



COURTESY OF SANLANDO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Sanlando United Methodist Church volunteers pull together for a big push.

One Day at a Time

By Kevin Fritz

Longwood volunteers join thousands in simultaneous community service project.

Be. Go. Do. A lexicon of sorts, these three words stand as a local mission and maxim for members of the Sanlando United Methodist Church in **Longwood**, which just celebrated its 40th anniversary. So when they heard of a new district-wide program designed to serve local communities, they jumped in head first.

Dr. Wayne Wiatt, district superintendent of the Orlando-based East Central District — Florida Conference — United Methodist Church, says Sanlando was one of 75 member churches last November that participated in an inaugural event called SundayServe. Wiatt says the simultaneous community-service project attracted 5,000 volunteers who gave four hours of their time to serve their local communities from Flagler Beach to Kissimmee.

While Sanlando and the dozens of other churches in the district all have on-going community programs throughout the year, this one was designed to make a much larger impact in a single weekend — locally and across the district.

“We wanted to come together for the community and get us out of the pews,” says **Dee Spiller**, Sanlando’s outreach director, adding that each church created its own local projects.

“It was not a top-down program,” Wiatt adds. “We wanted it to be organic.”

In Longwood, volunteers gathered in the church’s fellowship hall and began its SundayServe by packaging 2,200 meals in conjunction with Kids Against Hunger. Each package, which feeds a family of six, requires only boiling water to cook.

The meals were donated to The Sharing Center in Longwood, Loaves & Fishes in Apopka and to residents of the local Mobile Manor Community. Volunteers also prepared 30 Thanksgiving meals for distribution to local neighborhoods.

Next, the volunteering children wrote 150 thank you cards and attached a bag of candy to each one for distribution to the Longwood Police and Fire departments. In the meantime, adults penned 1,000 Christmas cards with personal messages, which were sent to troops in Afghanistan.

But that still wasn’t enough. Volunteers then sewed 60 fleece shawls for adults and children at SafeHouse of Seminole and Pathways to Care.

“People usually arrive at safe houses with nothing and leave with nothing,” says Spiller. “So we thought it would be nice if they could have something that could be just theirs.”

As a bonus, Spiller says her congregation began the weekend by participating in a Wekiva River cleanup with Keep Seminole Beautiful on Saturday, November 3.

Spiller estimates that more than 150 volunteers from Sanlando touched an estimated 10,000 lives that weekend, but notes there is still so much that can be done, especially in our own communities in which we live, work and play.

“There are never enough hours in the day or days in the week,” she says. **L**

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