

GALLUP DAY OF GIVING DRAWS HUNDREDS

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
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Organizations and people hand in glove

People were picking through winter clothes when the music started. Tables stacked with sweaters and pants were left behind when *We Are the World* began to play over the loudspeakers. The anthem for *A for Africa*

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drew volunteers and attendees to the center of courthouse square, where they joined hands.

“The healing power of giving - in so many areas.” Bill Camarota called it.

Camarota is the special projects director of WellSpring Recovery Center, part of Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services. This first-time event was organized in part by clients of the center.

The First Annual RMCHCS/Gallup Day of Giving at the Courthouse Plaza drew more than 500 people. The community and area non-profit organizations such as CYFD, Gallup Med Flight, Catholic Charities, Church on the Street, and others, all came together to hand out gently used coats, hats, gloves, sweaters, socks and boots for men, women, and children in need this winter. Free hot dogs and hot chocolate were given out by the Rotary Club of Gallup.

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Gallup Med Flight Nurse, Jolene Platero saw a flyer on the event and wanted to help combat hypothermia and keep people out in the cold weather, warm. She and other volunteers began collecting as many coats as they could. Once she received approval from her boss, they purchased gloves and put all the items together to give away to those in need in the community.

“We just wanted to be a part of the community and just to help out. We wanted to do our part in helping those who have to deal with being in this cold weather,” she said.

RMCHCS CEO David Conejo was quite pleased with the response. “It’s an exciting event, we didn’t know what the response would be. Now that it has been so successful, we want to do this every year. We wanted to distribute things to keep them [area people in need] warm and alive. The original thought was that every year a number of organizations would try to do something to get gloves and coats out. If everybody came out together, we would have a much larger distribution and a much better organization to draw people in.”

Conejo said the attendance reassured him that his original intention of making the Day of Giving an annual event was on track.

“Instead of having a [bag] of clothes you’re distributing, you suddenly have tons of clothes that are being distributed and a bigger attendance.” he added.

Food is an additional draw, he pointed out.

Camarota said the event was designed to join forces between all the helping agencies throughout the city. They came out together to call for donations and distribute as one.

“We’re doing all winter clothing and other items for this winter,” Camarota said. “We put flyers on store windows, radio ads, and put word of mouth, it was a collective work from everybody. We had other organizations come down to help. We’re also helping the food pantry by accepting non-perishable food items, and helping out that need, too.”

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Camarota said any left-over donations will be given to other agencies that might see a need.

“It’s a big turn around and the give back is so powerful.” Camarota said.

Amos Mitchell, who is currently homeless in Gallup, and found his way down from Minnesota, expressed his thoughts on the day’s event.

“I’m so proud to see these people come out here and help out all my brothers and sisters that are out here on the streets. I’m so proud to see them do that. There aren’t that many people who do that. It’s their choice to [do] that; their choice to do that for others. I bless them for opening their hearts and doing it.”

For more information about how to donate, contact Lisa Lovato at (505) 863-7110 or Bill Camarota at (505) 726-6944.

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