

Kiwanis Family at Work in Merrick

The Kiwanis Club of **MERRICK**, Long Island South Central Division – helped the holidays become a ho-ho-whole lot happier for more than 20 local families, residents of Regina House, and parishioners served by the Sacred Heart and Cure of Ars churches' food pantries when members of the Kiwanis Club of Merrick delivered bags filled with food, turkeys and toys the Sunday before Christmas.

Kiwanis President Ilene Dixel praised the community for supporting the food drive the previous two weekends; despite some inclement weather, the Kiwanis carts outside the Stop 'n' Shop, Kings and Associated supermarkets were filled to the brim. The toys were collected at the Merrick and North Merrick elementary schools.

After 20+ Kiwanians, members of the Calhoun High School Key Club, and Merrick Avenue Middle School Builders' Club sorted the thousands of pounds of food, they worked their way through the "warehouse" assembly line, filling the bags and preparing them for delivery. Then, like elves, they gathered up the food and toys, added lots of good cheer, and delivered them – and the hope for a happy holiday – to their neighbors.

The article that follows, written by 13-year-old Amanda McLoughlin, a member of the MAMS Builders Club and daughter of Kiwanian Tammy McLoughlin is the best explanation of the Kiwanis "family" at work.

A Little Help Goes A Long Way

As my mother, Tammy, my brother Connor, and I surveyed the mounds of food donated by Merrick citizens in the Food for Those in Need Drive, I was hugged by Doug Mills, last year's Kiwanis President who is so close to my family, he is practically my uncle. Pres. Ilene Dixel was there as well, directing the flow of volunteers – for there were a lot of us; two dozen Kiwanians, about ten Key Clubbers, three children of Kiwanians, and my brother and I, who belong to Builders' Club. Yet there was quite a lot of work to be done.

The event got underway as a few Key Clubbers and I numbered bags. Once all the paper bags had been double-bagged with plastic ones and opened up, we formed a human assembly line to stuff them with food. Working quickly to get the job done and also to try to keep warm on this cold Sunday morning, we completely filled all 240 bags. All of the leftover food and turkeys were to be delivered to the Regina House, a local home for unwed mothers, and food pantries at Sacred Heart Church and Cure of Ars.

Once the bags were lined up in rows according to their number, Kiwanis drivers were given the addresses of the families that would be receiving the holiday packages. It was the first time my mother had ever done a delivery. We loaded up six bags of food, one turkey, and two garbage bags full of toys. As we drove to the family's house, I was full of apprehension. Though each family had

been called in advance, what if they were offended? What if they were too proud to accept the food and toys, and we had to go back? What if the children started asking questions that the parents did not want to answer about why we were giving them food?

I could not mull over these "what if" thoughts for very long, for we soon reached the family's house. My brother and I hung back by the car as my mom walked up to the door, one bag of toys in hand. She knocked, and when the door was answered, my mother simply said, "I have a delivery from Merrick Kiwanis." The woman at the door looked sort of shocked, and as we carried bags from our car to her front stoop, she just kept repeating "Thank you" and "This is so much" and "Wow".

When we handed her the final bag of food, she looked to be on the verge of tears, she was so amazed. I could hear her kids yelling in happiness from inside her house. Then she asked me the question that I will never forget: "Are you sure that this is for us? Isn't there some more deserving family who you could help?"

That really affected me. My mom assured her that it was okay, that she needn't worry. With that, we wished her happy holidays and walked back to our car. As we drove off, I thought about that question. The fact that someone who was going through such a rough time could be so selfless as to think of other families was just amazing. Here this person is, not doing too well herself, and she was worrying about others.

So, why did I write this article? One reason is to thank the good people of the Merrick Kiwanis Club. They all come togeth-

er with the Key Club and the Builders Club each year to give families in Merrick a better holiday. They work together, laughing and joking and having a great time despite the cold, or the dust, or the hard work. They are the most optimistic and good-hearted people that I have ever met. I am very fortunate to be part of such an amazing group – for the Kiwanis members are my family just as much as my mother and father. I have grown up around them, attended almost all of their events, and become close friends with most of them.

So I suppose that I should be thanking my parents as well, for instilling in me the idea that in order to be a good person you need to help others. I have gotten to experience Kiwanis from a very early age, and I am a better person because of it.

Finally, and undoubtedly most importantly, I wrote this to show all of you that a little help goes a long way. Every person who donated to the food and toy drive have made the holidays a better experience for a family in Merrick. Each forty-cent can, each dollar, each minute that each volunteer spent helping add up to an amazing thing. As a town we must help our own citizens, for if we do not, we cannot thrive.

My parents taught me that no matter how you're doing in life, you must think of others as well. We need to remember that, especially in such a hate-filled world as the one we live in today. We would all be better people if we took that lesson to heart.

Editor's Note: Thank you Amanda for sharing your feeling about this experience. It was a very moving account of the day. Thank you Merrick for sharing this and all you do.



Alzheimer's Project

Steve Haller

DO YOU WANT A WONDERFUL SERVICE PROJECT THAT CAN INVOLVE YOUR ENTIRE K-FAMILY???

If your answer to this question is yes, read on.

Each year the Alzheimer's Association hosts Memory Walks across the entire State of New York. To the best of my knowledge, there are only seven divisions who have clubs actually participating in one way or another. They are Bronx Westchester South, Brooklyn, Finger Lakes, Genesee, Long Island North, Long Island South Central and the Long Island Southwest. I must make mention of two divisions that have made a total commitment to the Alzheimer's Association Memory Walk in their communities for the last two years: Bronx Westchester South led by DPLG Sister Anne-Marie Kirmse and the Long Island South Central Division led by DPP Maurice Cassano. On the day of the walk, you can find Key Clubbers and Kiwanians working together handing out tee-shirts, cutting bagels, serving food, putting up sponsorship signs, and collecting pledges from K-Family donors.

If your club or division supports the Alzheimer's Association in anyway please send me an email at stevenh@minutemanpress.com so I can get a true handle on who is involved. These K-Family volunteers either give a donation of money, volunteer their services, which is what Kiwanis is all about, or form a team of four or more people who have sponsors and they walk the walk.

All the money raised by the walk in your community stays in your community and helps the many support groups, care consultation, services and educational programs they offer to the patients and their families afflicted by this terrible disease.

I will be sending an email to the presidents in the next couple of months (through the district office, with the help of Gerald Payanoff) listing all the memory walks around the state, that are usually held in early September. I sincerely hope that our K Family will respond.



State Senator Charles Fuschillo (left) and State Assemblyman David McDonough (right) joined fellow Kiwanians Alan Aronson and Tammy McLoughlin in choosing just the right toy for each child on the Kiwanis Santa list.



It takes a village of Kiwanis members – and generosity of Merrickians – to help the less fortunate in our community have a more joyful holiday.

First Lady Debra

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son is IPLG Peter Mietenkorte (516 546-3277) and the upstate chairperson is PLG Kathy Peris (607 734-7723).

Included in this addition of the ESK are the requirements and reporting form for this year's Partner's Project. Should you have any questions, please feel free to call me. I hope that you all had a happy and healthy holiday. Please complete four of the projects described on the right and forward the completed form to: First Lady Debra Fuchs, 84 Madison Avenue, Island Park, NY 11558.

