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Greater Attleboro Area Council for Children, Inc.

DAY CARE SCHOLARSHIPS ★ CHRISTMAS IF FOR KIDS ★ NICKY O
HAPPY BIRTHDAY BACKPACKS ★ BEARS ON BOARD ★ IF ONLY

How can you help the Council? Volunteer or Become a Member

We are an all-volunteer organization that depends on the community and Board members to coordinate our programs and projects. Our Board meetings are held on the third Monday of every month at 6:30 PM at the Council office. For more information on volunteer opportunities please contact Kelly Fox at (508) 226-2336.

Be A Member of the Council

Your \$25.00 contribution will help support all the programs that are offered by the Council.

Name: _____
Address _____
City: _____
State _____
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We are a 501c3 charitable organization. Your contribution may be tax deductible. Please consult with your tax advisor.

winter '09

We are very fortunate to live in a community as generous as the Attleboro area is with its time, talent and treasures. Christmas is for Kids is only one example of this generosity. I thought that it would be good for the community to know a little about some of the behind-the-scenes adventures of the Christmas is for Kids elves.

Who did we help? Many of the children's stories made us cry and a few made us smile. The children ranged in ages from days-old to a 19-year old student who was taking care of her sister after the death of their parents. Many of the children are victims of domestic violence, some deal with parents who are incarcerated, addicts, alcoholics, disabled, depressed or clinically mentally ill. Nearly half of the children we helped were referred to us through one of the local social service agencies: the Department of Children and Families, Big Brother/Big Sister, the Family Resource Center, the Attleboro Center, the Young Parent Program, New Hope, Journey Home and other local organizations. Nearly 150 families from four towns applied to us directly and were accepted into the program. These families are often single-parent homes who are receiving little or no help from the second parent. None of them want to have to ask for our help but most promise to come back to help someday and virtually every year, some do.

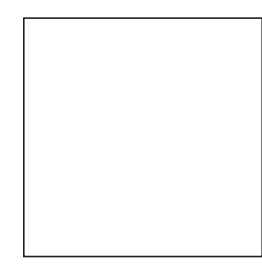


What amazes us most is reading stories that go something like this: "...is a sweet child who helps to take care of her/his younger siblings while (the parent) is working. She/He enjoys reading/sports and works a part-time job to help with the household expenses. She/He is a good student and has managed to keep up her/his grades and is looking forward to applying to college..." The resilience of these children is what motivates and inspires us to keep going because we are convinced that most people would prefer to pull the covers over their heads than deal with what these children face every day.

The Greater Attleboro Area Council for Children is a volunteer organization dedicated to providing year-round programs and educational support to enrich the lives of children in need.

Continued on page 2

www.councilforchildren.org



continued from page 1...

Who helped? Chances are, you helped. Countless organizations and companies (as far away as Chelmsford) had toy drives, hat and mitten drives, bought gifts for a child, made a cash donation or sent volunteers to help on some level. Over 120 volunteers (from as far away as Westboro) walked through the drop-off center doors between Thanksgiving and December 18th. The elves were from diverse backgrounds and ages - from teens to 70's.

Gifts. One of the hallmarks of the program is how hard we try to delight and surprise a child. Each child gives us their Number One wish for a toy and clothing and we try very hard to fill that wish. Occasionally, it's an unusual wish and we have a cadre of donors who ask to be called upon when we get something out of the ordinary. This year, one little girl asked for a live Christmas tree and while she was at school, it arrived, ready to be trimmed. Three sisters wanted to learn to sew and a donor provided a new sewing machine and boxes of fabric. The donor told us that she had been given the fabric and had been wondering what she was going to do with it before being matched with the girls wanting to sew. Sometimes the cosmos conspires in ways we'd ever anticipate.

The last thing my husband, Alan, and I ask each elf as they finish their last shift with us, is to think about the children they helped on Christmas morning before they open their own gifts with their family. Almost without exception, we can tell that a child's story has jumped immediately to their mind. They then pause to say good-bye to us with a lump in their throat and a promise to see us again next year.

Best Wishes...Kelly

2008 CIFK Recipient

We spoke with a CIFK recipient this year to let you know that the gifts that are left under the tree on Christmas day are appreciated by the parents as well as the children. This mother of five and her husband struggled to make ends meet. However, they still felt they were better off than others, not needing assistance. Things just snowballed. They struggled for years to make ends meet, then an ongoing medical condition complicated matters resulting in an increase in unplanned bills. It was then they reluctantly asked for help from CIFK. This is their fourth year receiving assistance. It was easy to get behind once the medical bills started coming in but as we know it's always harder to catch up. These types of situations could happen to any one of us. They eagerly participate in the required parent classes. Some of what they have learned at these classes is how to budget better, plant a garden and get organized. They have met others who share many of the same issues that they do. Most important is that she is "able to teach my children about finances and budgeting, hoping they won't make the same mistakes we made".

"I look forward to the day when I can once again buy gifts for my children, and be in the position to return the kindness we have received. Thank you!"

Champion for Children Awards

On February 24th we presented the 2009 Champion for Children Awards at Leona's Restaurant. It is an evening dedicated to those individuals and companies who have been involved with the Council and have gone above and beyond the call of duty.

We were pleased to recognize this year's Champions: Sara Achin of Achin's Garage organized a very successful toy drive. Border's in North Attleboro and Mansfield organized a book drive this year which resulted in the collection of over 2000 books! Montana Heard and Alex Almeida were instrumental in coordinating the book drives. Our other Champions include: The Children's Place at the Emerald Square Mall, Brian Germain, who donated this year's space for CIFK, Sheila McKenna who organized a book drive through her Bridgewater State College alumni chapter, Dream Dinners in Plainville and Nancy Young for her ongoing support of the Council.

Thank You

Thank You from the bottom of our hearts to everyone who helped make the 25th year of Christmas is for Kids a success.

*No Act of Kindness, no matter how small,
is ever wasted.*
-Aesop

Council Programs

More about the Council

LOOKING BACK ON 2008

We were very busy in 2008. Here is a recap of some of the activities the Council was involved in...

Guitar Hero was held in Attleboro and was a great success. The kids came, they danced, they played guitar, they ate and most of all they had fun. Our thanks to Joanne Mullaney for chairing that event.

We participated in **Kids Day** and raised some money through Musical Squares.

Sandy Newfield chaired our **Make a Difference Day** and collected **Jeans for Teens**. This is Sandy's third year overseeing this project. We collected almost 100 pairs of jeans. Our special thanks to all those who helped, including the companies and organizations who served as drop-off sites for the jeans, volunteers who gave up a Saturday to help gather, sort and distribute the jeans during CIFK. Make a Difference Day is a national day of caring. This year's date for Make a Difference is October 25, 2009.

Our Happy Birthday Backpack program really flourished this year as Sue Gilmore and Deb Scanlon stepped up and co-chaired this program. Special thanks to the Foxboro Regional Charter School for organizing a backpack collection. On an average we give away 30 backpacks a month to children ages 3 - 13.

Chrissy Giroir was our very first high school intern and did a great job in organizing the office, helping with mailings, and attending events. This year, Ashley Gilmore will be the council's intern.

Dr. Robert Brooks helped kick off our **25th Anniversary** this past October. He addressed over 300 people and discussed **Raising Resilient Children**. He talked about the trials and tribulations of parenthood, offered some sound advice, and made us laugh.

2008 Champions for Children Awards honored the North Attleboro branch of Rockland Trust, Sensata, For Pete's Sake Preschool, Janette Sears, Janice Pier and Deborah Bottomley

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2009

Our Wish List for 2009.

More donations to support our **day care scholarship program**. Day care scholarships are awarded to those families who need a little reprieve to help them get by.

Special thanks to the Andrade Faxon Charities for their recent donation of \$2,000. This donation has been earmarked to support the day care scholarship program.

Nicky O Scholarships.



Nicky O'Neill was the youngest victim of the Station Night Club fire in Rhode Island. His love of music and the arts prompted the council to establish a scholarship in his name.

Scholarships are awarded to local children interested in music or the arts. The money can be used to purchase instruments, take music lessons and/or art classes. Nicky O funds sent a Norton teen to Rock Camp this past summer.

Our loftiest wish would be permanent space for the Council for Children. We are always on the lookout for a permanent home. Our permanent home would house an



office and space for CIFK. This space would ensure continuity, stability and a place for the council to call home. For more details on what we would need, please contact Kelly Fox.

Looking Ahead... Car Seat Safety Program

Greater Attleboro Women of Today will conduct a **Car Seat Safety Program** along with the Professional Firefighters of Attleboro. Join us on Sat., May 23rd from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm at the South Attleboro Fire Dept. This event will be held rain or shine!

On October 21st, we'll continue our community **lecture series**. Michael Thompson, PhD. will be discussing "The Pressured Child."

Keep an eye out for details in our next newsletter.