

Essential Items Needed for the Women at the City of Joy in the Democratic Republic of Congo

V-Day (vday.org), a leading organization in the global movement to end violence against women and girls, helped found a remarkable place called the City of Joy (drc.vday.org), a community for women survivors of violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Since 1996, sexual and gender violence in the Eastern DRC has been used to torture and humiliate women and girls and destroy families. It is estimated that over half a million women and girls have been raped since the conflict there began. In addition to the severe psychological impact, sexual and gender violence leaves many survivors with serious physical ailments, unwanted pregnancies, and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. Survivors are regularly ostracized and abandoned by their families and communities.

At City of Joy, Congolese women and girls who have suffered these unimaginable atrocities come and live for 6 months where they are physically healed, emotionally nurtured and trained to be leaders. These women who have been raped and brutalized are bravely learning to turn pain to power.

Violence against women impacts one out of three women on the planet. That is over one billion women and girls who will be survivors during their lifetimes. This violence destroys women, which destroys life itself, which in turn eradicates our communities and our future. V-Day works to stop the violence, but to also harness the pain that survivors live with and transform it into a force for good.

The City of Joy provides an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate women's leadership in the context of conflict and disaster zones. While this work requires an approach specific to the cultural and political climate of a given location – one that is determined by those it will be serving – a great deal can be learned from the experience at the City of Joy in the DRC that can be applied to other countries globally.

Mary Ellen Cunningham will be traveling to City of Joy this coming February as part of a group from V-Day. She will have the opportunity to meet and spend time with the women of the current City of Joy cohort. We believe these women to be the most courageous people ever to live. We want them to know that there is bountiful love in the world; that they are not alone or forgotten; and that we stand with them in solidarity.

In support of this visionary place and courageous women, we invite you to help provide essential items for the women of City of Joy. All of the items on the list directly impact the comfort, healing and training of each woman at City of Joy. By helping to provide these essentials, you will personally be supporting each woman's recovery and transformation.

Please look over the list. Pick items that are meaningful to you. Consider providing those items for 10 women knowing that you are making a real difference in the lives of those women. The preference is for the items to be new. Gently used items are also appreciated. [NOTE: all make-up, toiletries and skin-care products must be new.]

Items will be collected on **Saturday, February 15th from 10:00am-2:00pm** in the parking lot on the SE corner of 44th Ave. SW & SW Alaska St (in the West Seattle Junction behind Pharmaca). The U-Haul truck will be parked there just waiting to be stuffed full!

There will be lots & lots of chocolate and sparkling cider for folks with donations!

If you have questions you can email Mary Ellen at me.cunningham@comcast.net.

Thank you in advance for your immense generosity. We believe the path to ending poverty and creating peace in the world is reconnecting with our humanity...treating all humans with the dignity, respect and love they deserve. We believe that V-Day and the City of Joy are leading us down that path.

It takes us all to create the change we want to see in the world.

With deep gratitude,

Mary Ellen Cunningham & Libby Cunningham

V-Day is a US registered non-profit organization. Your donation is fully tax-deductible. You will be given a receipt for your donation for your tax purposes.