

Posted Online: Jan. 28, 2012, 5:49 pm

Bethany beckons more Good Fellow and Argus Santa contributors

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By Leon Lagerstam, llagerstam@qconline.com

MOLINE -- Gift cards from The Dispatch Good Fellow and The Rock Island Argus Santa fund went such a long way to make Christmas merrier for people served by Bethany for Children and Families that agency leaders can't believe the campaign has come up short.

The annual campaign raised \$35,000 to \$45,000 in each of its past 10 years, but, so far this year, has collected \$26,796.61, and needs another \$18,203.39 to meet this season's \$45,000 goal.

Contribution deadlines have been extended to offset the shortage. Donations may be brought or mailed to The Dispatch, 1720 5th Ave., Moline, IL. 61265.

Bethany for Children and Families was among eight local social service agencies to get Good Fellow/Argus Santa help.

It was the first time in the campaign's 104-year history that gift certificates were distributed that way, as a way to streamline distribution, reduce duplication among other holiday-help providers, and let local non-profit agencies help families they knew best needed it.

"It was a great way to do it," division director of community services Mary Ann McLeod said. "Our families were so appreciative. Several said they wouldn't have had Christmas without the items they got from it."

Bethany used the \$2,500 worth of gift certificates to help 191 people belonging to 49 families, she said, adding that families used the certificates in a variety of ways.

"Some families used it for furnishings, some used it for groceries, and some used it for shoes and clothes," while others used it to buy hygiene items, blankets, towels, sheets, "and, of course, presents for their kids," Ms. McLeod said.

Bethany workers helped assess the neediest of families, and helped them determine priorities, she said, adding that getting Good Fellow and Argus Santa Fund help was a pleasant surprise.

Another organization's program wasn't going to be able to provide holiday help as it had in past years, but Good Fellow and Argus Santa assistance managed to fill that gap.

"People don't realize that any kind of donation of any amount can make a difference to a



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Photo: Gary Krambeck

Mary Ann McLeod director of community services at Bethany for Children and Families shows some of the bed sheets that were given to help some of the 191 people and 49 families this past holiday season by The Dispatch Good Fellow and Rock Island Argus Santa Fund.

family," Ms. McLeod said.

And it's a difference people still can make by contributing to the The Dispatch Good Fellow and The Rock Island Argus Santa Fund at the above address.

"People in the Quad-Cities have been so generous," Ms. McLeod said, "I'm surprised it hasn't made its quota yet."

Recent contributions are:

Anonymous, \$25
Sue Collard, \$25
Russ Scott, \$40
Vicki and Robert Hagen, \$30
Glenn and Sylvia Jump, \$25