



**For Immediate Release
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For More Information Contact:
City of Kyle
Jerry Hendrix (512) 262-3921

**City Council Member Samantha Bellows-LeMense
Leads Donation Drive for West Survivors**

Kyle, Texas – The citizens of Kyle took time from their busy weekend, and money from their pockets, to help our neighbors in the City of West, Texas, continue their recovery from the tragic explosion of a fertilizer plant last Wednesday. A spontaneously organized donation drive, the brainchild of Kyle Councilmember Samantha LeMense, yielded a roomful of supplies that are sure to help families displaced by the explosion.

The drive, held April 20th & 21st at the Kyle City Hall, saw a steady flow of residents dropping off item that included toiletries, first aid supplies, cleaning supplies, blankets, pantry items, water and Gatorade, and school supplies. LeMense coordinated these items through requests from West Elementary, Middle School, Intermediate, and High School.

“My brother is a teacher at West High School, and I feel very close to the tragedy that happened in West” LeMense-Bellows said. "My experiences through my job as a Safety Coordinator make me understand the magnitude of what has happened to this community. I felt it was my duty to help in whatever way I could."

The City of West is readying to get their children back in school on Monday to give them some sense of normalcy. Thanks to a generous donation from Grapevine Colleyville School District of portable buildings, they were able to do just that. LeMense and Hays Free Press reporter Andy Sevilla drove to West on Sunday night to deliver donated school supplies to the temporary classrooms.

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“The traffic was horrible and it took us four hours, but it was well worth the trip,” said LeMense-Bellows. Councilmember LeMense and her husband Mark, along with friend Graham Mendel, delivered a trailer-load of other donations directly to the town of West on Monday.

“The whole town has become so inundated with aide, that I felt it would be easier to let the Red Cross distribute the remaining items,” said LeMense.

For Council Member LeMense, the whole experience has been tremendously rewarding.

“The generosity of our community is overwhelming and I want to personally thank everyone that donated items or helped with the collection effort,” said LeMense. “The outpouring of donations and our combined efforts with the Kyle VFW were critical in the success of this effort. This would not have been possible without the time and support of people like Kyle resident and Planning and Zoning Commissioner Cicely Kay, my husband Mark, Graham Mendel, Andy Sevilla, and others. This is why I love the City of Kyle,” said LeMense.

If you did not get a chance to donate and would still like to, please visit the Waco Red Cross website at www.redcross.org/tx/waco.

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