

Imagine By Sarah Munley, AmeriCorps

Imagine spending a winter night on the streets. Imagine waking up on Christmas morning to nothing but a desolate room. Imagine being seven and hungry each night your helpless frail body goes to bed. But now imagine this:

Throngs, hordes, and masses of people stepping forth with overwhelming enthusiasm to teach young children how to read, to deliver meals to seniors constricted to their homes on Thanksgiving, and this multitude of loving and caring individuals being the teens right here in Sussex County. In just the past seven years, the neighbors, friends, and family here in Sussex have dedicated over 75,500 hours to the remarkable and tender non-profit organization titled Pass It Along.

I have had the privilege and honor to serve with Pass It Along for several years now and I would like to tell you a quick but deeply impacting and powerful story. Just this past Christmas I was assisting at Pass It Along's event 'Holidays Around the County' at which people who are in need are able to receive books, clothes, a stuffed animal, and toys for the seasonal holidays. I was aiding a middle-aged woman in her decision of which items to select for her two teenage daughters. I suggested a memory board to decorate their room with and she informed me that in two days her daughters will no longer have a room.

I looked back at her inquisitively and she began to cry telling me that her husband took everything they owned, cleared out the bank account, and left her and her two daughters to fend for themselves during the frigid, icy, and excruciatingly cold weather a week before Christmas and three days before an atrocious ice storm. At that moment I had a feeling inside like no other where I wanted to weep for her and ask them to live with my family but I took her in my arms, hugged her, and reassured her.

How is it acceptable for anyone to have to shield themselves against the harmful and chastising cold of winter with no home? It is not. Personally, imagining me in such a situation sends chills down my spine and pains my stomach. I left that day from the toy shop knowing that we were able to support a family in their time of desperate need and holding the numbness in my heart that this woman and her children were not the only ones suffering.