

THE SEASON OF GIVING GOES ON PAST CHRISTMAS

By Shelly Kaiser, United Way Volunteer Connection Director

Last month on this page, I wrote to you about Bundles of Joy, a United Way project that uses donations raised from a holiday gift wrap center to purchase diapers and formula for struggling families. I asked you to bring your gifts to be wrapped and to be as generous as possible in donating. You read . . . and you responded generously indeed. Now, approximately 1,700 families will have a way to get emergency diapers and formula in the coming year. Thank you!

Success of this magnitude is only possible with great partners and incredible teamwork. Our project sponsors, Ministry Health Care, Peoples State Bank and Wausau Center provided the supplies and the project space so all donations could all go towards diapers and formula. The B.A. and Esther Greenheck Foundation extended United Way's reach to families in need by providing an additional \$5,000 in grant funds. And of course the amazing team of 389 community volunteers who wrapped 7,053 gifts over 30 days cannot be overlooked. Not just committed individuals, but corporate businesses like Peoples State Bank, UMR, Greenheck and many others that supported Bundles of Joy through volunteerism.

This United Way project not only fills a gap for infant necessities, but provides a wonderful way for individuals and groups to give back during the season of giving. Our volunteers included the young and the old, families, co-workers, youth groups, friends, schools and community groups. Many were inspired to ask, "How else can we volunteer?" Just imagine what we as a community could accomplish if we regularly gave of our time.

Those that give, often receive. The following story illustrates this nicely and was shared by a gift wrap volunteer about her experience this season:

I was really touched by a boy of about 10 and his sister with special needs who was a few years older. He was the spokesman and was very conscious of involving his sister to pick out the paper and finding out where donations were going. Between the two of them, they scraped up \$1 in change and put it in the donation box. The boy said that he thought it was great what was being done with the donations. As I was wrapping the present, I told the boy that I was not a very good gift wrapper. He said that from where he stood, I was doing a great job. I have arthritis and shaky hands so I am sometimes self conscious, but after his compliment, I really felt good.

United Way thanks all those that supported Bundles of Joy this season. Let's continue to work together to build a better community.

For information on how to give or get help, please call United Way's 2-1-1.