

Freetown-Lakeville clothing drive produces 2 truckloads for needy children

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LAKEVILLE — For Freetown mom Jill Waldron, teaching her three children the importance of helping those less fortunate is a high priority and has led to a number of charitable efforts over the years.

Perhaps the most successful took place recently when Waldron collaborated with the Peer Leader Group at Freetown-Lakeville Middle School to hold a clothing drive for Gifts to Give.

The effort resulted in two truckloads of donations going to the organization that collects clothes, books, toys and other items for children and teens.

"There are hundreds of kids who are considered homeless in this area. Can you imagine not having a place to call home? So many of us are fortunate and have so much that it is good to give to those who don't," Waldron said, adding that she wants her children — Evan, Abigail and Mitchell — to understand that poverty does exist around them.

According to teacher Elizabeth Sullivan, the Peer Leader Group regularly does collections, but Gifts to Give was a little different.

"With the Gifts to Give drive, families didn't have to spend any money. All they had to do was look through clothing to see what didn't fit their kids anymore. We all know how fast middle schoolers can grow, and those jeans and ski jackets may be in great shape but don't fit. ... Kids came in with bagloads of great stuff," Sullivan said.

Holly Whitman, a volunteer for Gifts to Give, said drives such as the one at Freetown-Lakeville Middle School are keeping needy children clothed and warm throughout the winter.

"Jill is doing so much for us. We can't thank her enough," Whitman said.

The Peer Leader Group, which has 90 members, promotes community service and healthy living.

Sullivan pointed out that although the Gifts to Give drive was organized by the Peer Leader Group, the entire school was involved.

"We have a wonderful group of kids. They enjoy giving but not in a showy way. They were really pleased to put something in the bin," Sullivan said.

The Peer Leader Group is planning another drive for Gifts to Give in the spring.

And Waldron is excited about starting a collection in the new year for Project Cinderella.

Started in the New Bedford public school system, Project Cinderella collects gently used prom dresses

and formal shoes for girls who are unable to afford such attire.

The Gifts to Give building at 21 Cove St. in New Bedford holds donations from the general drives and will provide storage for Project Cinderella.

Gifts to Give is an entirely volunteer-run organization that provides clothing, books and other necessities to needy children and teens in the community.

Both volunteers and donations are welcome at the 21 Cove St. location.

Waldron also offered to pick up items and can be reached at (508) 763-8820.

For more information on Gifts to Give, go to www.giftstogive.org.

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