

# Haitians Give Thumbs Up To Grain Bin Homes

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

One Iowa grain farmer's idea for helping homeless Haitians after the devastating earthquake in 2010 has resulted in a coalition of ag businesses and citizens united to provide a common sense solution to the need for low cost housing. At the heart of the plan is Safe T Homes – modified grain bins turned into mini homes by Sukup Manufacturing Co. of Sheffield, Iowa.

"People ask me, 'Aren't they hot?'," says Ken DeYoung, who created the Global Compassion Network based out of his hometown, Laurens, Iowa. "It's the design that makes it work. The double roof is the key. And there's ventilation as well. It's 8 to 10 degrees cooler inside."

GCN has partnered with the Iowa Soybean Association's Food and Family Project ([www.iowafoodandfamily.com](http://www.iowafoodandfamily.com)) to launch "Special Delivery. Homes. Help. Hope. For Haiti." The goal of the campaign is to set up 48 of the homes at the Village of Hope, 10 acres of land that DeYoung purchased in Haiti after months of fighting through government red tape.

With the support of campaign co-chairs, Iowa Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds and Iowa Ag Secretary Bill Northey as well as farm groups, businesses and individuals, DeYoung expects to exceed his goal. Thirteen homes have already been shipped and set up.

"The response from the Haitians to the design was pretty exciting," DeYoung says. He explains that Haitians live in concrete block homes with cement roofs, which were deadly during the earthquake. The people who survived are now afraid to go into concrete structures.

DeYoung says Haitians eagerly joined Americans who flew to Haiti earlier this year to assemble the new homes – 11 structures in 5 1/2 days. On the last day the Haitians built a home by themselves.

Each home comes with a 1/2-in. open-end wrench, a speed wrench and punches to line up holes – the only tools needed for assembly.

Making it simple to erect and easy to transport were the goals of Brett Nelson and his design team at Sukup. Nelson had been thinking about the design, and then got permission from the company's owners to work on it after the earthquake.

"It's an engineered system that draws on our experience making grain bins," Nelson explains. "It's very durable and it's fireproof, nearly earthquake-proof and anchored to withstand wind. It's also termite proof and cool."

The 20-gauge steel, 18-ft. wide by 13.5-ft. tall structures weigh less than 3,500 lbs., with the longest roof sections at 9 1/2 ft. so



they can easily be transported by hand or on carts. They include two windows and a door. The lip at the edge of the first layer of the 24-gauge steel roof is turned up to help channel water for collection under the eave. The top heat shield layer is made of perforated steel that shades the roof. The double roof combined with a cupola and continuous ventilation under the eave, keeps the unit cooler than outside.

"This shelter is suitable for all phases of recovery," Nelson says. "It can be deployed quickly, but is durable enough for transitional or permanent shelter."

Cost per Safe T Home is \$5,700. With another \$1,000 for shipping and a concrete slab, the units have a 70-year life expectancy. The partnership with Sukup is just one of many.

The Iowa Soybean Association pledged \$1,000 per Safe T Home (up to \$48,000) to purchase Meals from the Heartland – food packets of soy protein, rice, vitamin powder and dried vegetables to feed six. Cargill-Iowa Region is also donating meals.

County Farm Bureau groups, FFA clubs and other organizations have rallied around the "Special Delivery" that Iowans plan to make to Haiti through GCN.

DeYoung says the Village of Hope is transitional to get families back on their feet, provide education and opportunities for future sustainability.

"It's not a free ride for them," DeYoung says. They will sign contracts and be expected to help with the village and pay rent to

hopefully make the village self-sustaining. He hopes to build larger, 48-ft. dia. Safe T Homes to set up as a clinic and community center/church. Donations of a tractor and grinder for rice will make it easier to grow and process food.

The need is great, and another community has offered land to set up a similar village.

People can help by contributing money, goods or by volunteering their skills by going to Haiti.

"I want to get as many people down there as I can," DeYoung says.

He is a pilot and flies his plane on many trips to Haiti delivering medical and other supplies. Early on, he worked with others welding and fabricating shipping containers into an orphanage, which was frustrating work in a country where there's no acetylene gas and few tools that most people take for granted.

The simplicity and durability of Safe T Homes make them a great housing option.

"My heart and my faith tell me I have a responsibility to work to take care of the orphans and widows of the world," DeYoung says.

He invites anyone with the same belief to support GCN to help with its Special Delivery project.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Global Compassion Network, 47902 170th Ave., Laurens, Iowa 50554 (ph 712 358-2226; [www.globalcompassionnet.org](http://www.globalcompassionnet.org)).