

Local Law Firm Brings Holiday Cheer to the Homeless

By Monica Yori

Scanlon and Gearinger, an Akron law firm, jumped with both feet into the spirit of the holiday season and hosted a Christmas party beyond compare for some of Akron's homeless families. For the second consecutive year, the law firm organized the annual Christmas party for H.M. Life Opportunity Services, an organization that provides a transitional housing program for homeless, single parent families. The party was held December 18 at Dowd Hall of Annunciation Church.

With much attention to detail, Scanlon and Gearinger transformed the church hall into a winter wonderland of entertainment for 22 families. Santa, attorney Michael O'Neil, even made an appearance to visit with the children and pass out gifts that were provided and wrapped by the staff of the law firm. Bill Heinbuck, owner of Crystal Photography Studios, donated his services to capture on film the excitement of each family's visit with Santa.

Early in the evening, volunteer

lawyers painted faces and helped the children decorate the Christmas tree.

Special entertainment was provided by ventriloquist Mark Wade and his many, colorful puppet friends who captivated the children's hearts and imaginations. Wade was previously awarded "International Ventriloquist of the Year."

Scanlon and Gearinger also provided a delicious Christmas feast which included Italian chicken, vegetables, salad, cookies and a poinsettia cake.

Attorney Mike Delmedico, a volunteer from Scanlon and Gearinger said, "We've been planning this party since October. At the party last year we had such a good time with the families that we couldn't wait to start planning it again. We really believe that H.M. Life Opportunity Services is a worth while cause."

From one activity to another, the children raced around with wide eyes and grins that matched. With so much to do, there was never a dull moment for anyone, although many

adults found that watching the children was more than enough entertainment.

Alicia Tabet McLaughlin, development director, "The outpouring of support that we've received from Scanlon and Gearinger not only at Christmas-time but also throughout the year has been phenomenal. They truly care about the people in this community."

Donations are currently being accepted for the annual HMLOS

Winter Appeal which was kicked off in December with three billboards to raise community awareness of homelessness among families. Their Winter Appeal will end in March. Some of their greatest needs are financial assistance, children's clothing, women's career clothing and volunteers for child care and office work. For more information call HMLOS at 869-5600.

Heralding the holidays

Seasonal bustle was in full swing Monday night as local families and business professionals decked Dowd Hall at Annunciation Church.

Twenty-one moms and 31 children who participate in H.M. Life Opportunity Services' transitional housing program heralded the holiday at the annual Christmas party, sponsored by Scanlon and Gearinger law firm.

Cindy Grady and her tot, Tyler, beamed for their caricature, sketched by George Parmelee. Toddler Corry Moore grinned while Luke Clossman painted a dinosaur on his face.

Pat Hart supervised a lively Christmas bingo game for the kids as photographer Bill Heinbuck of Crystal Images Studio provided complimentary photos of Santa-visit memories.

Santa gave the moms "pamper-me" presents, and children received special gifts they had wished for.

"The kids have been talking about this party for a month," said

Life's development director.

After dinner, ventriloquist Mark Wade provided even more grins and giggles.

H.M. Life Opportunity Services provides transitional housing, tuition and other assistance for single

parents with children under age 12.

Kelly Moore, mother of Tyler. Corry and Stephanie, said, "This is the best program around, because if you need anything — even a ride or a baby sitter, they're there for you!"

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