

Happy New Year to Wheels of Blessings supporters! You have all done it once again, and so many hungry, cold people are grateful to you.

A brief synopsis of our January 10 trip:

Our three-car caravan held Sr. Carolyn, Carolyn Bergman and Ellen Weir, Deacon Zeke and Jean, and Judy Dobies. Our cars held Sisters of Mercy sandwiches, with fruit, chips, cookies and water, Jean Panzica's minestrone soup and honey butter muffins, Sr. Rose Marie Tresp's bags of toiletries, packed with donated items from the Sisters of Mercy Administrative staff, Mercy Associates, Hay Clinic staff, and numerous individuals, McDonald's gift cards from the staff of the Sisters of Mercy's Marian Center, also coats, boots, socks, shoes, etc. donated by so many of you.

++ We found that one of the larger camps had been moved on. Our friend with colon cancer who many refer to as "The Mayor" wasn't there anymore. Judy and Zeke found "The Mayor" and a few others, although they said, "they will probably make us move on again." The homeless are essentially nomads, always forced to "move on." All nomads of circumstance, financial disaster, addiction, choice, or trauma.

++ Thanks to Sr. Rose Marie Tresp and some friends of Carolyn Bergman's, we donated 4 large bags of hats to the Gaston County United Way, to be distributed through the Continuum of Care Committee, which is a service for the homeless population in Gaston and Lincoln counties. The CoC Committee is sponsoring the annual "Point in Time" homeless count on January 23, and will distribute the hats at that time. Wheels of Blessings will continue collaborative efforts with CoC.

++ We talked with a man on a bike, noticed his ragged shoes, asked him if he would like some nice, sturdy boots. He immediately said YES! We asked him what size he is, he said, 10, we had size 13 boots, but he said he would take them and just stuff something in them to make up the two extra inches.

++ We met a woman pushing a roll-ator. She was very obviously in pain, and said she was waiting on paperwork to get her two knees and hip replaced. She sleeps at the Salvation Army shelter at night; all shelter guests must leave during daylight hours...so they are on the streets.

++ We saw our friend "Kurtis", whom we reported on in the last several newsletters. He got a new job and is now able to pay for the motel room with "Belinda", 72 who has cancer.

++ We arrived in the middle of an incident at a camp in the woods behind the hospital. A woman had been attacked in her tent by someone trying to steal what little she had. The police were called, ambulance, etc.

++ Many of the people we encounter do work. We wondered how they get showers, clean clothes, etc., transportation to get to work.

Lastly, we share on the website a photo (taken with permission) of the 88-year-old who lives in a toolshed beside her former home, which is now dilapidated and unlivable. She refuses to leave the property. She and Sr. Carolyn Mary have a close relationship, as Sister visits her several times a week and brings her food and supplies. The woman's church helps her with a heat source and food (the toolshed is not insulated, with no water). This woman has especially touched all of us on the Wheels of Blessings team. I (Ellen Weir) was moved to write a poem about her, see attachment.

Once again, thank you for all you do, with love, to support this ministry!

Wheels of Blessings Team: Sr. Carolyn Coll, Judy Dobies, Carolyn Bergman, Mary Wright, Ellen Weir