

Real-women diet makeovers • Surprising new skin saver • Best workout shoes



SHAPE'S 2008

women who *shape* the world

Through their efforts to empower women, battle childhood obesity, and more, these 11 trailblazers have impacted the lives of millions, both in their own communities and around the globe. Read how they're continuing to make a difference—and how you can too. **by Amanda Pressner**



Rivard's group delivered aid to the Guirola Orphanage in El Salvador

Uniting the travel industry for a worldwide mission

Nancy Rivard

●●● **WHEN A CYCLONE STRUCK** Myanmar this spring, nearly 100,000 people perished and millions more were left in desperate need of food, water, and shelter. Initially the military-run government blocked nearly all relief efforts, but a team from Airline Ambassadors—an international aid organization started by Rivard—was among the first allowed into the country. “One of our Burmese-born members arranged the visas necessary to get a jet in within a week of the disaster,” she says. “We delivered 1,000 ‘shelter boxes’—each containing a tent, beds, and a portable stove—to some of the hardest-hit areas.”

Coordinating such an extensive relief effort was no easy task, but Rivard has had lots of practice. **Through her organization, she’s facilitated the delivery of \$50 million in aid to orphanages, clinics, schools, and refugee camps in 51 countries.**

It was during her stopovers in various developing nations, including India, Sri Lanka, and Peru, that the flight attendant for American Airlines saw thousands of children whose basic needs, like food and adequate shelter, weren’t being met. So she asked the airline to donate spare cargo space and unused seats to carry supplies to underprivileged families. While the company considered the request, she organized her own relief

mission. “Two flight attendants and I used our baggage allotment to carry travel-size personal items to Bosnian refugees. We only gave them small shampoos and soaps we’d collected, but the women were overjoyed,” she recalls. “Once the word spread, hundreds of airline employees wanted to get involved.”

After the executives at American Airlines heard about Rivard’s trip, they finally agreed to loan her a plane for 12 hours to bring supplies to orphans in Haiti. Eventually 11 other airlines followed suit. By 2008 the membership of Airline Ambassadors had expanded to 6,000 people, including airline workers and passengers.

Because of the recent jump in fuel prices, it’s been more difficult to get cargo space and airline donations, so Rivard teamed up with a group of Green Berets she’d worked with in the aftermath of Katrina. “It’s enabled us to get supplies into areas we could never have reached before, like southern Columbia,” she says. In the past year, Airline Ambassadors has also delivered puppets and soccer balls to kids in Iraq and sewing machines to women in Guatemala.

What she wants you to know Travel outside your everyday world. “Whether you’re getting on a plane to South America or driving across the state, expose yourself to new people, situations, or cultures,” says Rivard. “That’s when you really start to learn about humanity.” **Her stay-healthy tip** Buy a pair of sneakers so you can exercise anywhere. “Staying active keeps your immune system strong so you’re ready for any adventure.”