



WORLD TOILET DAY

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Did I get your attention? I'm sorry to disappoint you but this is not an article that chronicles the development of the toilet. There will be no potty humor. I do apologize.

The United Nations declared November 19th, 2013, as the first annual World Toilet Day. It is meant to raise world awareness of the need for proper sanitation. 2.5 billion people, 1 in 3 do not have access to proper sanitary systems. Doing what we do in private and in comfortable surroundings is not an option for so many of these people. There are no outhouses, no public facilities. So often people "go" in an alley, behind the bushes or in a "designated" spot outside of town. Is it any wonder diseases such as cholera and typhoid run rampant? Diarrheal diseases are the second most common killer of children in third world and developing countries. They kill more children each year than AIDS/HIV, malaria and measles combined.

When a natural disaster such as the typhoon that hit the Philippines or the earthquake that struck Haiti occur, the world reacts with an outpouring of humanitarian aid. We send all sorts of water, food and medicine. After a few days we realize the one thing we forgot. Port a Potties. Maybe these areas haven't had proper sanitation prior to the disaster, but now we have multitudes of displaced people congregating in one area. Give them food. Give them water. What are they going to have to do?

I am, of course, talking about third world and developing nations. But you know, this phenomenon happens in this, a developed country, as well. I have seen it firsthand. In Louisiana, after hurricane Rita. In New York, after Irene and Sandy. I have participated in the restoration of water service while the collection systems remained untouched. I have voiced my opinion and been told "we have to get water to these people". I understand the morale boost to a community once water service is restored. It means life will start to return to normal. Does normal include sewage flowing down the road because it has no place else to go? Limited resources, yes, I've heard it all before. We, as a developed nation should be leading the way, yet within our organization we have 7 funded water programs and only 2 funded wastewater programs. "Quality on Tap" only happens when we PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT.

We have a similar problem here in the "Developed Nation". While we may not have sewage running down the streets, our

children are at the same risk for disease. That problem is called non-point source pollution (NPSP). There are many private septic systems in this country. They are not regulated and so there is no real data available to substantiate water quality data. Recent reports on various watersheds "estimate" the number of failing septic systems to be about 30%. That's an estimate because they just don't know.

Do me a favor.

The next time you are sitting in the library reading "Aquafacts" please pause and think of those less fortunate. 💧💧