motivator for the work that I do and I believe financial advice should be open to anyone who wants it.



*Items destined for Fiji*



*Donations ready for sorting*



*Seventy-six push bikes thanks to the City of Salisbury*



*In the process of packing a container to Uvira, in the Democratic Republic of Congo*



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“When it comes to financial planning clients, money has never been a motivator for the work that I do and I believe financial advice should be open to anyone who wants it. So a client’s inability to pay fees is never a reason for me not to assist them. Rather, we discuss what they can afford and I adjust my fees accordingly.”

### Benefits galore

COH’s work has direct impacts and benefits, both tangible and intangible, for the people it helps.

“On a very tangible level, the benefits of the pro bono work I am involved in can be seen largely in the effect the items we send through COH have on the people who receive them. We fill a need in communities that often have many great needs such as refugee camps in the north of South Sudan as well as schools in Uganda, and poor communities and villages in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” says Moore.

A good example is the aforementioned generator sent to in Burundi. “To give more context to this, rebels had blown up the power source in Rweza village and the people had no money to pay for a new power source. Thus, we sent a 300-kilowatt generator, the biggest one we could find, to them so they might have power back,” he explains.

Back home, Moore’s donations of goods to two op shops allowed them to start-up and function. His work also has an environmental benefit given the goods he has

saved for container projects end up put to good use, rather than in landfill. “It’s truly incredible how much we waste in our throwaway society,” he laments.

In terms of intangible benefits, Moore says when he helps one community, the people spread the word, allow him to extend the reach of his work. “It is amazing how quickly we went from having only one container project to having ten. And we are always receiving requests for containers.”

Finally, Moore is also keen to highlight another of COH’s cornerstone principles: pay it forward. “We encourage all people who become involved with us, particularly project sponsors and beneficiaries, to respond to the kindness shown to them by being kind to someone else,” says Moore.

“One of the manifestations of this is that sponsors are required to attend at least six COH monthly working bees. Beneficiaries are also encouraged to share the items they receive with as many people as they can, so that kindnesses might continue to flow on. We want the benefits to continue on after the container project is completed,” he says.



*Not all work, work, work – volunteers also enjoy themselves*