

Severna Park Voice Article and Interview- January 14, 2011

Local Charity Reflects On Joy Of Giving



Friday, 14 January 2011 17:48



For the volunteers of Giving Back, it's an annual Christmas Eve tradition to make their rounds, attend the 11:00pm service at Woods Church and then visit 7-11 for some late night Slurpees.

By Hayley Gable

Over the years, *The Voice* has covered Giving Back's Backpack Collection Drive Program, which provides backpacks, coats and boots to homeless people in Baltimore city and Washington, D.C.

Executive Director Steve Anstett recently updated us on how the group fared in 2010. "This was our best year in terms of collections," he stated.

The organization filled 22 U-Haul trucks to the back of each truck. Volunteers delivered or assisted six shelters in Anne Arundel County (including Arundel House of Hope, Arden House, Lighthouse Shelter, WE CARE, and Hope for All), three in Washington D.C. (including CCNV, the shelter started by Mitch Snyder that takes up an entire city block), and 15 in Baltimore City

(including Helping Up, Baltimore Rescue Mission, Carrington House and others). The trucks were filled with the donations collected at schools and at the Farmers Market in Annapolis leading up to Christmas Eve. Most of the donations were gently used winter clothes, but there were also 1600 backpacks sponsored by a host of schools, churches, and businesses. There were significant contributions from Severn High School, Severna Park United Methodist Church, and the Severna Park High girls and boys basketball teams.



Giving Back volunteers taking a pizza break amidst a truck full of backpacks.

For the first time ever, Giving Back had two teams provide and serve lunch to several hundred homeless people in a Code Blue Shelter in Baltimore City.

“What a joy it was to deliver half a truck of food to a group home whose food closets were so bare they didn’t know where Christmas Dinner was coming from,” recalled Anstett.

On Christmas Eve night, more volunteers handed out over 1,000 backpacks filled with new winter clothes, and over 700 new winter coats! In addition to the clothes, Kent Island United Methodist Church brought hot chili and coffee and Chevy’s donated 300 burritos to serve to hundreds on the streets.



Smiling faces like these are what makes Giving Back so rewarding!

“Between the shelters and the streets, I estimate that we provided something for over 3000 men women and children in the area,” confirmed Anstett.

Again, the engine that drove Giving Back was the youth of Anne Arundel County. Over 600 people volunteered during the five day event, and well over 80% were high school and college students. This year the girls basketball team from Severna Park High School came on Christmas Eve as a team project, and Anstett made deliveries with them.

“One of our stops was at a Group Home in East Baltimore that caters to men and women recovering from substance abuse. We unloaded a ½-truck of food to a network of 9 homes whose cupboards were literally bare for the holidays,” recalled Anstett, continuing, “Through tears, two of the women from the home addressed our volunteers. They talked about the food we were bringing and were very open about the decisions they made that led them to need support. It was an open, heartfelt, realism that not all students get to hear. As we drove away, the girls, who were somewhat stunned by the experience, talked about the value of the message, which they all agreed should be heard by all students.” Equally important to Anstett is educating the community at large on the plight of homelessness and to show the value of volunteering to the young people of the county. To show them that volunteering with organizations like Giving Back can be fun, rewarding, and powerful.

Find out more about the program at www.homelessdrive.com. Congratulations to Giving Back on another successful year!