

# We Cancerve helping provide Halloween costumes for children

## AEGIS STAFF REPORT

Southampton Middle School seventh-grader Erin Acerno is spearheading a brand-new initiative for the We Cancerve Movement Inc. to help homeless children feel included in the Halloween fun.

Acerno, 12, created "Halloween Haunt-me-downs" to collect new and gently-used Halloween costumes for children of all ages who live in transitional housing programs for homeless families and homeless shelters like Anna's House in Bel Air, Harford Family House in Aberdeen and the Eastside Family Emergency Shelter in Rosedale. The community is invited to drop off costumes until Oct. 21, which builds in just enough time to sort through the collection and deliver them to area shelters.

"This project is important to me because Halloween is a fun time of year for kids and all children should be able to enjoy it as an exciting part of their childhood memories no matter what circumstances they are in. All kids should just be allowed to feel 'normal,'" Erin said. "I think it's especially meaningful to homeless kids because they are in an awful situation where they often feel left out or different from other kids. If they can have a nice costume like everyone else, they can relate to the other kids better and not feel like an outsider because they're homeless."

Erin secured three drop-off locations for the community, thanks to support she solicited from the studio where she dances, Rage Box Contemporary Dance Company in Forest Hill, her church St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church in Abingdon and from Tiny Toes boutique in downtown Bel Air.

"I love the costumes and dressing up because you can be whoever you want to be that day - with no limits, just imagination," said Erin, who's an accomplished child actress. She also appears on Harford Kids TV.

She said her favorite costume of all time is Maleficent.

"I like dressing up as a villain because it's cool to explore a side of yourself that you'd never show in real life," she said.

Erin is serving her third year as a member of the all-youth board of advisors for the We Cancerve Movement, a nonprofit organization that creates giving opportunities that can be supported by the community to bring happiness to homeless, sick and foster children.



Southampton Middle School seventh-grader Erin Acerno, whose favorite costume is Maleficent, is collecting new and gently used Halloween costumes to be given to children who are homeless or in transitional housing through her Halloween Haunt-Me-Downs.

In 2016, We Cancerve Movement, Inc. was named an Honor Rows recipient by M&T Bank, the Baltimore Ravens and the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism for their community service. The organization will receive up to 100 tickets to attend a Baltimore Ravens game this season and be recognized with T-shirts and on the RavensVision video board.

To date, We Cancerve has donated 1,193 Eggstra Special Easter Baskets to area homeless, sick and foster children



COURTESY PHOTOS

since its first donation in 2012; \$10,500 in cash grants and \$25,000 in products to five hospitals including Sinai Hospital in Baltimore and University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Medical Center in Bel Air, eight homeless shelters and transitional programs, local feeding ministries The Sharing Table and St. John's Episcopal Church's Cupboard, an orphanage in Catonsville and two foster care group homes.