

Teddy Bear Donation Will Help Children in Crisis

On Friday, May 17, Georgiana Gordon and Margaret Trenchard-Smith of the Columbia County Coalition for Human Dignity (CCCHD) met with Officer Mikael Walter of the Vernonia Police Department. Officer Walter received a donation of about three dozen teddy bears and other stuffed animals to place in VPD patrol vehicles to have on hand for children in crisis.

When an officer responds to an accident, fire, domestic dispute, or other traumatic situation involving children, the officer will now have a plush little friend to give to a child to help provide comfort and caring. Officer Walter happily accepted charge of this new menagerie telling Gordon and Trenchard-Smith that, to his knowledge, VPD has never had teddy bears to give to children in crisis. He was quite enthusiastic about having the bears available in his patrol unit.

"I have a background in law enforcement and have seen this kind of community support for the children in crisis met by police officers," said Gordon. "Providing a plush friend to a child who has just been in an accident, a house fire, a case of domestic discord, or otherwise traumatized, can provide comfort and assurance on a level, we as adults rarely consider. The Columbia County Coalition for Human Dignity was seeking a community project that would assist some of the less fortunate, and more rural members of our community. We landed on this idea, and it actually made each one of us smile."

The Officer Buddy Bear Program has been in action nationwide for decades, but rarely extends to rural communities like those in Columbia County, explains Gordon. "We felt it was important to make sure children in our community who are in crisis would have access to the comfort a bear would provide."

Columbia County Coalition for Human Dignity is a large community organization with about 200



members. They put the word out on social media that we were collecting bears, and the bears just started coming in! "One woman donated about 40 bears that she had collected during the course of cleaning vacated apartments," said Gordon. "The bears were new, some still with price tags attached. We ended up collecting around 100 bears. Each bear was inspected, and wrapped to keep them clean until the officer needs them."

Gordon said they would like to see the project continue annually.

Where Do You Read The Voice?

Oaklynn Rosenstiel caught up on the local news in the Voice while getting her hair done at the Wild Child Salon in Vernonia.



The Postal Letter Carriers Food Drive on May 11 yielded 321 pounds of food for Vernonia Cares. Pictured is Vernonia Postmaster Melissa Kinney-Takata and Vernonia Cares President Tina Brewington.



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