Help Local Folks In Need Through Lifting Up Westchester

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By: Daily Voice

Local residents will soon be getting into the spirit of giving.

Lifting Up Westchester (LUW), a nonprofit agency which provides homeless and poverty services to individuals throughout the county, has started its second annual Holiday LIFT campaign, which kicks off Saturday, Nov. 4. The campaign offers multiple opportunities for the community to spread holiday cheer and lift the spirits of Westchester’s men, women and children in need.

Holiday LIFT activities will include distributing warm coats and winter clothing, providing 2,000 holiday meals from the LUW soup kitchen, filling and distributing 500 holiday food bags, and wrapping and delivering hundreds of gifts. It will take an army of volunteers to get it done.

New Rochelle resident Chi Chen of the New York Tzu Chi Foundation is one them. Chi discovered LUW in 2015 when LUW’s Open Arms Men’s Shelter was undergoing renovation.

Chi and his organization decided to share some of their holiday traditions with the homeless men at Open Arms by treating them to a special Chinese meal and a Lion Dance which is normally performed during the first few days of the Chinese New Year. Scarsdale residents Jen Premisler and her husband, Eric, are also big fans of the LIFT program. Four years ago they were looking for a place for their sons to donate gifts for the holidays. The family had started a tradition in which their sons would forgo receiving a Hanukkah gift one night in order to give a gift to someone in need.

Her Google search revealed Lifting Up Westchester’s holiday wish list for the hundreds of homeless and economically disadvantaged children in their Brighter Futures After-School Mentoring Program.
Premisler shared the list with a few other moms she knew and what started as a small email chain went viral. Together they were able to secure many of the gifts on the list. Since then, she has engaged the help of social media, White Plains friends Lauren and Michael Kraver and Girl Scout Troop #2790.

The result led to a huge outpouring of support; last year, they provided more than 180 gifts and gift cards for the Brighter Futures children.

Said Premisler: “As much as this is about Lifting Up Westchester and the kids who benefit from the holiday gift drive, for us it was and continues to be, about ensuring that our kids understand not everyone is as fortunate as they are during the holidays, and even all year long.”

Here’s how to get involved:

- **Organize a food drive** and involve your neighborhood, school, religious organization or community group. Foods needed most are turkeys, hams, instant mashed potatoes, gravy mix, stuffing, canned vegetables, canned cranberries, cake and brownie mixes.
- **Donate the free turkeys** that many grocery stores give away at Thanksgiving or Christmas.
- **Donate $10 to $25 grocery store gift cards** for food bags given to vegetarians and families who traditionally eat something other than turkey and ham for their holiday meals.
- **Donate new gloves, hats and scarves** for residents of the Open Arms Men’s Shelter and Samaritan House Women’s Shelter.
- **Donate sports balls, board games** and multi-cultural dolls for the children and teenagers in the Brighter Futures Youth Programs.
- **Donate money online** at www.liftingupwestchester.org to help fill any gaps or last-minute needs.

For specific date and timing information on Holiday LIFT activities, contact the Community Outreach Department at ninzinna@liftingupwestchester.org or call 914-949-3098 ext. 9735. You can also go to www.liftingupwestchester.org/holiday-lift/.

To view the full article online, please visit: http://whiteplains.dailyvoice.com/events/help-local-folks-in-need-through-lifting-up-westchester/725110/