

Socketed with love - Organization offers the security of new socks to people in need

By Brenda C. Birmelin,
StarNews Correspondent

Published: Friday, October 16, 2009 at 9:02 a.m.
Last Modified: Friday, October 16, 2009 at 9:02 a.m.

[Click to enlarge](#)

Theresa Tese collects socks and distributes them to agencies that help homeless people.

[Buy photo](#)

Photo contributed by Joe Tese



Theresa Tese wanted to find "something the Lord could use me for that was worthwhile."

On a cold, rainy night in her home in Manorville, N.Y., she prayed fervently. She felt very snug in her warm home in clean clothes and socks. She had a vision that homeless people would feel comfortable, too, if they had clean, dry socks.

A few months later, she moved to Lockwood Folly Estates and soon started her project which she named Comfort Socks. Her financial background enabled her to incorporate her non-profit organization quickly and find a North Carolina sock manufacturer who would give her wholesale prices on socks. Dr. Bryan Satterwhite, a podiatrist, shared his medical expertise. Her husband, Joe, who runs A-1 Virtual Tours.com, a Web design company, built a Web site for Comfort Socks. In October 2008, Comfort Socks was off and running.

"We long to provide the secure and comfortable feeling that putting on a new pair of socks can give someone who feels lost or forgotten by the world," said Theresa.

Comfort Socks provides socks to Brunswick Family Assistance Agency, Coastal Haven, Good Shepherd Shelter, the Early Bread program and homeless shelters across the country.

Theresa researches each local agency and pays them a visit before she sends socks. She also hand delivers diabetic socks to agency directors to insure that the special socks will go to those with a medical need.

"Socks are a renewable need," Theresa explained. "In this economic downturn, more people will be living in homeless shelters. Many homeless people live in the woods and sleep in their shoes."

Angelo's Pizza and Bistro in Shallotte held the first sock drive last November. Since then many groups have held sock drives including the Brunswick County Motorcycle Enthusiasts, the Calabash community, UNCW Athletic Department, Girl Scout troops, and church groups. One Vacation Bible School group sent handmade notes of love to accompany their socks. A student at UNC-CH spearheaded a sock drive in his dormitory. Summer visitors to Ocean Air Camp World provided 475 pairs of socks. Beach House Harley-Davidson sponsored a "Pack Your Saddle Bags with Socks" ride.

From October 19-23, Supply Elementary School will be hosting a sock drive. Socks can be dropped at the school office. Dr. Dwight Willis, principal said, "Teaching compassion is part of our character education program. We want our students to know they can help others who aren't as well off as they are." He adds, "We will use this opportunity in the classrooms to teach foot health and why socks are important".

Sock drop boxes are located throughout the county at Nationwide Insurance offices in Shallotte and Sunset Beach, and Atlantic Foot Specialists in Southport and Shallotte. New Light Christian Fellowship Church in Supply provides storage for the collected socks.

Donations can be made at Comfort Socks' Website www.comfortsocksonline.org. American Express bonus points can be exchanged for cash on the Web site. The Web site has a "heartfelt" page where volunteers share their experiences and sentiments.

"What we need most are men's over-the-calf cotton socks. We can use dress socks for those who are seeking jobs or working. For every twenty-five dollar donation, we are able to keep fifty people's feet clean and dry," said Theresa.

She is also looking for more drop box locations where socks can be collected and literature about the program distributed. Volunteers to head sock drives are always needed.

"We send out love with every pair of socks. Until I started this project, I never knew so many people cared about others," said Theresa.