

Earth Day 2012



Volunteerism & Charitable Giving

Name: Purposeful Acts of Kindness

Location: Southeast Regional Office

Years with DEP: 18

Eighteen years ago, employees of DEP's Southeast Regional Office decided that they could make an impact not only on the environment during work hours, but also on individual lives through volunteer giving.

In response, the region's Purposeful Acts of Kindness (PAK) initiative was begun by energetic employees who formed a committee, identified worthy causes and staged fundraisers to support their efforts – all on their own time.

Over the years, PAK has contributed time and money to many good causes, including ALS, American Cancer Society, Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundations, Special Olympics and Doctors without Borders, but their most remarkable body of good work has been the adoption of a North Philadelphia elementary school.

The John Welsh School, located in the West Kensington section of the city, is an oasis of learning in a crime-ridden neighborhood. Student achievement is high, and the DEP employees who have been involved with the school recognize the potential of these children to succeed – with encouragement and kindness.

What began as Christmas presents for a few children has grown into a festival of giving for the entire school. After reviewing touching, funny and often wrenching letters to Santa, DEP employees provide gifts to students in grades K-5, and handmade stockings filled with practical and fun goodies for students in grades 6 through 8. Using vacation time, a DEP 'Santa' and group of DEP 'elves' deliver presents to the entire school, along with instruments, outerwear and uniforms to children who might not otherwise have them. During Santa's visit, DEP employees also spend time in John Welsh classrooms, and share their love of environmental science with students.

Throughout the year, PAK raises funds by holding hot dog sales, bake sales, pretzel sales, chili cook offs and its largest fundraiser, a golf outing. The committee raises enough money annually to cover its expenses. Through the generosity of the region's employees, PAK has been able to distribute more than 6,243 presents and 2,685 stockings to John Welsh students since 1994.

PAK believes that kindness is learned by being a recipient of it, and that in return, the giver gets his or her own special reward. Hundreds of current and former employees of DEP's Southeast Regional Office have been rewarded through their kindness.

