

Group to deliver gifts to inmate families

Thursday, December 19, 2019

A simple desire to show love and kindness to her neighbors is what prompted one local woman to organize a toy drive for inmate families.

Through her work and personal connections, Mandy Storer has gathered over 300 Christmas gifts for children of inmates participating in the Department of Corrections Re-entry Program at Caddo Correctional Center. The toys will be distributed to families from 9-11 a.m. and 2-4 p.m., on Friday, December 20, at the Re-entry Facility, 1121 Forum Drive.

Storer said she felt drawn to begin a "movement of love" three years ago. Over time, she became involved with the Local Missions Committee at First United Methodist Church where she learned about a need for prison ministry. While speaking to inmates in the Re-Entry Program at Caddo Correctional, Storer gathered the names of their children and began collecting toys.

"The next part is where the 'community magic' happened," she said. Storer Services, First United Methodist Church, Summiteer Creative, Pharmacy Department of Ochsner LSU Health, Ochsner LSU Health - post-graduate pharmacy residents, and friends all pitched in.

"I am blessed to be a part of the Pharmacy Department of Ochsner LSU Health and my husband, Aaron, works with an outstanding group of people in our family business, Storer Services. The post-graduate pharmacy residents within my department made contact with all families involved to create a wish-list for the children."

Pharmacy staff, physicians, and even hospital administrators got involved in the project. Next, the employees of Storer Services volunteered to take the lead. They had a toy drive and hosted a working lunch where all toys donated were wrapped and labeled. "It was amazing to see their training room full of employees working to serve others. There were also several great friends that got involved, and all together, this project has been a great example of a community pulling together," Storer said.

Re-entry is a state pre-release program for inmates who are nearing the end of their sentences. The program focuses on job skill training, employment, housing, money management, and other life skills necessary for a successful transition into the community. There are currently 57 inmates from northwest Louisiana in the Re-entry Program at Caddo Correctional Center.

What: Christmas toy delivery to families of Re-entry inmates

When: 9-11 a.m. and 2-4 p.m., Friday, December 20, 2019

Where: Northwest Regional Re-entry Facility, 1121 Forum Drive, behind Caddo Correctional Center

Contact: Caddo Sheriff's Manager Sabrina Raborn, Re-entry Program

Comments: Mrs. Storer will be available from 9-11 a.m. for comments. Gifts will be stacked and organized for pick-up beginning at 9 a.m. Families will come and go to pick up their gifts and take them home. There will be no inmates on site.