

Hanover Eagle Scout candidate creates care packages for homeless

By Dana Forsythe

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HANOVER - To reach the rank of Eagle Scout — the highest rank in the Boy Scouts of America — a Scout must plan, organize, develop and produce a service project that will benefit a school, organization or religious institution in his community.

According to the Boy Scout's manual, an Eagle Scout candidate must plan the project, organize the personnel needed for the workload and direct the work to completion.

This year, Hanover resident Alex Judge, 17, tackled a project on behalf of Father Bill's/MainSpring, which has homeless shelters in Quincy and Brockton, to create and assemble 125 care baskets for the people who visit the shelters.

Currently a Life Boy Scout, Judge put together housing starter kits, which will be distributed to people who have been homeless, as they move into permanent housing units through the shelters' Housing First program.

Judge said he heard good things about these shelters and decided to go on a site visit last August at which point he thought to create the kits, which could help the homeless transition into their new lives.

After a short tour of the MainSpring shelter, Judge deemed that the care packages would prove immensely useful for homeless men and women looking to transition their lives.

Included in each of the starter kits is a set of twin bed sheets, a face cloth, a bath towel, one razor, one can of shaving cream, two toothbrushes, one tube of toothpaste, a bar of soap, one stick of deodorant, a bottle of shampoo, one comb and a laundry basket in which the previously listed items are stored and delivered.

"I was really searching for something different for this project," he said. "There are several programs where you can work on bigger projects, but I really wanted to help people directly."

Over two Sundays in June, Judge organized more than a dozen of his fellow Scouts to finish the work of assembling the starter kits at the MainSpring location in Brockton.



Alex Judge of Hanover stands with Tom Washington, director of community relations at MainSpring in Brockton, during a recent work session at the shelter.

“We just worked in an assembly line and put them together in a few hours,” Judge said.

“I really picked up what living in the shelter was like and how important it was for people looking to help themselves,” he added.

Tom Washington, director of community relations at MainSpring said the kits are very important to people who’ve been homeless, and who are transitioning into new apartments.

“Some of our people simply can’t afford these things,” Washington said. “We all were very impressed with Alex and the crew he brought to assemble the kits. They had a little factory going.”

Judge said he raised funds for the starter kits through various Boy Scout fundraisers during the past year and by directly appealing to local businesses for help.



A group of local Boy Scouts pose for a photo with Hanover Eagle Scout candidate Alex Judge during a recent work session at the MainSpring homeless shelter in Brockton.

He also collected bottles and cans at the Hanover Transfer Station, trying to raise enough to put together the packages.

“I really got an overwhelming response from a lot of the local businesses around here,” he said. “BJ’s, Building 19, Rite Aid, Wal-Mart, Shaw’s, Stop & Shop and Roche Bros. all helped out a lot.”

According to Judge, each business made a direct monetary donation while some companies like Wal-Mart provided great discounts on goods, such as selling him the laundry baskets for just 75 cents apiece.

Since completing his work for the shelter, Judge has almost finished documenting his project and will present it to the Old Colony Eagle Review Board in Kingston for review, at which time he’ll be interviewed for the rank of Eagle Scout.

“One of our missions is to get people, families, children and individuals into homes,” Washington said. “But once we find them housing, they’re starting over. They don’t have the basic items like towels, sheets and personal care items.”

Of the 125 kits Judge has put together, Washington said 75 were immediately shipped to a housing development in Quincy and many more were handed out in Brockton.

“We have about 250 housing units, so they went quick,” Washington said.

He added that many residents of Father Bill’s and MainSpring are struggling and many are not working, so the kits, filled with the basics are a huge help.

Judge, who will be a senior at Hanover High in the fall, said he hopes to study music education moving forward. “I’m just happy that my project could help out people who really need it,” he said.

For more information about the project, or to donate to Father Bill’s or Mainspring, check out www.fatherbillsmainspring.org.