



Area women's ministry spreads the spirit of the season to women in need

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Last Tuesday, five women from the Women in God's Service (WIGS) ministry met at Saks Baptist Church to put together 10 gift baskets of items most people take for granted.

The baskets — decorated with red and green tissue paper and stuffed to the brim with shampoo, conditioner, body wash, lotion, loofahs, Christmas cards and plastic candy canes filled with M&M's — are intended for the women living at the Salvation Army women's shelter in Anniston.

The idea began last year when WIGS volunteer Coni White noticed coupons for the Wal-Mart hair salon were printed on the back of her receipts.

White called the shelter and told them she had some coupons that the women living there could use, and asked what else she could do to help. When she learned that the shelter's bathrooms were communal, she had the thought of also giving each woman a wire basket filled with assorted toiletries.

Providing gift baskets to those in need is just one of the things WIGS does. According to president Margie Winnie, each month the women of WIGS perform different services within the community.

"The organization is founded on services. That's the primary, most important thing that we do" Winnie said. "But the unique thing about WIGS is that the groups that do the services choose their own service to do."

Winnie says that WIGS is different from other ministries because it encourages its members to band together with others who have similar interests and passions.

There is also a strong sense of equality among members, she continued. All of the leadership roles are shared by two people, and all services are completed by groups of at least two volunteers.

Since its start in 2010, the women of WIGS have been busy helping others — both at home and abroad. They donate to the needy in the community through their food pantry, and on Dec. 19 they served a Christmas dinner to those at the Center of Hope Ministries.

The ministry has also sent baskets, cards and drawings to those serving overseas in the military, said Diane Bennett, the group's secretary.

"One of the units in Afghanistan that had received care packages from WIGS sent us the United States flag that had flown in Afghanistan and also a picture of the men in unit in response to the care packages. It's far-reaching. It's not just Calhoun County," she said.

WIGS members have also donated crocheted baby blankets, gowns and caps to hospitals for those who have had stillborn infants.

Bennett recalls a nurse who works in the stillborn program.

"She said that it had made such an impact on the parents that it had impacted her staff, as well," Bennett said. "And it was just from one of the (WIGS) ladies going and saying 'What can we do?'"

By 2014, Winnie hopes to replicate the ministry throughout the community and surrounding counties. They have the infrastructure and the means to do it, she said, they just need some help getting the word out.

"I see it," she said. "I really see it in my mind, this organization all over the country."

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