

# ON A ROLL

Once thought quaint and outdated, the ministry of rolling bandages still plays a vital role in Congo hospitals.

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Dressed in surgical gowns, caps and booties, surgical masks, and latex gloves, sixteen women looked like they were ready for the operating room. Instead, they grabbed lengths of three-inch-wide fabric and began feeding them into a little hand-cranked contraption.

What's believed to be the first-ever bandage rolling competition in the Covenant was underway last August at Triennial XI, an event sponsored by Women Ministries. Contestants represented the Triennial planning committee, missionaries, members of the Board of Women Ministries, and conference presidents.

Hundreds of Triennial attendees cheered as the contestants tried to roll the tightest and neatest bandages in record time. Retired missionary Jody LeVahn, the lone judge, watched over

the competition, deciding which team was fastest, rolled the tightest and neatest bandage, and which was most entertaining.

In the technologically sophisticated twenty-first century, rolling bandages for medical missions in Congo seems like a quaint project of a bygone era. In fact, leaders of Women Ministries were about to abandon it. Before doing so, they checked with Jim Sundholm, director of Covenant World Relief, to see if the effort was worth continuing.

The answer surprised everyone. The reusable bandages, created from rolling strips of used sheets, would cost hospitals in Congo \$180,000 a year to replace. Suddenly, there was new zeal for a sixty-five-year-old ministry.

The tongue-in-cheek bandage-rolling contest at Triennial was the public debut of the ministry that's been formally renamed "Rip & Roll." It's a task that will be made easier by bandage rolling machines invented by residents at Covenant Village of Golden Valley, Minnesota. Thirty prototypes of the machines were sold at Triennial, with the hopes that they can be duplicated nationwide. Proceeds from the sale of the machines will be used to defray the \$2.25 per pound it costs to ship rolled bandages to the Covenant Church of Congo.

## Ministry partnership

During a visit to see her parents at Covenant Village, Women Ministries board member Cyd Cole Johnson noticed a woodshop on campus. She asked her parents, Adele and John Cole, to see



The bandage-rolling machine, here being incorrectly loaded during the Triennial bandage rolling competition, was made by men from Covenant Village of Golden Valley, Minnesota.



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Contestants donned surgical gear for the competition.

if the woodshop craftsmen would consider making a bandage-rolling machine—relatively simple U-shaped wooden frames with a crankshaft for rolling fabric.

“Mrs. Cole approached one of the fellows on our woodshop steering committee and asked if we could make some of these machines,” says Roger Lindholm. “We thought it was very doable and a tremendous mission outreach for our group. We were really excited about the opportunity.”

Using plans provided by Women Ministries, the steering committee made two prototypes and presented the project to the annual meeting of the woodshop group. The group embraced the project whole-heartedly.

“We told Mrs. Cole we would take it on,” says Lindholm. “But we wanted to make a couple modifications to the design.”

### Making refinements

The experienced craftsmen had already identified improvements that would make the machines more user-friendly. “We could see right away that the machine was not grabbing the material,” says Lindholm. “We planned to cut grooves in the metal cranks by using a knurling die on the metal lathe to solve that problem.”

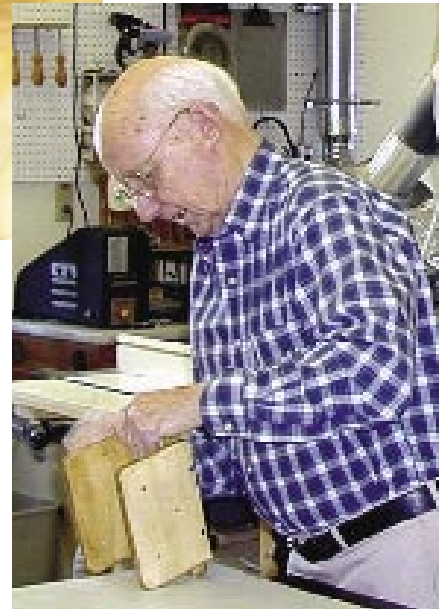
They also wanted to make the base a bit longer so it would be easier to clamp the 10-by-10-by-8-inch machine to the table. The group set to work. They used \$378 in woodshop funds to purchase the plywood, quarter-inch steel rods, quarter-inch dowels, and other supplies needed to create 100 bandage-rolling machines.

Eleven of the Village craftsmen set up an assembly line that started with cutting the bases and sides for the machines, and ended with finishing each machine with polyurethane. They created jigs to help accurately drill holes in the sides, bend the quarter-inch steel rod into a crank, and position the base and two sides during final assembly. The centerpiece is adjustable so the machine can accommodate two-, three- or four-inch widths of fabric.

While the machines are simple to use, they’re labor intensive to produce—and the Covenant Village craftsmen are sticklers for quality.

When production was complete, each machine was packaged in a plastic bag with a three-inch clamp and a sheet of instructions for construction and use. The group had even improved the instruction sheet, adding labeled color pictures for clarity.

The machines were stored at Brookdale Covenant Church in nearby Brook-



Carl Elving was part of the team that made the new bandage-rolling machines

lyn Center. Toni Schwabe, director of Women Ministries for the Northwest Conference, distributed some to interested churches. They were a hot item at the Northwest Conference annual meeting.

The rest went to Triennial XI where they were sold for \$15 each so that people could take them back to their churches and use as prototypes in their conferences.

Women Ministries hopes that Triennial and Covenant Village enthusiasm for bandage rolling will spread throughout the denomination and cross all age groups. It’s a homespun project with a lofty goal: roll a bandage, fill a need, and tie a bond with the church in Congo. □

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