

IN THE HEART OF GLOUCESTER COUNTY

Plain Dealer



Volume 83, Number 20

May 15, 2008

SouthJerseyLocalNews.com

Mothers Matter pampers moms

Group delivers gift baskets on Mother's Day to those in need throughout the tri-county area

By **CLAIRE LOWE**
Editor

Susan Rose is a woman on a mission to make sure that everyone knows: Mothers Matter. Rose is the founder of the Lauren Rose Albert Foundation, striving to "bring Lauren's legacy of love, laughter and light to children and families in need; to help those who do not have a lot of sunshine in their lives."

"We are trying to help the women who fall through the cracks... and there's a lot,"

Susan Rose
Founder of the Lauren Rose Albert Foundation

"The Lauren Rose Albert Foundation was created in 2000 in memory of our oldest daughter, Lauren; and the mission is to

help meet women's unmet needs," Rose explained.

Lauren died suddenly in 1999 while on vacation with her husband, leaving behind her parents, three younger sisters, her husband and her three children. According to the Foundation's website, "Lauren possessed tremendous integrity, discipline and above all, great strength of character. She would

always speak up for what she felt was right and would fight for her beliefs with resolve, determination and always, with dignity. Lauren was a steadfast advocate

for a safer, gentler world."

In order to spread that idea to the rest of the world, Rose used the Foundation to start three programs: Mothers Matter, the LRAF College Book Program and the Safe Travel Initiative.

Mothers Matter collects personal beauty products and assembles them carefully into individualized baskets for women in need such as women confronting challenges everyday and working poor moms. To make it more special, they hand-deliver the baskets to various locations on Mother's Day.

"There is government help and agency help, so much help available, but we are trying to help the women who fall through the cracks, whose needs are not met by government or agency



PHOTO BY JAY ROWLES

Volunteers (left to right) Corky Jacobi, Anne Marie Wamsley and Betty Bartkovsky, and Susan Rose stand with many of the baskets they had assembled for Mothers Matter in the Grenloch Community Center.

services, and there's a lot," Rose said. "We want to really make a difference."

The idea came about during a roundtable discussion with repre-

Continued on page 6

Local organization treats moms on Mother's Day

Continued from page 1

representatives from the postal service, religious groups and government. While deliberating over ways to reach these women, someone said, "Why don't we run a collection of personal beauty products?"

So they started collecting. In their first year, the volunteers were able to assemble 265 gift baskets and hand-deliver them to four locations. The second year proved stronger.

"In the second year doing it, there was a mother from a day care center. She was crying, came up to [the volunteers] and said that was her only Mother's Day gift," Rose explained.

In 2007, Mothers Matter

delivered 1,950 baskets to 34 locations throughout Burlington, Gloucester and Camden counties. This year they delivered 2,150.

On Thursday, May 8, members of the LRAF presented the 10,000th Mothers Matter Mother's Day gift basket to Grandmother in Collingswood. This woman has been raising her 3-year-old grandson.

Then on Friday, May 8, the volunteers delivered baskets throughout Burlington, Camden and Gloucester Counties to day care centers, women's shelters and agencies, pediatric medical day care centers and facilities such as Ronald McDonald House,

Samaritan Hospice, Cooper Pediatrics at Cooper Trauma, Kennedy Health Center, Ethel Lawrence Housing, and more.

A core committee for Mothers Matter meets at the Mothers Matter headquarters in the Grenloch Community Center all year long and oversees the planning and delivery of materials to schools participating in the collection drives as well as delivery of the gift basket. The committee includes 10 members, including co-chair Lisa Moriarty of Washington Township.

Collection drives are held in schools throughout the tri-county area, as well as in Philadelphia. Places

like the Rothman Institute, Jefferson Hospital, Campbell Soup, Valero, Gloucester County College and NJ Manufacturers Insurance participate in the collection drive, as do county and township employees. The collections begin in mid-January and end in March, in order to give comparable time to assemble the baskets.

There are over 50 volunteers that dedicate their time from collection to assembly to delivery, helping Mothers Matter.

According to Rose, a new, but large supporter of Mothers Matter has been the Dollar Tree stores in the region.

"They adopted us and did a collection through their shoppers," she said. "Thanks to them and Jon Denning, regional manager, they put us over the top."

The LRAF hopes to give something special to the mothers who give so much all year long. Rose explained that they are "providing items to them in the gift that are special to them; that they treasure all year long."

Each gift basket is meant to brighten some mother's, grandmother's or caretaker's Mother's Day.

"Every one is prepared with such care and love, color coordinated to make it look beautiful and be special," she said. "The last thing that [the moms] are going to do is to think of themselves, take care of themselves or spend money on personal items for themselves."



PHOTO BY JAY ROWLES

Mothers Matter co-chair Lisa Moriarty, AnnMarie Nemeck, site supervisor for the Blackwood Headstart, and Founder Susan Rose, delivered baskets to the Headstart on Friday, May 9. Here, they sit with Aniyah Schell, 4, who will deliver a basket to her mother.