

Relief for Sandy Victims

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The Recreation Center of Garfield, N.J., was the distribution site for items donated to assist residents of the area and surrounding townships to recover from Hurricane Sandy. Items included coats, winter clothing, toiletry items, blankets, rain boots, rain gear, non-perishable food items, and others. Volunteers also provided health screenings, hot meals, gospel music, praise and worship, and intercessory prayer.

Donations were contributed by many Free Methodists churches, including those of the Wilkes-Barre District, and were delivered by Pastor Al Sones of Good News Church in Mechanicsburg, Penn. New Vision Fellowship of Forestville, Md., conducted a coat drive; Bethel FMC in Fort Washington, Md., conducted a coat and toiletries drive. The community outreach event included several partners from the D.C., Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) area, including Higher Cause Productions of Arlington, Va., Taking it to the Streets' "Nu Dimensions" Outreach Ministries of Alexandria, Va., and host church Friendship Baptist Church of Garfield, N.J., which provided information on community logistics, secured the venue, and provided volunteers. Samrawit Yohannes of Bethel, Fort Washington FMC volunteered, along with several who came by van from the DMV area. Minister John Owen of Crisis Chaplains Ministry donated 800 copies of the book of John, 500 in English and 300 in Spanish.

The community outreach event was attended by about 1200 to 1500 residents who were abundantly blessed to know that people were still thinking of them and willing to make the trip to ease their suffering a month after the storm went through. It was a great day of evangelistic worship, praise and

giving to honor a Savior who has their pain on His heart and used us as a conduit for His love for them.

Some community residents stopped by to ask what they could donate to help with our efforts, left the premises and returned with cases of bottled water, diapers and toiletry items. Other local residents sorted and folded clothing items.

Garfield mayor, Joe Delaney, stopped by to greet us and give us his blessing; Garfield director of parks and recreation, Anthony Furfano, gave us full run of the facility, and we utilized every inch of it. The Garfield Health Unit partnered with three other health agencies to do diabetes screenings, blood pressure checks and registration for lead poisoning testing at the clinic.

Parents played with their children on the floor, people mingled, ministers and evangelists engaged those requesting prayer, and the atmosphere was filled with His glory.

Many were in tears as they left the building with 5-gallon bags filled with clothing and items lost in Sandy's floods. All were grateful that we came, and some from surrounding communities asked if we could come to their townships as well.

This was an amazing opportunity to be of service to a township where services have been slow or absent. There is surely enough ministry to go around in many under-served areas of our nation, but I'm glad that when God said "Who shall I send?," our response was "Here I am, Lord, send me."