

LEAVITTS GIVE DONATIONS TO HOMELESS COMMUNITY

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When the governor's mansion caught fire last week, most of the first family's personal belongings were destroyed. The family is rebuilding ``with more resources than most people" who have such a disaster.

But they've been deeply affected by the number of donations - from clothing to money - sent in by Utahns to help them. Wednesday, Leavitt and his wife, Jacalyn, presented the Travelers Aid Society-operated Salt Lake Community Shelter and Resource Center with checks totaling several hundred dollars, donated by Utah residents to help the Leavitts replace items destroyed by fire, smoke and water. They used the occasion to thank citizens of the state and ask them to give to ``other people with needs far greater than ours."

They made their request at the homeless shelter because that venue portrays how little so many families have after a crisis.

The Leavitts were joined by officials from the Allied store, which also caught fire last week, to present a Christmas tree to the homeless shelter.

The tree, they noted, had been treated with flame retardant.

``A lot of good things come out of these disasters," Leavitt said. For one thing, ``I'm becoming intimately acquainted with the housing shortage."

The Leavitt family stayed in a hotel for four days following the fire and have now moved to a downtown condominium. They are learning how tight the housing market is because they are trying to help a family living in a home they own find another place, so the Leavitts can move in there.

When the mansion burned Dec. 15, shelter director Maun Alston put the Leavitt family on the shelter waiting list. Although she knew they would not need to be on that list, she thought it would be interesting to see how long it took them to get off the list and into the shelter. When they visited the shelter, exactly one week after the fire, they found they were No. 8 on the list. An employee estimates it would take another week for them to move up.