



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FAYETTE COUNTY FAMILY DONATES EASTER BASKETS TO CYS

Uniontown, PA – Easter will be a little brighter this year for some of Fayette County’s children, thanks to a local family’s generosity.

The Helping Heroes Foundation, started by the family of the late Hunter Braddee, recently donated about 175 Easter baskets to Fayette County Children and Youth Services (CYS).

“They wanted to do something for our families,” Gina D’Auria of CYS said. “They put together, and they are donating, Easter baskets for kids who are in out-of-home care placement.”

Hunter’s family, along with foundation director Sherry Williams, delivered some of those baskets March 24, with Hunter’s grandfather even driving a McClellandtown Volunteer Fire Company truck to the event. Refreshments were served, including cookies donated by Penn Craft Market.

Case workers delivered baskets to the children who were unable to attend.

“They did all this in (Hunter’s) memory,” D’Auria said of Hunter’s family. “This fire truck was their first donation to the McClellandtown VFC.”

Hunter Braddee passed away in a motor vehicle crash in June 2019, just days after his fourth birthday. His mother, Amber Gibbs, said the foundation came about as a way to remember her son and his fondness for helping others.

“My son loved to help people, so I’m doing it in his memory, and I’m trying to help as many people as I can,” she said, adding that reaching out to others also helps her deal with her grief.

Bryan McKahan, Hunter’s grandfather, said all donations to the foundation go back into the community.

Donating a fire truck made sense because not only did Hunter love them, but his family also is heavily involved in McClellandtown VFC. Bryan McKahan is the company’s chief engineer, while Gibbs is a firefighter and a member of the auxiliary. Hunter’s grandmother, Lisa McKahan, and Williams, Gibbs’ best friend, are auxiliary members.

Williams said members of the fire company helped put together the Easter basket donations.

The Helping Heroes Foundation began in July and has several other good works to its credit, including spaghetti dinners. Williams, an English teacher at Albert Gallatin South Middle School, said students in the after-school program there make blankets, which are then donated to hospitals. The program, called Bunny’s Blanket Buddies because Hunter was nicknamed Bunny, has pledged 50 blankets to WVU Medicine Uniontown Hospital.

The foundation doesn't make donations only on holidays, but Williams said they do try to do something for each special occasion.

"We try to do some form of community outreach for every holiday," she said, noting that the foundation looks to help a different group each time. "(This Easter), we were trying to think of a way to reach the kids who deserved it most."

"We like to help the kids who are in need," Lisa McKahan said.

Plans already are in the works for a few upcoming events, including a touch-a-truck, where local businesses, farmers and other truck owners will bring their vehicles and let kids get an up-close look.

Gibbs said she hopes to make it an annual event, with bounce houses and other fun activities.

In the fall, the Helping Heroes Foundation has plans to help a less fortunate segment of the population.

"For Thanksgiving, we're going to try to prepare dinners for the homeless," Gibbs said.

This may not be the last time the group puts together Easter baskets. "Next Easter, we're thinking about doing baskets for Children's Hospital," Gibbs continued.

For more information on the Helping Heroes Foundation, visit www.rememberinghunter.com.

To find out more about Fayette County Children and Youth Services, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

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