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AARP members a big help to seniors

By Jenni Vincent, Journal staff writer

POSTED: January 13, 2010

MARTINSBURG - Ricardo Stith believes in preparing for the proverbial rainy, and especially snowy, day.

That's why Stith, president of the Martinsburg AARP Chapter, joined forces with dozens of other local members to help create "blizzard boxes" for area homebound senior citizens.

He said the boxes contain an emergency food supply, which can be used in the event of inclement weather or some other problem that may interfere with a senior receiving a home-delivered meal.

Although this was his group's first time to assemble and deliver the boxes, Stith said the members did well and were able to prepare a total of 822 meals.

"It really was impressive considering the truck arrived at just a few minutes after noon at the Berkeley County Senior Citizens Center to deliver the supplies, and the last meals were delivered at 2:58 p.m. I would say that is pretty good, especially for our first time doing this," Stith said.

He credited his fellow members and senior center volunteers for the success.

"Not only were they organized, they really wanted to make a difference, and it showed. We had everything ready to go and were just waiting for the truck, so it was good right from the start," he said.

Stith estimated that at least 30 volunteers participated in the project.

The timing was good, especially since many area residents have already been impacted by snow and frigid temperatures, Stith said.

"It really was a great time to do this, what with all of the snow we have had and probably more storms to come. Folks just don't know what they will be facing, except that they do realize there is a lot more winter left this year," he said.

Reaction has also been good, with recipients happy to receive the blizzard box goodies, which includes a variety of items such as canned soup, desserts like pudding, juice boxes and even water, Stith said.

Each person received two of the boxes.

"Folks have been very pleased; they really have liked them," he said, adding that the goal is to make this an annual project.

His wife, Sandra, credited the national AARP organization for having helped spearhead this project.

"I think it is wonderful because just think how bad it gets when we have a big snow. And there are a lot of people who just can't get out, let alone the folks who would have trouble trying to deliver the meals. This is when it will really help," she said.

"Even when they can't deliver, they will know that their clients have something to eat for a couple of days," she said.

Sarah Jones, who visits the senior center frequently, said she was glad to be part of this effort because of its benefit to homebound seniors.

"It will give them something to eat until they can get something else," Jones said.

Gloria Young agreed that this is a good idea, saying, "When it gets cold and Meals on Wheels cannot make a run, then they will have these in their homes. So it should come in very handy when they have that kind of need."

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Article Photos



Journal photo by Jenni Vincent
AARP members pack a total of 822 boxed meals for senior citizens who may find themselves in need during inclement weather and other types of emergencies.

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