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Clothing swap hill send helping hands to Louisiana

By Mary Wenzel/Staff Writer

Wednesday, January 17, 2007 - Updated: 04:13 PM EST

MARLBOROUGH — Volunteers headed for New Orleans recently held a Swap-O-Rama-Rama as a novel way to raise funds for their upcoming trip.



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Bring a bag of clothing, pay \$5, and take home a bag of clothing was an opportunity for people to clean their closets and possibly pick up a few items that would enhance their wardrobes.

For those who had nothing to bring, a \$10 donation would allow them to sort through the tables of clothing and select items that they could use.

There were skirts, sweatshirts, snow pants and shoes. There were jackets, hats, dresses and jeans.

It didn't take long for Max Hooker to find an orange Marlborough Youth Soccer shirt that he wanted to take home with him.

"It'll take a while for you to grow into it," Marnie Hooker told her son.

The over-sized soccer shirt went home with the 6-year-old as well as a few other items as Marnie Hooker had brought a bag of clothes and paid the \$5.

The volunteers will travel to New Orleans, Feb. 10 to Feb. 17, to help rebuild parts of New Orleans, ravaged by Hurricane Katrina.

The tables in Parish Hall of the First Church in Marlborough, Congregational filled up quickly on Jan. 7 as local folks dropped off clothing that they couldn't use and at the same time found new items that they could add to their wardrobe.

Liz Mahoney was on hand sorting donations into piles of women's, men's and children's items.

She is one of the volunteers going to New Orleans.

"I felt compelled to go," said Mahoney. "It is an opportunity to actually, physically do something, not just write a check or donate clothes. It's selfish, I'm doing this for me."

The trip to New Orleans, will include 20 workers who will rebuild houses and work in schools.

Many of the volunteers are members of First Church, but not all of them.

"I'm looking forward to being exhausted," continued Mahoney. "I expect to be doing a lot of good hard work."

Transportation, food for meals while they are in New Orleans and other expenses they may incur is the reason the group of volunteers are fund-raising.

"I've never had the chance to do this kind of work before," said Richard Rowell, the owner of R&S Cleaning and a deacon at First Church.

Rowell feels that his electrical skills as well as his knowledge of carpentry and mold issues will be useful in New Orleans.

"We will go to the bones of the house," explained Rowell.

Houses damaged in the wake of Hurricane Katrina will be rewired and insulated before putting in new sheet rock and replacing windows.

"I'll help with cooking for the group and whatever else is needed," stated Elizabeth Waterman who will be traveling to New Orleans with her husband Craig Waterman and her mother-in-law the Rev. Betsy Waters, the interim pastor at First Church.

The Watermans are teachers at The Meeting House, a Quaker boarding school in Rindge, New Hampshire.

Lindsey Seger of Boston, a junior at The Meeting House, will also be joining the group in order to fulfill one week of a four-week program at the school where students are required to do some form of community service.

While in New Orleans, the group of volunteers will stay at a church, using air mattresses and cots for sleeping, and sharing three showers.

The volunteers will take their own sheets and towels but will need to purchase and prepare food for their meals during the one-week stay. They will also rent a van in order to get to the work sites.



Sharon McCarthy, top left, discusses an item of clothing with Renee Mgrass, right, a seamstress, and Suzanne DeMitar, also a seamstress, during the Swap-O-Rama held Jan. 7 at the First Church in Marlborough, Congregational. (STAFF PHOTO BY ERIN PRAWOKO)

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In addition to the Swap-O-Rama-Rama, the group is planning a Mardi Gras Themed Fund-Raiser on Jan. 27, 6 to 9 p.m., at First Church.

A southern-style dinner and a silent auction will be featured. Also there will be live music including jazz, swing and dixie.

All proceeds are to benefit the First Church in Marlborough, Congregational, Work Camp Mission Project to New Orleans, Feb. 10 to Feb. 17.

The cost of the Mardi Gras event is \$20, adults; \$10, children; and \$50, (minimum) family.

To make reservations, call 508-485-6297.

The group is accepting monetary donations as well as lightly used books and games for children and teens.

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