

Cooper met Morris at her Charlotte office last week to deliver the goods: 40 balls, 80 pairs of shoes and other equipment. Morris planned to have them shipped in a few days.

Cooper, 29, grew up in a Gainesville, Fla., family that emphasized, among other things, soccer and mission work. She and her brother Caleb played collegiate soccer, with Candace competing for Queens University of Charlotte from 1999 to 2002.

Like other missionaries before them, when the Coopers traveled abroad, they began to appreciate soccer's global appeal, often seeing children kicking around rolls of socks, cans or other trash in lieu of soccer balls.

They planned to one day take a trip and carry soccer equipment to their destination, but the scope of the idea soon broadened. By spreading the idea for their charity by word of mouth and through their Web site, [peacepassers.org](http://peacepassers.org), the group quickly caught on in the soccer community.

"I've really recognized how soccer brings people such joy," said Cooper. "Kicking a ball around gives them a sense of hope."

Peace Passers collects balls, shoes, team sets of shorts, shirts or socks, goalie shirts and gloves – and duffle bags to carry it all. Equipment must be usable – in other words, don't send a ball that won't hold air.

Without an established office or warehouse, Cooper handles administrative work from her home, and the goods are usually stored in her boyfriend's spare bedroom or at a warehouse in St. Augustine, Fla., where Caleb lives.

A limited budget prevents Peace Passers from always paying the shipping costs for donated goods. But Cooper has found that contributors don't mind handling the bill.

Charlotte has rallied around the agency, as well. Cooper plays in several women's soccer leagues, and word has spread among teammates and opponents. One of those one-time opponents, Nina Chenault, already has collected a bag of soccer balls from Cooper to take on her church's mission trip to Kenya next month.

Cooper says youth have gotten on board. Some have held donation drives, and a set of twins suggested guests bring soccer equipment to donate at their birthday party.

Groups such as the North Mecklenburg Soccer Club, Charlotte Junior Soccer League, and the women's teams at Queens and UNC Charlotte have donated equipment.

Realizing the power of partnership, Peace Passers joined with other agencies to strengthen its appeal. It connected with Comunidad Connect and The Hester J. Hodgdon Libraries for All Program – both national organizations that support relief efforts in Nicaragua.

In addition to Morris' support of Streetman in Iraq, her daughter, Emily Morris, plans to take some Peace Passers soccer equipment on a church mission trip to Honduras next summer.



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8/24/2009