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Posted March 3, 2006

LINK Provides Services for Community

To the editor:

LINK is comprised of 16 churches (Baptist, Brethren, Catholic, Episcopal, Fellowship, Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian) whose purpose is to provide groceries and financial assistance to qualified people in need 52 weeks a year.

LINK strongly believes that assisting those less fortunate with their most basic needs fosters hope and goodwill among our diverse and fast growing community. We appreciate your concern and respect for the work that we accomplish and the services we provide. LINK has provided our community with 33 years of volunteer service excellence.

The LINK organization would like to thank the Herndon, Sterling, Ashburn community for their volunteer support and donation efforts for the 2005 LINK programs.

During the 2005 calendar year, LINK volunteers made 730 non-perishable food deliveries directly to needy homes, comprising 3,000 people and also distributed \$13,000 in grocery gift certificates.

About \$25,000 was provided to Northern Virginia Family Services and Loudoun County Social Services to be used for utility bills, medical and eyeglass prescriptions and rent for housing. This funding touched the lives of another 150 families.

LINK teamed up with the Loudoun Community and the Herndon free clinics to help these organizations supply much-needed prescription medication to those they serve in our area. The "Neighbors in Need" project was made possible by a federal grant from our great Congressman Frank Wolf. LINK distributed \$19,000 to the clinics.

This program also delivered 145 new beds to the sick and handicapped and \$11,000 for hygiene supplies (dishwasher soap, laundry detergent, sanitary goods, deodorant, diapers, baby wipes, tooth brushes, toothpaste, dental floss, shampoo, etc.) to families in desperate need.

The 2005 LINK Thanksgiving and Christmas food basket and toy programs took place at Christ the Redeemer Catholic, Sterling United Methodist, Trinity Presbyterian and Herndon United Methodist churches on Nov. 19 and Dec. 17, 19 and 20.

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More than 300 community volunteers participated in these events. Volunteers assisted the LINK organizers to escort 700 needy families (3,300 people) in selecting their five-day allotment of non-perishable food items and ensured the LINK guests received more than \$12,000 in grocery gift certificates. They helped restock shelves with 45,000 pounds of groceries and loaded food into guest vehicles, acted as Spanish translators, and distributed 572 used coats to needy families. LINK received food donations from Scouting for Food and 39 public and private schools in Fairfax and Loudoun as well as many local businesses.

Three newspapers (The Observer, The Loudoun Easterner and Loudoun Independent) coordinated toy drives in support of LINK. More than 3,000 toys were provided to more than 1,000 children in our local neighborhoods. LINK received enough toys for its Christmas guests and donated all excess toys received to various homeless shelters, churches, social service programs and the Herndon Neighborhood Resource Center.

Wherever you find the sick, unemployed, the powerless and the unloved; you will find LINK and the Christian church.

Mark Gunderman

LINK Board Member

Sterling

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