

Putting a wrap on community spirit

Sanderson MacLeod partners with charitable foundation

By Denise Falk
Correspondent

PALMER — Employees at Sanderson MacLeod, Inc. in Palmer spent some time “clowning around” on a recent Saturday, and all for a good cause. Company volunteers teamed up with the Clowning for Kidz Foundation to wrap and distribute toys donated by the Hasbro Corporation to help fill the Christmas wish lists of local children.

The Clowning for Kidz Foundation, a non-profit charity headquartered in West Warren, requested and received donations from Hasbro. The toys were earmarked for children at the Old Mill Pond School in Palmer where 200 families received vouchers to pick up toys to help fill their children’s wish lists, said Jim Allard, founder of the Clowning for Kidz Foundation.

For a second year Sanderson MacLeod opened up its facility to the Clowning for Kidz Foundation as a toy wrapping and distribution site, he said.

Approximately 15 company employees filed in as early as 8 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 4 to begin wrapping the 400 donated toys, said Linda Mitchell, vice president of administration at Sanderson MacLeod. Employees who could not volunteer on the day of the event provided refreshments for families while they picked up the toys, she said. “I’m impressed,” said Allard, referring to the numbers of Sanderson MacLeod employees that turned out for the event. Toy selection donated by Hasbro included Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head, Life, Nerf footballs, Transformers, Pictureka, Tinkertoy and Fur Real Pets.

“Employees were thrilled to help out,” said Mitchell. “They had so much fun volunteering their time and effort.”

And fun is what the Clowning



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Clowning for Kidz representatives George Staiti (left) and Jim Allard (a.k.a. Nit-Wit), both of West Warren, check out some of the 400 wrapped toys ready for donation.



A group of Sanderson MacLeod volunteers and Clowning for Kidz members gathered to wrap toys for distribution.

for Kidz Foundation is all about.

“The World Runs on Laughter” is the motto of the non-profit charity now in its third year of operation. “We hope by sharing our love, laughter, time and resources, we will bring genuine smiles to the faces of all children,” said Allard. “The Clowning for Kids Foundation, Inc. was organized and formed for the

sole purpose of helping children, by advancing, and teaching the art of clowning. It is our desire through clowning to educate children on self-empowerment in order to build their confidence and show them how to laugh,” he said.

Through clowning events, the organization receives donations that in turn go directly to the kids, said

Allard. “Helping children in need, that is our priority,” he said.

The organization is lucky that it has indeed received many donations, said Allard. With continued growth, Allard has signed on fellow volunteer George Staiti, also of West Warren, as secretary to oversee the budget and analyze just where donations should go, he said. Past recipients include the Autism Research Institute, associations for abused and neglected children, teen scholarships, donations of equipment for special needs, and others. The Clowning for Kidz Foundation has also purchased education kits focusing on bullying, character development and sexual abuse issues that schools, day care facilities and other organizations can borrow at no cost to bring about awareness in these areas, said Allard. The foundation has participated in workshops for scouting groups and other youth organizations, child identification programs, programs for seniors and a wide range of public functions, said Allard.

With approximately 20 clowns on hand to serve local communities and those as far reaching as Boston, Clowning for Kidz continues to offer clowning classes to individuals wishing to join the ranks, said Allard, who also portrays “Nit-Wit” the clown when in costume. All prospective clowns go through extensive background checks including Criminal/Sex Offender Record Information (CORI/SORI), he said.

Deemed a success by organizers from Clowning for Kidz and Sanderson MacLeod, the holiday event looks promising to continue in years to come.

“We had a lot of fun and a lot of volunteers to help,” said Jim Pascale, president of Sanderson MacLeod. “We’ll be here to help Clowning for Kidz as long as they need us.”

Additional information about the Clowning for Kidz Foundation can be found at www.clowning-forkidzfoundation.org or by contacting the organization’s office located at 2162 Main St. in West Warren at 413-454-7234.