NNB News : 2013 : 02 : 27 : Operation Attack Provides Food and Clothing to Families

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OPERATION ATTACK PROVIDES FOOD AND CLOTHING TO FAMILIES

Operation Attack’s motto is “Sharing God’s abundance with our neighbors” and their volunteers’ commitment to the ministry is proof of that mission.

Enter the double doors of Operation Attack’s location inside Lakeview Presbyterian Church on any Tuesday morning and Peggy Junkin is there to greet you. Surrounded by racks of gently used children’s clothing and shelves stocked with peanut butter, Ramen Noodles and canned vegetables, Junkin has been volunteering with Operation Attack for about six years now. She first learned of Operation Attack through the Westview Presbyterian Church she and her husband William Junkin attend. Along with several area churches, Peggy Junkin said Operation Attack was one of Westview’s missions.

"Most of us do all kinds of jobs," Junkin said. "I meet people when they come in. I work with the clothing — sorting, hanging, and washing." Junkin and her husband also help in the pantry, purchase food and toiletries, pick up donations from the local food bank and free clinic and distribute supplies to clients.

Operation Attack’s presence in south St. Petersburg has been steadfast. In 1967, a pediatrician by the name of Edward Cole saw a need within the community and began collecting children’s clothing in his office. According to Junkin, Cole—a Presbyterian Church member—reached out to Lakeview Presbyterian with a donation and the concept for Operation Attack. Junkin said she believes the name is derived from a Reagan-era philosophy to "attack poverty."

Volunteer Diane Klamer, of St. Petersburg, has been a member of Lakeview Church since she was a child. Having grown up in the area, Klamer knew about Operation Attack early on.

The retired Pinellas County schoolteacher and guidance counselor devotes several days a week to Operation Attack.

"I like volunteering," she said. "It fits in with my work experience and I am able to help people access resources in the community."

Like Junkin, Klamer helps out with just about everything, from "providing leadership within the mission to donations and small projects."

Since 2005, Klamer said her experiences with Operation Attack have been extremely positive and the community response equally so. She said several clients return on a regular basis, some multi-generational. Klamer said the ministry’s history and longtime presence in the community have contributed to the ministry’s success.

"I think it’s a good location for those who come in on a regular basis."

Operation Attack provides clothing four times a year and a 3-day supply of groceries once a month to persons in need. A referral from an agency like the Salvation Army or Daystar or a school or hospital is how clients get started Junkin explained.

Junkin has observed the downward economy affect the mission. A program helping people pay their utility bills ceased in January.

"I think people are hurting in general," she said. "This year, we haven’t gotten as many donations. And
maybe because of the economy, more children are wearing their clothing longer.”

Mary Smith, a 47-year resident of St. Petersburg, also volunteers on a regular basis. Smith, who retired after a 32-year career as a Pinellas County school custodian, first heard of Operation Attack through her mother-in-law.

Although currently a volunteer, Smith said she and her five children were previous clients.

“My children grew up with Operation Attack,” Smith said. “I came and got food and clothing for my family for years.”

Smith said one day she came for clothes and asked if the organization needed help.

“They said yes. And I have been here ever since,”

Smith said. “I have a chance to give back to the community; to the neighborhood.”

By Aimee Alexander

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