



Special Notices

2009 Sleeping Bag Campaign Final Press Release

"MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIFE OF A CHILD"

Statewide Sleeping Bag Campaign for Homeless

Children across the First State of Delaware



A statewide sleeping bag campaign for homeless children was launched at Legislative Hall in Dover, Delaware on September 15, 2009. The committee's goal was to collect 2600 new sleeping bags for children ages 3-21, which would be one sleeping bag for every homeless child in the state of Delaware. Over 900 of the children are in special education programs in the public education system. The campaign ended the latter part of December; however, we are continuing to receive sleeping bags even as of this writing. Even though we did not reach the entire goal, the Committee is pleased with

the turnout. To date, over 1,100 sleeping bags have been donated and distributed.

The committee is really pleased with how the entire community, which included many student groups, area businesses such as the BlackRock Global Client Group in Wilmington, and local church groups, collaborated with us to bring the gift of warmth to many homeless children this year. All of the cash donations received, approximately \$3,000.00 were put towards the purchase of new sleeping bags. Mr. Chow, manager of the Camden Walmart, helped us make this event successful by giving a 10% discount on sleeping bags purchased at this store. Monetary donations were received from Kevin Ripley and Kraft Foods, George Bailey and Sam's Club, along with over 200 sleeping bags from Pat Daley Lewis and the Attorney General's office. Some organizations, like the members of the Radiology Department at Beebe Medical Center in Lewes, donated the funds they would normally have spent on holiday parties or gift exchanges to purchase bags. Others, like Annie Goffredo of Cromwell's Tavern/Restaurant and the ladies of "It's All Good in Delaware", held raffles and used the proceeds to purchase bags from Al's Sporting Goods at a discounted price or other local stores.

A sleeping bag not only provides warmth for the child but security as well. These children are sleeping outside, in vehicles, or in an overcrowded house. Most of the time, they do not even have a bed to sleep in so they sleep either on a couch or on the floor. The donated sleeping bags provide the child with warmth as well as a gift that is all their own, to take with them wherever they go and lay their head to rest. Most of these children do not have many material items so when they received the sleeping bags they were overjoyed by the fact that they were able to keep it all to themselves.

Jessica Hazzard, Case Manager said, "The Shepherd Place would like to thank everyone for the support of the Sleeping Bag for Homeless Children campaign. Some of the sleeping bags donated over the past few months went to children residing at our homeless shelter. During the holiday season, the children were overjoyed when they received their sleeping bags. They were so excited that they could sleep in a bed with their very own sleeping bag and wait for Santa to come the next day. You could just feel the excitement in the air as the children accepted their sleeping bag. As the

holiday came and went so have the children, but I am relieved to know that no matter where they go, once they leave the shelter they will have the comfort of their sleeping bag to keep them safe and warm. To see the joy on the child's face is priceless."

Foster Care Coordinator Vera Greenplate said, "I gave a sleeping bag to a teen foster girl and she loved it! She is 17 and was more concerned about having a "PINK" one than the size of the sleeping bag. She said she would make herself fit into and opted not to get the larger "BLUE" colored adult one. She was so excited it was hers and brand new! She too slept with it on her bed at night! Overall our kids have loved receiving these sleeping bags from the oldest teens to the young toddlers!"

Pamela Denney-Griffiths, Smyrna School District Homeless Liaison said, "The sleeping bags were a wonderful and important addition to our TYN Packs (TYN Packs are filled with necessary school items and personal care items for transient homeless students). The Dental Hygiene kits were a great surprise and completed the care packages. The children and families who received the complete packages were excited and grateful. A group of children from one family were so excited about the sleeping bags. They move around often due to economic challenges and so the sleeping bags were a necessary item.

The children seemed to be relieved to have something of their own. Their smiles said it all."

The economy has been hard on everyone, which is why the following agencies worked on this project together. Not only did the children receive a sleeping bag but they also received an oral health kit which included a toothbrush, toothpaste and dental floss, which was donated by the Delaware Oral Health Coalition. The agencies that assisted with the Statewide Sleeping Bag Campaign for Homeless Children were as follows: the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens, the Developmental

Disabilities Council, the Council for Exceptional Children, The Shepherd Place homeless shelter, Kent County Tourism, the Department of Education, Caesar Rodney School District, New Castle County Vo-Tech School District, Lake Forest School District, Food Bank of Delaware -Georgetown and Newark locations, Lower Delaware Autism Foundation, WSFS Banks, Legislative Kids Caucus and the Delaware Oral Health Coalition. These and other agencies brought sleeping bags and oral hygiene products to homeless children throughout Delaware. Special thanks to Robin Coventry of Kent County Tourism for her assistance in reaching out to various media outlets. The McKinney-Vento Homeless liaisons in many schools districts reached out to obtain sleeping bags for the homeless children in their districts as well as the Homeless shelters and Foster Care Coordinators in each county throughout the state.

The committee is grateful to the following organizations that gave of their time and space to be drop off centers: Tender Loving Care Childcare & Learning Centers located in Smyrna and Newark, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, Food Bank of Delaware-Georgetown and Newark sites, Eden Support Services Center/Christina School District, Developmental Disabilities Council and the Margaret O'Neill Building, WSFS Bank branches in Kent and Sussex counties, YWCA Delaware and the Drew Education Support Building/Christina School District. The staff at the Developmental Disabilities Council, WSFS branches and Lavina Smith, homeless liaison for the Christina School District did an outstanding job of receiving, counting and organizing the sleeping bags for distribution.

We know we cannot capture every committee or all community volunteers but we would like to at least mention a few. The students and their directors from the Polytech High School VICA, Salesianum High School, Nativity Preparatory School and Caesar Rodney High School worked hard throughout the Campaign, collecting donations to purchase bags and assisting with moving the bags from place to place, beginning with the Kickoff in September. Marylou Shoga volunteered her time to coordinate our efforts with Mr. Chow of the Walmart Camden as well as outreach to many of the

school districts. We thank Jose and Elizabeth Mendez of Any Garment Cleaners for dry cleaning the used sleeping bags we received. Also, thanks to Joe Hancharick for driving from New Castle County to Kent County to make a delivery so the children in foster care would receive them at their holiday party. We appreciate the efforts of State Representatives Donald Blakey, Quinton Johnson, and William "Bobby" Outten for their assistance with the Campaign.

Wendy Strauss said, "We would like to thank everyone for all of their support and contributions to the sleeping bag campaign. The media was very helpful in helping us get the word out. Television and radio interviews, along with articles in the newspapers really helped to ensure that people all over the State were made aware of the problem of homelessness in Delaware and how they could help with the Sleeping Bag Campaign. Through this campaign we not only feel like we gave some children warmth and security but we brought a lot of awareness to our schools and communities, that we too have homelessness in our state. Again, we cannot thank the students, organizations, churches and community enough for making a world of difference for our children in Delaware."

The committee will be working with the Department of Education and is hopeful that some of the student organizations who helped this year will be able to take this project on for years to come.