

Deere employees foot the bill for shoes

Steven Martens | Posted: Friday, December 30, 2011 7:24 pm

As the mother of five children between the ages of 7 and 12, Carrie Rewerts of Davenport says she didn't think there was any way she could afford to buy new shoes and snow boots for all of them this winter.

"It was just a hard year," she said. "The bills are just piling up on me."

But thanks to the generosity of some Deere & Co. employees and the friends and family of a Bethany for Children and Families caseworker, Rewerts' children and dozens of others will soon have new shoes and boots.

Earlier this month, employees at the John Deere Cylinder Division in Moline decided to get involved with a local charitable organization as part of a celebration of Deere's 175th anniversary in 2012, human resources manager Melanie Porter said.

She said the employees picked Bethany for Children and Families after becoming familiar with the family services agency through Ron Edwards, a Deere attorney who also serves on the group's board of directors.

"We think it's just an amazing organization," Porter said.

After learning that Bethany for Children and Families had a particular need for new shoes and boots for its clients, the John Deere Cylinder employees held a drive that resulted in the donation of 41 pairs of shoes, and with the help of John Deere Seeding employees raised about \$950 to purchase more shoes and boots.

"We were really very pleased and astonished by the kind of response we got," Porter said.

John Huber, a caseworker for Bethany for Children and Families, said the donations made a huge difference, but were not quite enough to meet the needs of the organization. He said he was talking about the situation with his wife, Sarah, and other families last week over dinner.

"My heart really goes out to them, and I was just expressing that," he said. "It really surprised me when they pulled out their checkbooks."

Through donations from his family and an appeal posted on his Facebook page, Huber raised nearly \$2,000, enough to buy 94 pairs of shoes through a special arrangement with J.C. Penney and 60 pairs of boots.

"This just goes to show that one person can make a big difference," he said.

Rewerts said Huber and the Deere employees made a big difference to her and her children.

"It's definitely something awesome that they did, that they were able to help out," she said.