

Local cabinet maker heading to Alabama to help family rebuild

Like the rest of America, Jeff Christenson watched in horror as a tornado cut a six-mile path through Tuscaloosa, Ala., in April.

The storm damaged or destroyed more than 5,700 structures, affecting the lives of more than 13,500 people.

Soon after, Mr. Christenson, owner of Coal Valley's Jeff's Cabinets (www.jeffscabinets.com), called Habitat for Humanity to offer his services. Once details of the storm were sorted, word reached Habitat officials in Alabama that a 20-year cabinet-making veteran was available to help a family rebuild.

Now, after six months of prepping and planning, Mr. Christenson — a modest and humble sort — will take the kitchen and laundry room cabinets and bathroom vanity he's building to Alabama. He is slated to leave the Quad-Cities on Oct. 30, drive to Alabama, install the cabinets in the home on Oct. 31 and return home the following day.

"The simple answer as to why I'm involved is I saw what happened on TV and felt I needed to do something," Mr. Christenson said. "I didn't think out all the details at the time; I just thought I do something for a living that might be of service to those who are trying to get back to normal."

"This has been the toughest year business-wise we have had and this project — knowing we are doing something for others — has helped me get through some rough patches."

Mr. Christenson's wife, Elizabeth, also is helping. She has been collecting items from longtime Q-C business



— JOHN MARX —

staples and is putting them in baskets. Some nonperishable foods, T-shirts, hats and other items will make the trip with her husband to Alabama.

"If anyone has anything that is a Q-C original they believe would add something, I'd love to make it part of the basket or baskets," Mr. Christenson said.

To offset the cost of the cabinets, Mr. Christenson called on longtime suppliers Liberty Hardwoods, Oharco Distributing and Blondell Plumbing to step forward. And they have.

"I'm new to this asking-people-to-help-stuff," Mr. Christenson said. "But we will accept any kind of donations that will help make the trip. We have plenty of labor to make the cabinets. It's the other stuff we need help with. Again, I'm not good when it comes to asking; I just know it's our turn to help."

Excited to make the journey to help a family start anew, Mr. Christenson isn't



Submitted

Jeff Christenson has constructed cabinets for a new home to be built in Tuscaloosa, Ala. The city was devastated by an April 27 tornado.

sure what he's going to see when he reaches Tuscaloosa.

"It will be eye-opening," he said. "I can't begin to imagine the destruction, but knowing I have been called to help is a good sign people are starting to get their lives back in

some kind of order."

Anyone willing help Mr. Christenson defer the cost of the trip can call (309) 292-2225.

Columnist John Marx can be reached at (309) 757-8388 or jmarx@qconline.com.

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