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Shoe company, nonprofits team up to help area kids



Payless coupons provide much-needed footwear for the neediest cases.

By [Jill Kelley](#), Staff Writer

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Hundreds of Miami Valley children in need are getting new shoes for Christmas, thanks to the Payless Gives Shoes 4 Kids program and the initiative of area nonprofit organizations.

For the third year, Payless Shoesource asked nonprofit organizations that benefit children to apply for some of the \$1.2 million in new shoes the company is giving away in the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and Latin America.

In Ohio, 26 nonprofit organizations were selected, including seven from the Miami Valley. Dayton groups Agape for Youth, Boys & Girls Club of Dayton, [St. Vincent de Paul](#) and Wesley Community Center will benefit from the program. Also included in the program are Hannah's Treasure Chest in Centerville, Clinton County Community Action Program in Wilmington, and the Family Violence Prevention Center of Greene County in Xenia.

The local groups were awarded between 50 and 150 coupons, each good for \$15 in kids' shoes at Payless. There are six Payless stores in the Dayton area.

Many in need

Angela Addington is the director of Hannah's Treasure Chest, which provides clothing, books, toys and other essential items to area children.

Addington said she is continually surprised by the number of local kids who don't have proper-fitting shoes.

"They are either way too small, which medically can hurt them, or two and three sizes too big," Addington said. "That affects them in so many different ways. If I go out and put on my heels, I think, 'Oh, my aching feet.' But these kids are in these shoes every day."

Donna Sizemore, the executive director of the Family Violence Prevention Center of Greene County, said her organization was beyond excited when they heard about the program.

"We have people coming in (to our center) who are basically leaving their homes with what they have on their backs," she said. "If they try to pack up their stuff, that lets the batterer know they are leaving. And this program lets them get brand-new shoes."

At Agape For Youth, these coupons from Payless are helping 100 kids from the group's foster care program and its family reunification program.

Timely program

Although these organizations serve their communities year-round, most also provide gifts and parties during the holidays. They often use wish lists to find the best use for shoe coupons.

At St. Vincent de Paul, a Christmas party earlier this month allowed Santa Claus and his elf to learn about the kids in the organization's Hotel Gateway Shelter for Women and Children and in Transitional Housing.

"The case managers know exactly who needs the shoes," said Lisa Glandon, St. Vincent's director of development and marketing. "We certainly receive a tremendous amount of gifts for our families at this time of year, but nothing exactly like this. We are very blessed."

The 150 coupons Hannah's received this year were included in the organization's Giving Angels program, which is in its sixth year. This holiday season, Giving Angels supplied 600 kids with two toys and two articles of clothing each.

"We chose the neediest cases," Addington said. "We also checked to see if their sponsor had given them a pair of shoes. Between the two, we came out almost even."

At the Family Violence Prevention Center, the coupons have become part of an annual Christmas event.

“Last year, the store was really great in working with us,” Sizemore said. “We had a couple of moms with younger children who were able to get two pairs with a coupon.”

Sizemore said they planned to go to Payless at The Greene, eat lunch, see a movie and visit with Santa — all paid for by donors and sponsors.

A great fit

Glandon said shoes are important for those in need — at all ages.

“It’s not just kids going to school who need them,” she said of those served by St. Vincent de Paul. “There also is a need for work boots and winter boots. So many of our guests are employed, but they just don’t make enough money to afford to pay for housing amid food, schooling, medical bills, etc.”

Addington said this Payless program has allowed Hannah’s to go above and beyond what the organization already does, which is help 1,500 children referred to their organization.

She added that every dollar donated to Hannah’s Treasure Chest nets \$9 worth of clothes or shoes through their corporate sponsorships.

Sizemore noted that the overall need has increased at the violence prevention center in the last few years.

“We ended 2008 having housed around 2,000,” she said. “In 2009, it was more than 7,000. This year, it has already exceeded that.”

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