

NEWS

VOLUNTEER CENTER OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC.

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Payless Gives Shoes 4 Kids Program benefits Mentoring Moms Family

The Volunteer Center of Bergen County is participating in the 2008 Payless Gives Shoes 4 Kids Program, the first-ever national, grassroots campaign to deliver \$1 million in free shoes to children of families in need.

Forty merchandise gift coupons were distributed to children participating in the Center's two mentoring programs: Mentoring Moms, which provides volunteers who serve as role models and friends to isolated, overwhelmed mothers and their children; and Volunteers In Protective Services (VIPS), in which caring men and women provide friendship, guidance and consistency to abused and neglected children.

One family for which the Payless Gives Shoes 4 Kids program is making a huge difference is that of Geneva a grandmother who cares for two young, school-age children and who experienced a fire in her apartment right before Thanksgiving. The fire destroyed virtually all of the family's personal and household possessions.

Geneva is a warm, loving woman who took on the responsibility of raising her disabled son's two very active children, ages 8 and 10, several years ago. Geneva is 62 years old, and has worked as a home health aide; unfortunately, due to multiple health problems she no longer is able to work.

Her mentor, Joyce says, "This fire has been a tremendous set back for the family, especially around the holidays. The first challenge was to find temporary housing—the extent of the damage to the apartment rendered it uninhabitable."

She continues, "Next thing needed were clothes and home goods. Everyone got out of the apartment safely with basically the clothes on their backs. The Payless certificates will help Geneva get the kids shoes for school."

This story has a happy ending. Geneva was able to find housing, many people stepped forward to donate personal and household items, and Payless played a role in helping the family get back on its feet in time for Christmas.

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Ginny, her mentor Joyce and the grandchildren