

## Poor Handmaids making efforts to aid local homeless families

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It all started with a dream about K-Mart.

Sister Connie Bach, director of volunteers for the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ out of the Center at Donaldson, said she had a dream several months ago about turning the abandoned Kmart building in the Pilgrim Place Shopping Plaza into a warming center for the local homeless population.

When inquiries about the property went unanswered, she took to the streets to seek out those in need of immediate assistance.

"I took some time driving around Plymouth, ... but was (later) told that the homeless can be good at hiding," Bach said. "Homelessness isn't always what people think. It can be families living in motel rooms, trailers — places that don't provide the best shelter for a family."

Bach explained that homelessness can manifest as couch-hopping between friends, or other instances that result in someone having "no real place to call home."

Whole families with two parents and three or four children are living in a single hotel room," Bach said. "They often are not counted among the homeless."

In January, Bach reached out to Todd Zeltwanger, director of fund development for Cultivate Food Rescue, to begin supplying the area homeless with food, meals and other essential products. This includes blankets, hats, scarves and occasionally boots, as they become available.

It started at 50 bags per week, but has grown to 100, offering two per family.

To date, Bach reported the group has distributed around 1,000 bags around the area.

"We hope to keep this going for a long time," Bach said. "The persons who receive food, paper goods that they cannot buy with food stamps, blankets, coats, ... are so very grateful for, as they say,

'helping us get through a rough period.'"

Bach emphasized that while she is the coordinator of the program, its success can be attributed to its volunteers and supporters.

Even while passing out the bags, Bach said they are also supporting other nonprofits. They will inform recipients of other nonprofits, such as the Head Start program for families with young children.

Bach said there are around 45 volunteers assisting with the endeavor, including people helping put meals together, aiding with distribution and offering donations.

Anyone interested in volunteering or offering donations can contact Bach at 574-340-6409 or [connie.ss@att.net](mailto:connie.ss@att.net).



**Photo Caption:** Poor Handmaids making efforts to aid local homeless families