

Teen project makes a Covenant

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BRIDGEWATER — What started as Kristina Woung-Fallon's Girl Scout Gold Award project snowballed into four trucks and two cars loaded with toiletries and other donations headed for the Covenant House, which helps homeless, runaway and at-risk youths between the ages of 16 and 21.

Kristina, a 16-year-old junior at Mount St. Mary Academy in Elizabeth, has been a Girl Scout since she was in kindergarten. The drive served as the service portion of her Gold Award, which she recently received and which requires a



Kristina Woung-Fallon

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Photo courtesy of Kristina Woung-Fallon

Bridgewater teen Kristina Woung-Fallon's Girl Scout service project developed into a troop-wide collection of clothing and other personal items for Newark's Covenant House.

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minimum of 65 hours of service. Kristina stopped keeping track after 91.

Her original plan was to help children in Africa. However, that changed after the woman who became her project adviser took in a 17-year-old girl in need of help.

"I started to realize, as I searched around my community and saw what was needed, 'Wow, this is something that hits home. Right around the corner, kids my age are struggling,'" Kristina said. "The main part for me was to spread awareness of these young kids living homeless right around the corner from us."

Beginning in October, Kristina began asking local schools and businesses to display fliers along with decorated collection boxes in their lobbies.

She spent hours sorting, counting and monitoring items collected in boxes, bags and bins. She and members of her Girl Scout troop packed each bag with toiletries and gifts, taking time to highlight "Hugs and Love" on each bag's inventory sheet.

"All of our family was involved," her mother, Kathy Fallon, said. "But if Kristina hadn't done the leg work — and it was a lot of leg work — it wouldn't have happened. She just did everything."

"The magnitude of the project surprised me. I never even thought about this age group. The awareness was brought to all of us — mothers, teachers — wow, we forgot about that," Kristina's mother said.

Kristina and her family dropped off three truckloads and a carload of supplies at the Covenant House's Valentine's Day extravaganza. The donations kept coming, though, which prompted a return trip with another truckload and another carload on June 20.

Since she was 5 years old, Kristina has served the homeless, making place mats for soup kitchens and helping cook and bake as well. She has no intentions of stopping any time soon.

"I'm going to keep doing community service," Kristina said. "This project hasn't ended. My house is still being filled with stuff. This need doesn't go away. I plan to continue helping them and my community."

To contribute, contact the Covenant House or visit www.do1thing.org.