

The Rock hands out treats for charities

By Roger Knox - Vernon Morning Star

Published: October 31, 2008 4:00 PM

Updated: October 31, 2008 5:23 PM

Four local organizations found a big lump in their Halloween treat bag on Friday.

And they couldn't be happier about it.

The Vernon and District Community Land Trust, Vernon Food Bank, Upper Room Mission and B.C. Teen Challenge received cheques totaling \$100,000 from the Vernon-based The Rock Developments Corporation at a special ceremony Friday morning.

The cheque presentations were held Halloween morning at The Rock on Heritage, a 60-unit townhouse project located at 4900 Heritage Drive off Bella Vista Road.

It was the developers way of giving something back to the community.

"We want to be a responsible organization and be a community building a community for the betterment of the community," explained Michael Molnar, joined by project partners Cornell Mulder and David Claeys for the presentations.

The partners, in 2006, set out to fill a gap in Vernon's affordable housing market, noting that there were few affordable projects for first-time and average income home buyers, and not very many multi-family dwellings.

When they started out The Rock, they set out a condition among the investors: all would agree that a portion of the proceeds from the sale of The Rock units would be donated to charitable organizations in Vernon that would benefit people in need in the community.

The Rock is also donating \$100,000 towards a number of projects overseas.

"We were all excited a couple of weeks ago that, on the morning the Dow Jones dropped by 800 points, we're having a meeting deciding what to do with \$200,000," said Molnar.

The Vernon and District Community Land Trust, an entity that works with people to provide hope and shelter, were the biggest beneficiaries, receiving a cheque for \$50,000.

"There's all kinds of death, destruction and despair out there, we're bordering on a world recession, and we have a corporation like The Rock doing the right thing for the right reason, providing money for not only shelter, but for hope," said Randy Kolibaba, director of the Vernon and District Community Land Trust.

"Without hope, there's no community. There's no nothing."

Kolibaba said his organization is working on a couple of projects that he can't release details on at this time, but said the \$50,000 "will help the community immeasurably."

The Salvation Army Food Bank and the Upper Room Mission each received \$20,000. David MacBain from the Food Bank said the cheque was the largest corporate donation ever received in the nine years he's been in Vernon with the Salvation Army.

Andrew Yeo, manager of the Upper Room Mission, was only too pleased to get a phone call from Molnar's group.

"It's not everyday someone calls and says we have \$20,000 for you," smiled Yeo.

B.C. Teen Challenge, a faith-based ministry that helps youth, young adults and adults out of addiction, received \$10,000. Representative Aaron Tilley announced that the money would go towards helping establish a women's centre in the Okanagan Valley.

A cheque for \$25,000 was given to the international Christian-based Be-A-Hero organization, which will use the money to support a children's welfare project in Uganda. Picking up the money for Be-A-Hero was Wesley Campbell, son of former Vernon councillor and provincial MLA Don Campbell, who is now a pastor at a Kelowna church.

Other international projects to receive money from The Rock include an orphanage in the Ukraine and one that buys water well drilling equipment for Africa.



The Rock Developments Corporation partners Michael Molnar (from left), David Claeys and Cornell Mulder present \$50,000 to Vernon and District Community Land Trust representatives Annette Sharkey, Trevor Perepolkin, Randy Kolibaba and Greg Schroeder. The Rock made \$200,000 worth of donations to local and international organizations on Halloween.

Cory Bialecki/Morning Star