

Mr. Speaker, one of the great economic fallacies of our time is that if government doesn't do something, no one will. This disastrous fallacy underlies much of our national debate concerning health care, education, poverty, housing, and disaster relief, to name just a few issues.

But today I rise to applaud an organization that stands in stark refutation of that fallacy. Convoy of Hope, a private charity in Springfield, Missouri, does so much to help so many communities that the term "charity" doesn't begin to describe it. In fact, Convoy of Hope is equal parts grocer, clothier, health care provider, first responder, educator, and logistics expert. It works with communities in America and around the world bringing together local charities, businesses, churches, and government agencies to alleviate poverty and help people in the wake of disasters.

In other words, it is a real community organizer! The tremendous scope of its activities serves as a reminder that government is neither the sole nor the best provider of goods and services to people in need.

Mr. Speaker, I recently had the privilege of touring Convoy of Hope's headquarters and distribution center. It was a humbling but deeply encouraging experience, as I learned the full extent of its charitable

outreach. Frankly I've never seen an organization so focused, efficient, and poised to do tremendous good for so many people.

First, some background: Convoy of Hope was founded by Hal and David Donaldson in 1994, who as young boys suffered the death of their father and subsequent poverty. But both men were struck by the outpouring of support their family received during that time; local churches and the community provided food and shelter. As a result, the two brothers both developed a deep sense of responsibility to help others in need.

In the years since, Convoy of Hope has helped more than 50 million individuals in more than 100 countries-- giving away nearly \$300 million worth of food and supplies in the process.

Today, Convoy of Hope describes its mission as a global movement focused on four keys:

- Children's feeding initiatives: the organization's overriding goal is to alleviate child hunger worldwide, providing food and clean water while also teaching agricultural techniques;
- Community outreach: Convoy of Hope coordinates dozens of community events annually with thousands of volunteers and guests. These events involve free groceries; job and health fairs; and activities for children. As always, this outreach is available to all, without regard to age, race, physical appearance, or religion.
- Disaster response: from an earthquake in Haiti to a tsunami in Indonesia to tornadoes in the American south, Convoy of Hope is a proven first responder. With its fleet of tractor trailers, 300,000 square foot warehouse, and high-tech mobile command center, it efficiently leverages relationships with private industry to help victims of worldwide disasters.
- Partner resourcing: Convoy of Hope supports hundreds of like-minded organizations throughout the world, providing them with the food and supplies needed to help their communities. In this way Convoy of Hope consistently promotes local control, results, and accountability-- while demonstrating humility and a willingness to let others shine and take credit in local communities.

Unlike government bureaucracies and many top-heavy private charities, Convoy of Hope applies a uniquely results-oriented approach to serving people. You won't find bloated salaries or patronage jobs at Convoy of Hope, nor will you find tony offices in New York or Los Angeles like so many nonprofits. In fact, the organization regularly spends only about 10% of its budget on overhead (a very low ratio in the nonprofit world), while employing a small staff of approximately 85. Watchdog group Charity Navigator consistently gives Convoy of Hope high marks for both its financial acumen and transparency.

Convoy of Hope also stretches its resources by developing strategic partnerships with private sector corporations, many of which provide in-kind donations of goods or services. This allows Convoy of Hope to offer a win-win proposition to prospective corporate donors: companies

benefit from donating needed goods or services already in their inventory or area of expertise, while Convoy of Hope benefits from receiving the supplies and services it needs without paying retail prices. Its corporate donors-- including Coca Cola; Nestle; Proctor & Gamble; Nestle; Georgia Pacific; Cargill; Del Monte; and FedEx-- donate everything from building supplies to bottled water to toiletries. These partnerships with successful private companies demonstrate an entrepreneurial mindset that enables Convoy of Hope to help more people with less overhead.

Its massive distribution center and headquarters are located strategically in Missouri, where its fleet of trucks can dispatch quickly anywhere in America. It also operates six international distribution centers for logistical efficiency. By contrast, many government agencies purposely locate offices and facilities in different states at the clear expense of efficiency, solely to curry funding support from as many members of Congress and Senators as possible.

The next step for Convoy of Hope is an audacious one: a 50 state tour beginning in May designed to address poverty across the United States. The "Convoy of Hope Tour" will provide an average of \$1 million in goods and services to a community in a single day. Convoy of Hope's fleet of 18 wheel trucks will roll through every state, providing a wide variety of goods and practical services to those in need, including:

- Groceries

- Job counseling

- Clothing

- Dental care

- Breast cancer screenings

- Haircuts
- Family portraits
- Children's activities
- Prayer and connections with local churches

Finally, while Convoy of Hope is a Christian-based organization, it is nondenominational and strongly non-political in its approach, helping those in need without imposing their faith. Convoy of Hope employees simply believe their faith compels them to help their fellow man. This commonsense dictum guides infuses everything that Convoy of Hope does.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion let me state unequivocally that Convoy of Hope is doing tremendous work on behalf of mankind. I wish everyone at Convoy of Hope (and their donors) best wishes for great success with their upcoming Tour. It's hard to imagine a government agency operating as efficiently, as nimbly, or even as cheerfully as Convoy of Hope. I truly believe it should serve as a model for private, nongovernmental solutions to poverty and its attendant ills.