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St. Joseph's Elementary School 8th Graders Donate Winter Clothing to Unity House Consumers



St. Joe's 8th Grade Volunteers

AUBURN – Because of the generosity of 17 eighth graders at St. Joseph's Elementary School in Auburn, consumers of Unity House's services and programs will stay warm during the region's cold winter months.

The students, under the direction of William Locastro, their home room teacher, and with the help of school principal Kathleen Coye and administrative secretary Diane Pike, undertook the collection of hats, gloves, and scarves for the agency's consumers as part of their annual Christmas volunteer project.

"Each year at that time, all the classes in our school connect with a local or regional charitable organization as part of their annual volunteer project," said Coye. "The eighth grade class collaborated with Unity House largely as a result of one of its members, Eric O'Conner, recommending that the class somehow help consumers at Unity House, where his mother, Pam, works as program manager of G.R.A.C.E. House, the agency's chemical dependency community residence program. We all determined that providing this winter clothing would immediately benefit consumers in need of it."

The class went to work procuring the scarves, hats, and gloves from family, friends, and others. They gave the items to O'Conner for distribution to the agency's consumers at the beginning of February 2009.

"There was nothing magic about the kids bringing in the materials we decided to collect," said Locastro. "It really was a collective effort on their part. Of course, we're heartened by how eagerly they took on the project and by the wonderful support of the donors they asked for the items. Some were bought outright and others were new and not being used and given to this very worthy cause."

O'Conner echoed Locastro's sentiments and praised Coye and the school for their work on behalf of Unity House's consumers.

"We're grateful for schools, students, principals, and teachers like St. Joe's and Ms. Coye and Mr. Locastro," she said upon receiving the gifted items. "It speaks loudly about their understanding of community needs and their willingness to make a difference."

The items were to be distributed to Unity House consumers accessing the agency's mental health residential, MRDD residential and day hab, G.R.A.C.E. House, and employment services and programs.