

Links of Love: Little bracelets make big difference

By Karen Osborne

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ESSEX - As siblings Sophia and Sam Crowell learned this Lent, sometimes the smallest of efforts can make the biggest of differences.

As a Lenten project, the Crowell children are making rubber band bracelets to raise funds for the hot meal program at their parish, St. Clare in Essex. Sophia and Sam estimate they have raised more than \$600 for the Friday-evening program by fashioning and selling the bracelets to friends, family and the Essex community at a quarter to 50 cents each.

Sophia and Sam learned to make the bracelets from friends at St. Ursula School in Parkville, where they are both students. It occurred to Sam that the two siblings could do some good with their abilities.

"We decided to sell them and give the money to charity for Lent," Sophia said.

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The children set a goal of a \$100 donation by the end of Lent, and set about creating hundreds of bracelets - both simple chain-link ones they make with their hands and more difficult "fishtail" bracelets that require the assistance of a hook and a loom.

Both Sophia and Sam already understand the impact their project will have on the community, as they have volunteered alongside their parents, Lisa and Eric Crowell, on the serving line of the hot meal program. They have met many of the people their fundraiser will benefit.

Although Lisa Crowell helped the children create a Facebook page for their project, she said it was Sophia and Sam who had the idea to sell the bracelets on a Saturday afternoon at Shoppers Market in the Middlesex Shopping Center.

Shoppers manager Chris Turbott not only allowed them to sell the bracelets there, but also made announcements over the store's PA system about the project.

"They were two young people who were so driven to do this, to make money to donate to a charity," said Turbott, a parishioner of St. Isaac Jogues in Carney. "You so rarely find that. We were all in. It inspires us to know that we're helping someone in the community."

The Shoppers sale was when "things got crazy" and people really started to help out, according to Sophia. Madi Lewis, a cousin who helped sell the bracelets at Shoppers, said they kept running out.

The children sold hundreds of bracelets to Shoppers patrons, including a customer who paid with a quarter taken out of a pill bottle.

“He said that he had been poor, that he and his girlfriend used to be homeless,” according to Sam. Sophia said they were amazed that someone who “didn’t have much money” helped.

Since that first Saturday sale, the charity has been growing. Friends from Sophia and Sam’s sports teams want the bracelets, as well as fellow parishioners and teachers at school. Sophia and Sam have lost count of the number of bracelets they’ve made.

Sophia said she and Sam are committed to raising money and making the bracelets through Easter, both at Shoppers and through a GiveForward page.

“You should always do something nice for other people who are less fortunate than you,” Sophia said. “You do it because it is worth it.”

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