



Local News in Delaware

Habitat event raises funds for homeless at 'shack city'

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Huddled in downtown Delaware they shared blankets, pillows, a CD player, a few books and two over-sized cardboard boxes set up side, insulated with plastic sheeting and duct tape. A slit cut in the cardboard served as a window between cousins Monica Wood and Hewitt's shared cardboard walls.

Delaware Mom Pam Halleck made sure Dylan, a student at the Delaware Area Career Center, was set up with flashlights and ready Saturday night before leaving.

"I think it will be a good experience for them," Halleck said. "He's homeless for the night."

Dylan didn't seem too worried about it; he's slept outside before, and planned to finish up homework for the night. Monica, 15, said she planned to pass the time reading.

Monica and Dylan's makeshift cardboard homes were among the dozens set up in the plaza at the southwest corner of Sandusky and William streets as part of the Delaware County Habitat for Humanity's annual "Shack City" fundraiser. Event organizers expected 500 people to spend the night in cardboard boxes as a means to raise awareness about homelessness and related issues.

"Most kids have no idea what it's like," said Jackie Kuhns, Habitat's interim executive director.

Most Delaware residents don't either, she said. Because Delaware has no homeless shelter, most of Delaware's homeless population spends their nights staying with friends, sleeping in their cars, or travelling to adjacent cities. But not all — two homeless people have spent the night sleeping outside in Delaware while sleeping outside over the last year and a half, she said.

The conspicuous location for the event was selected for exactly that reason; Habitat hoped passers-by would see the group and ask questions.

The event, which had a \$5 registration fee per person, is also a major fundraiser for Habitat's Youth United team; the proceeds will go toward building a house at some point in the future. Habitat's Youth United team built its first completely youth-funded Habitat home on S. Liberty St., in Delaware, earlier this year.

Last weekend's event marked the third Shack City, organizers said.

The participants, mostly area high school students with a dozen or so adult chaperones, set up their boxes around 7 p.m. About an

later, they ate donated pizza before hunkering down for the night. Everyone was bundled up, but temperatures only dipped into the 40s — a far cry from the 13 degrees participants experienced last year, organizers said.

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