

North Jersey storm victims receive clothing, food relief from Washington, D.C., ministry

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GARFIELD — Laura Taylor cringed on Saturday as she recalled the bone-chilling cold that spread through her apartment last month and left children and her shivering, after superstorm Sandy knocked out their electricity. At one point, Taylor admitted, "we put on the oven," to cut through the chill.



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North Jersey residents who lost belongings in superstorm Sandy select clothing donated by 'Operation Rescue' on Saturday at the Garfield Recreation Center.

On Saturday, with the help of "Operation Rescue" — a clothing and food giveaway sponsored by a Washington, D.C.-based ministry, "Takin' it to the Streets," and hosted by Friendship Baptist Church in [Garfield](#) — Taylor found a safer way to fight off the winter cold: several warm blankets.

"I really needed the blankets," she said, the expression on her face turning to delight and gratitude as she thanked God for her finds. "They are really nice."

Hundreds of people, many of whom lost clothing, children's toys and other belongings to water damage related to the storm, crowded into the [Garfield](#) Recreation Center on Saturday afternoon to take advantage of the giveaway.

Some gently used and some new, items of clothing were piled two feet deep on tables across the recreation center gymnasium. Families filled black plastic bags with puffy winter coats, towels, dresses, blue jeans, jumpers for toddlers, and shoes. Another table was stacked with Bibles and inspirational pamphlets in English and Spanish.

And while some came to find basic necessities, others showed up with items to donate, including one man who came with his family to deliver baby formula and cases of bottled water.

Arthur Bryant, pastor of Friendship Baptist, explained the motivation behind the giveaway: "You have to ask: 'What would Jesus be doing?'" he said. "What Jesus would be doing looks like this," he said, pointing toward the crowds, many of them children. "He loved the people."

Ronnie Hampton, founder of "Takin' it to the Streets," said his ministry targeted the [Bergen County](#) area because "you guys had a tragedy that happened." He said a team of 10 people drove up to [Garfield](#) on Friday, bringing clothing that volunteers had been collecting for months in the D.C. and Maryland areas.

Hampton said all of the ministries costs are covered by donations.

He said the ministry tries to meet people's basic needs for food and clothing, and then talks about their spiritual needs. "First, you feed the physical man," Hampton said.

Barry Hicks, a [Garfield](#) father of five, said he and his wife collected two bags of clothing, including a winter coat Hicks found for himself. He said the family lost clothing after the storm when their basement flooded. The clothing began to rot and could not be worn again, he said. "We had to throw some out," he said.

Yet, he was all smiles on Saturday as he struggled bringing the stuffed bags to his car. The clothing, and some canned goods, "are a blessing," he said repeatedly.

Participants were also treated to free hot dogs with chips and juice drinks. Nurses from area health agencies were also on hand to provide health screenings, while some participants enjoyed gospel music played on a nearby stage.

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