

# Wal-Mart donates supplies, funding to youth program

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SOMERSWORTH — When Youth Safe Haven Co-director Teresa Johanson went into High Street's Wal-Mart last week looking for a discount on beach towels and water shoes for the 42 children in the safe haven's summer program, she never expected to hear what she heard on the other end of the phone two hours later.

"They said, 'We can do better than that,'" Johanson remembered Thursday as she looked out over the 42 beach bags stuffed with towels, water shoes and bathing suits for each child.

A whole table filled with frisbees, inflatable beach balls, diving rings, spf 50 sunblock, special face sunblock, bug spray and water guns had also been donated.

Wal-Mart associates provided every last item and the store donated \$2,000.

"Teresa expressed they were low on funding," said Department Manager Tanya Hilton, who has a son enrolled in the safe haven's summer day camp program.

That was a week ago. In seven days, associates at the Somersworth Wal-Mart were able to bring in more than \$1,700 in summer-related materials to donate.

For several months, officials with the Youth Safe Haven and Housing Authority knew they were low on funds to run the program and without help would likely be unable to provide the service to the many children who would otherwise participate.

"We were going to have to close our doors mid-June," Johanson said. "And now we'll be able to stay open until September."

Wal-Mart's donation came on the heels of a \$12,000 check from Service Credit Union and \$3,000 provided by the city. They also raised \$700 in a yard sale and netted some money by selling bird houses the children at the safe haven made themselves.

But nothing beat the smiles on the children's faces as they were each presented with a colorful beach bag or backpack stuffed with the beach necessities.

"I got a two-piece bathing suit," said Lauren Winson, 8. Her friend, Toni Neal, 7, pulled pink water shoes, a red T-shirt and a beach towel from her bag. As the summer campers take frequent trips to beaches and lakes, both girls agreed the supplies would be "very helpful" during the summer.

"We did something fabulous to make sure you guys have the best summer possible," Hilton told the group of children.

Housing Authority Executive Director Beth Salinger kept repeating "Wow" over and over as she looked at what the store's employees had managed to bring to the Youth Safe Haven.

"This is just truly amazing," she said. "This is what community effort is."

Hilton said she challenges employees at other stores in the area to do what they did and donate items to the Somersworth Youth Safe Haven.