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Helping build self-esteem

Patterson Mill sixth-grader donates toiletries to homeless

AEGIS STAFF REPORT

It started as a simple collection aimed to give unused hotel-size toiletries to school counselors and shelter staff for area homeless children. But to Ashlee Brockwell, a sixth-grader at Patterson Mill Middle School, this project is all about building self-esteem.

Brockwell is the newest member appointed to the all-youth board of advisors of the We Canceve Movement Inc., a Harford County-based nonprofit organization that brings happiness to homeless, sick and foster children through a series of service projects and annual programs. The group, established in 2012, has distributed hundreds of small toiletries kits since 2012 to area homeless and foster children, which includes children at their newest recipient organization, Magnolia Elementary School.

The group named their collection "Scentsational" to drive home the message that personal hygiene grooms one's own positive attitude.

"The Scentsational project means a lot to me because I get to help people feel better about themselves and serve my community," 12-year-old Ashlee said. "No one should feel embarrassed about how they look. Coming to school clean means the homeless children will have more focus on their education. Also, socially they will feel more comfortable around their peers."

We Canceve Movement Founder Grace Callwood agreed.

"I imagine it feels really terrible for any kid at any age to know that everyone can tell who in their classroom stinks and who doesn't, and who can afford to be clean and who can't. It's really sad that so many people can't pay to be clean, which is a basic necessity," said Callwood, a sixth-grader at Edgewood Middle School.

Grace, also 12, said the group knew a lot of people who collect hotel soaps and "so we always ask people to save their unused items for us so we can give them to the people who really need them and who can't afford to buy their own."

America has more than five million hotel rooms, according to an August 2015 article in the Business Travel News. This number is up from 4.5 million in February 2008. In Maryland alone, there 1,403 hotels, according to Booking.com and, on average, there are 114 rooms in a limited-service hotel and 290 in a full-service hotel.

"So even if we got donations from just limited-service hotels, that means we could collect a soap or body wash, shampoo, conditioner, lotion and sometimes mouthwash from hotels in our state and help more than a hundred thousand children," Grace said.

Board members collected donations of unused hotel toiletries and also full-size items donated to the project.

Ashlee called her cousin, Caleigh Griffin, in Nashville, Tenn., who with college buddy Caitlin Roorda created Cheap Chicks Craft Soapery.

"They are impressed by how many ways the We Canceve Movement helps families in



Patterson Mill sixth-grader Ashlee Brockwell stands with some of the donated toiletries that will be distributed to homeless families.

need. When they heard about Scentsational, they offered to help in any way they could. I'm very lucky to have such supportive family members. I think the kids will be happy to get their products," Ashlee said. "Their soaps smell great!"

Cheap Chicks donated a few dozen hand-crafted soaps, scrubs, bombs and butters made from 100 percent all-natural, raw, paraben and GMO-free ingredients to We Canceve. We Canceve collects toiletries all year. The current collection will be distributed Valen-

tine's Day. Anyone interested in hosting a toiletries collection for We Canceve should email peoplewhocare@wecanceve.org.

To date, We Canceve has donated more than \$9,000 in cash grants to Sinai Hospital, Casey Cares Foundation, Harford Family House, Anna's House, Eastside Family Emergency Shelter and the Sharing Table, and plus more than \$23,000 in products to more than seven homeless shelters, four hospitals and a group home for children in foster care.

We Canceve has established an accumula-

tor fund with the Community Foundation of Harford County. It will eventually become a permanent fund of CFHC to support the work of the We Canceve Movement. Contributions made to the Community Foundation of Harford County are tax-deductible, and can be designated to the We Canceve Accumulator Fund. The Community Foundation of Harford County is a 501(c)(3) public charity.

To donate, contact We Canceve Movement at PeopleWhoCare@WeCanceve.org or 202-491-3586.