

Teens take charge of raking leaves

Thursday, December 21, 2006 - Updated: 12:23 PM EST

Have you ever tried to get your teenager to go out and rake the yard on a Saturday morning? It's right up there with getting them out of bed for school.

For many, this is no easy task. A few weeks back, however, Pam Washek, co-founder of the **Wayland Angels**, wanting to create and build a network of teen angels, enlisted the help of Anne Becker and Wendy Price. They posted a request to recruit some eager teens who would give a couple hours of their time to rake the yards of elderly neighbors, veterans and families in need, who might otherwise not be able to get their yards cleaned.

As the list of volunteers grew, it became apparent that in spite of their busy lives and the offer of community service hours, our teens know the importance of helping others. The date was set with a long list of volunteers but the day arrived and it was pouring rain. The fear was that the momentum would be lost if the event was postponed a week, but there was no choice given the downpour. Calls were made to the homeowners to explain the absence of rakers. One person remarked, "Thank you for calling. I thought you might have forgotten about me." Another, when told that the rakers would be there the following week, said, "That's the best news I've gotten in two weeks."

The following Saturday turned out to be a beautiful day – Becker, Price and Washek arrived at the meeting place with fingers crossed. As the cars started to arrive filled with helpers, it became apparent that our kids also know about commitment – 27 teens, two junior helpers (under 9), and several adults showed up with rakes in hand eager to get started. With a long list of yards, the groups set out to the various locations around town.

As the groups got going, it was evident that raking was taking quite a bit longer. There were many leaves to rake and maybe not enough time in the day to get it all done. Could the promises be fulfilled?

The groups were spread out around town – some finishing up, while others, beginning to tire, were still knee deep in leaves. Price called in the SWAT team across town – "Send back up. Heeeelp!"

Within 10 minutes, the special forces arrived in four different cars, willing to put in the extra effort to complete the last property. Together the group finished the final yard. It was fun, it was community building, and it felt great to see the appreciation of the homeowners.

At the end of the day, the recipient families looked out their windows to their clean yards that the teens beautified on their own time. As one of our veteran recipients said, "They were the most polite and hardworking young men and women I have ever had the pleasure to observe. You and all of Wayland should be proud of them as they not only deserve to receive their (community service) certificates, but they serve as outstanding role models for other teens in Wayland ... I can't tell you how much we appreciated their services at a time when we needed it most."

Another recipient wrote, "I am so grateful for the wonderful work the youngsters and the adults did with the leaves in my yard. I am 83 years old and have been active until this year. I have always cleaned up the yard myself, however this year I was not able due to a fall last January. I broke both my wrists ... If I try to use them too much they are painful ... Thank you all again."

The teens felt good having made a difference and bringing a smile to many.

Many thanks to Lynch Landscaping. This community service event would not have been possible without their help as they followed behind in their trucks to pick up the many piles of leaves collected all around town, working into the night to get it all done. Thank you for your many hours!

And, thank you to Starbucks Coffee and Donelan's Market for their continuous generosity in supporting events in our community.

To the many volunteers, thank you for giving your time and for making a difference in our community. Teen Rakeout participants were Andrew Becker, Corey Scult, Nick Van Sciver, Mike Synodis, Meg Dejong, Gabe Yanoff, Andrew Connaughton, Sarah Gordon, Chris Ogletree, Neal Graves, Matt Hart, Tyler O'Regan, Ryan Pesaturo, Ainsley Washek, Kathryn Washek, Katie Miller, Izzy Stern, Lynn Moschella, Melissa Otis, Caitlin Falvey, Hannah Sieber, Emily Wright, Meredith Traquina, Nina Price, Jessica Washek (junior helper!), Drew O'Regan (junior helper!), Matt Devlin, Ryan Devlin and Jenny Price.

If you are a teen and would like to be alerted to opportunities to assist others in need in our town, please e-mail the Wayland Angels at mail@waylandangels.org

After witnessing the goodness and helpfulness of our local teens, it is clear that the Wayland Teen Angels will accomplish great things.

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