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FedEx apologizes, pays \$30,000 to fix shelter

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GARDEN GROVE – FedEx officials responded to a local shelter director's claims that their employees had trashed and made her home uninhabitable by overnighting a \$30,000 check to help the shelter make the necessary repairs.

Je'Net Kreitner, executive director of Grandma's House of Hope in Garden Grove, said Thursday that FedEx Ground employees offered to come into the shelter for disabled and distressed women to install new flooring and coat the walls with new paint. But instead, on Sunday, Kreitner was horrified to find the women's belongings discarded, blotches of paint on the carpet and the house in a complete mess.

The remains of a computer desk and counter lay in the driveway of Grandma's House of Hope in Garden Grove. The house is a shelter for disabled women. Je'Net Kreitner, executive director, says volunteers from FedEx Ground in Anaheim came in to do work but ended up doing damage.

Donations may be sent to Grandma's House of Hope, 174 W. Lincoln Ave. Suite 541, Anaheim, CA 92805. Information: Je'Net Kreitner at 714-457-3187 or e-mail jenet@grandmashope.org.

Trash bags were piled up everywhere, vegetation was destroyed, kitchen dishes and valuable food was thrown in the trash and even the women's only computer desk was broken to pieces.

"This is not what I signed up for," she said. "They were supposed to fix up the place, not trash it."

On Friday morning, Maury Lane, director of Corporate Communications for FedEx, profusely apologized on behalf of the corporation.

"At FedEx, our effort is to make each and every one of our customers satisfied and happy with what we do," he said. "Our effort at Grandma's House of Hope fell way short. We are sorry and apologize for what happened."

Lane said he hopes the \$30,000 donation will help right the wrong and help the shelter make the necessary repairs and complete any other pending projects at the home.

"We hope things will be back to normal soon for them," he said.

Lane declined to say if the company will take disciplinary action against the employees who were involved.

"But this is not our culture," he said. "And we are going to be culture-consistent."

Kreitner said she is grateful for FedEx's attention to the shelter's situation. She said work had already begun Friday morning.

"We have professionals, some who have volunteered to help us out, and others whom I have hired to get some things done," she said.

Kreitner said the team of more than 50 volunteers from FedEx Ground in Anaheim was supposed to remove the carpeting and replace it with laminate flooring. They also agreed to paint the six-

bedroom house, Krieter said.

But when the volunteers were "done" Sunday, Kreitner says, the house was in far worse shape than she had ever seen it and "completely unlivable."

Kreitner said it was FedEx Ground that approached her seeking volunteer opportunities. She was told that the company had a budget of \$4,000 for the weekend project and could spare 50 volunteers to do the job.

The team began work Saturday. Kreitner had moved the women from the home to another one of the organization's facilities in Anaheim. One of the women is going to have breast cancer surgery Friday and won't have a home where she can recuperate, Kreitner said. Other shelter residents are recovering from addiction, are victims of domestic violence or are physically or mentally challenged. At any time, there are about 10 women in the home, she said.

On Thursday, the house was in a state of disrepair.

White paint was splashed on to new laminate floors. There were also drippings of paint on carpeted areas, on furniture and fixtures. Paint pans with paint and rollers were left in different parts of the house. Trash bags filled with sundry items were plopped atop the rose bushes in the front yard. Branches were chopped off from an orange tree in the backyard. An entire bed of ice plant was ripped off from the ground.

"They never asked us for permission to cut down those branches," Kreitner said. "Growing plants and trees is one of the ways our women heal. This is going to be devastating for them emotionally."

All of the women's belongings were under piles of lumber and paint cans in the garage.

Kreitner said when she came back Saturday afternoon to assess the progress, she saw the computer desk the women use out in the front yard, broken to pieces.

"I was simply told that the desk snapped when they were moving it, no apology, nothing," she said.

On Saturday, the team finished early in the evening and left all the items they had moved out into the yard just as they were. And it rained that night.

"Our washer and dryer were also left out in the rain and I don't even know if they work any more," Kreitner said.

What was most upsetting, she said, was volunteers' callous attitude toward the home and their possessions. They threw out all the food from the kitchen including unwrapped vegetables, salads and cheeses that the women had bought with their own money.

"It's as if they had absolutely no respect for anyone or anything in this house," Kreitner said. "This was somebody's home. Now, it's been ruined and trashed."

She said group members left Sunday and that two team members returned Monday to work, but left in the afternoon saying that they would return the following weekend. Kreitner said, Ortega had initially told her that they would have the project completed in two or three days.

On Friday, Kreitner said she is optimistic the work will be completed soon and the women will return to their home.

"To them, this is their only secure home," she said. "I want the house restored to its peaceful and healing state and move the women back into their cozy beds."

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