

November 19, 2007

RE: What it means to work with Covenant to Care

I have been the Covenant to Care liaison at the Danbury DCF for over a year. The work that this program does for our family is invaluable and irreplaceable. The best part of working with Covenant to Care is involving the local community in the understanding and work of the DCF.

In our office, Covenant to Care is very active. We have fifteen churches working with us and two pending enrollments. I cannot tell you how delighted the families are when they experience first hand the churches' help. The church donations are beyond our expectations. For example, we had one little girl donate all her birthday gifts to the DCF for Christmas presents for other children. The mother, the child and her siblings came into the DCF office with great excitement to offer her donations of gifts. Her unselfish act is just one of the multitude of demonstrations by parishioners displaying the true meaning of giving and helping others.

Last Christmas we received a \$5000 donation from a single foundation. This was given to us by a person's employer when he nominated the DCF as his charity of choice. This generous donation was added to our DCF Children's Fund and used throughout the year for emergencies by offering pre-paid gift cards for gas, food, Wal-Mart and Target. These sources of 'emergency funding' proved most useful and beneficial to our investigation units in offering immediate aid to our clients when necessary.

Examples of Projects throughout the year have included:

- Three churches host a Christmas "Giving Tree" for the children in our case loads.
- Six churches provide Thanksgiving Food Baskets for our families.
- Many churches prepare festive and thoughtful Christmas Food Baskets for the families.
- One church held a "Diaper Drive" for their Mother's Day service. The diapers were donated to DCF.
- Various churches do Easter Baskets. One church alone did over 45 gorgeous baskets for the children.
- The "Back to School/Backpack Drive" is incredible! Over 100 backpacks with school supplies with 'extras' were donated. This past year there was a surplus of backpacks and we shared our good fortune by donating the excess to the Extended Day Program at Family and Children's Aid. Many of their children and families are also involved with the DCF.
- One church focuses their efforts on our adolescents in DCF care. The parishioners have helped college bound young adults, teen-mothers and supplied birthday presents.
- One church provides scholarships to a Christian summer camp.

- The Assumption Greek Orthodox Church has provided emergency cash. Father Peter, a wonderful person, has been instrumental in assisting the DCF secure funds for unexpected emergencies that arise to aid our clients in need. For example, the church helped with funds for rent deposit in order to reunify a two year old child with his single father. Mr. Kyprianou, a parishioner and a computer analyst by trade, has reprogrammed donated computers for our needy children and families on his own time. One of the examples of his recent generosity involved a child with a speech disability who required a computer with a specialized program for school. Covenant to Care located a computer and Mr. Kyprianou graciously installed the program for this child.
- One church hosts a Christmas Party for our foster care children. Our social workers volunteer for this event on the specified Saturday from 11:00-3:30. The church provides a wonderful luncheon buffet; meatballs in sauce, baked ziti, salad, macaroni and cheese, rolls, ice cream cake, cookies and drinks. The food is made by the congregation and held at their church site. Entertainment for the children includes a magician, who himself is a volunteer, and the arrival of Santa Claus all dressed up in his red velvet suit! Each child receives about three presents depending on their 'wish lists' (a list previously and secretly submitted by their social worker). Santa arrives with their presents brightly wrapped and each child is called by name and has their picture taken with Santa. Last year the church provided extras gifts for the foster parents!
- The Convent to Care program also has a generous provider that hosts a "Prom Dress Drive". Girls are able to purchase a new, never used prom dress for just \$10.00! The Family and Children's Aid girl's group's home was also able to take their girls shopping for dresses.
- Most recently two churches have agreed to clean and decorate our visiting rooms. This project is excitedly anticipated by the DCF office staff and is currently scheduled to commence in the new year.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend a most special thank you to Meral Prewitt and her staff for their energetic and enthusiastic assistance in helping the DCF children and families of Danbury and the surrounding area. Her ongoing efforts have been and continue to be extraordinary, unselfish and tireless. Thank you once again.

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