

Hurley surf contest puts focus on global water problems

By LAYLAN CONNELLY

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Jon Rose remembers a mother in Haiti who approached him about a week after he taught her how to use a water filter to clean her family's drinking water.

It was the first time in her baby's life that he didn't suffer from diarrhea, she told the former pro surfer who grew up riding waves in Laguna Beach.

"You don't do it for the credit, but it's nice at those times to really see the human aspect of it and have it related to a woman's child," said Rose, founder of the nonprofit Waves for Water. "This technology exists, it

works. It's proof and validation that it works and it can change lives in an instant."

Set in a 20-foot shipping container painted bright blue, Rose's Waves for Water initiative is a big presence on the sand at Trestles, where Costa Mesa-based Hurley is using a major surf contest as an educational tool for teaching beachgoers about the water crisis.

The surf brand is showcasing its H2O Initiative at the Hurley Pro – where thousands of surf fans are showing up through the week to watch the world's best surfers compete – to highlight Waves for Water and The Ecology Center in San Juan Capistrano to spread the word about water.

"For us, being Hurley, everything starts at the beach," said Ben Edwards, vice president of global outreach for Hurley. "Hurley is a brand of water."

The water crisis is split between two areas: Humanitarian and environmental, Rose explains. Waves for Water deals with the humanitarian side of the issue, while The Ecology Center focuses on the conservation, preservation and awareness.

Hurley teamed up with Waves for Water about three years ago, supporting the mission to bring clean water to people around the world.

Rose first started distributing water filters after a massive earthquake hit Indonesia while he was on a surf trip in 2009, and he rushed to the devastated city with a backpack full of filters to help first-aid responders. Since then, he has brought clean-water filters to overseas areas such as Haiti, Chile and Afghanistan. More recently, after Hurricane Sandy hit the East Coast in 2012, he mobilized efforts to help the coastal cities of New Jersey and New York rebuild, where they are still doing work.

There are two ways Waves for Water gets people clean water: the larger projects Rose is a part of, whether it's teaming up with the United Nations to bring in large filtration systems to countries in need, or rain-catching systems for tribes in rain forests. Then, there's the volunteer program called the Clean Water Couriers for travelers to take water filters with them to poorer countries when they travel.

"Hopefully our projects are inspiring people to get inspired or involved. We built a platform for them," Rose said. "We want to tap in and piggyback on travelers who are going to places anyway. There are millions of travelers, and that's millions of filters and that's global change."

At the contest site, beachgoers pay \$5 for a stainless steel water bottle and can refill at six stations at the shipping container, which Hurley has dubbed its H2O Blue Room. Around the area, facts of the water crisis are scattered about, like the fact that one person in six doesn't have access to clean water.

"What we're trying to do is flip that and say '5 in 6 people can help'," said Edwards. "We're trying to raise awareness so people can choose their own adventure, whether it's taking water filters on trips, or turning off the water faucet when they brush their teeth."

Edwards estimate they will raise \$5,000 for Waves for Water this week from people purchasing water bottles and T-shirts.

Newport resident Wendy Fanticola was happy to buy a reusable water bottle for her son, Spencer.

"It's fantastic, so now people aren't bringing down their plastic bottles to the beach," she said. "Everyone can take a bottle and take it home to use. It's a great idea. I think it's great because it really promotes a healthy lifestyle."

Spencer, 11, said he'd much rather use reusable bottles over plastic – especially if it helps a good cause.

"It's going to help a lot of people who need water," he said.

Also set on the sand was a 25-foot tall geodesic dome exhibit, where The Ecology Center set up big, empty water bottles next to signs with facts about water consumption.

"We are about empowering individuals with skills so they can live a more sustainable lifestyle in their homes and in their community," said Jeff Davis, marketing and outreach coordinator. We love the ocean, we love a healthy ocean."

The exhibit focuses on three messages: Eat vegetarian once a week instead of eating meat, planting natives instead of having a grass lawn, and using reusable water bottles instead of plastics.

For example, to make one hamburger – to feed a cow, manufacture, package and transport – it takes 650 gallons, Davis said.

"The simple solution we offer is to think about eating a vegetarian meal once a week," he said.

Also, it takes 750 gallons a week to water a lawn.

"We love the ocean and everything we do every day – what we eat, what we drink, the activities we choose to do – they all affect our ocean," Davis said.

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