

Clinton Twp. Eagle Scout project benefits Capuchin Soup Kitchen

Student salesman invests in hygiene products, donations

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Boy Scout James Eldred earned about \$3,600 through a fall seasonal décor sale, with the majority of the money going towards his Eagle Scout project of assisting the Capuchin Soup Kitchen and Capuchin Services Center. Pictured are scouts Kacen Lehl and James Eldred assisting a customer in selecting a pumpkin at the sale. (PHOTO COURTESY OF KELLY ELDRED)

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Inspired by an empty table, Boy Scout James Eldred put his entrepreneurship skills to work on Oct. 1 to sell fall seasonal décor, earning approximately \$3,600 and making a key step toward obtaining Eagle Scout rank.

“I’ve learned that people are willing to help if a good cause is behind stuff,” Eldred said.

Eldred is a 14-year-old sophomore at Chippewa Valley High School in Clinton Township, and a Clinton Township resident. He is currently a member of Boy Scout Troop 248.

“Most of the older scouts waited until they were 17, and they were rushing to get stuff done. I thought it would be good to get stuff done early so I won’t stress when I’m 17,” Eldred said.

To attain the Eagle Scout rank, a scout must do a project to benefit the community and show leadership, according to Eldred. He began thinking about the type of project he would like to do in February.

“In the past I have volunteered at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, I thought it was an organization I would want to reach out to,” Eldred said.

The Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit offers a number of different initiatives, including a meal program, substance use disorder support and treatment, the On the Rise Bakery and Café, Earthworks Urban Farm, the Capuchin Services Center, the Rosa Parks Children and Youth program, and the spiritual care program. The Capuchin Services Center offers a food pantry that resembles a small grocery store, a clothing distribution area and an appliance distribution area for families reestablishing households after a fire or a stay in a shelter.

A visit to the Services Center established for Eldred what his Eagle Scout project should be.

“They had stuff like food and clothes and a table labeled hygiene stuff, for hygiene kits and supplies. There was nothing on that table and I thought it was important to get hygiene items,” Eldred said.

Eldred decided his Eagle Scout project should be the purchase of family-sized hygiene kits with full-sized items inside each, benefitting the Capuchin Services Center.

“My project was a little pricey, full-sized hygiene stuff for families,” Eldred said.

Keeping in mind that the project required plenty of cash to complete, Eldred sought a tried and true method of fundraising. He said he learned about the profit of a fall seasonal décor sale from a fellow scout. He contacted Cherokee Elementary School Principal Heather Batko to reserve Oct. 1 for a fall seasonal décor sale to benefit his Eagle Scout project. Eldred also set out on an advertising campaign to get the word out about the sale, setting out lawn signs and speaking before the Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education on Sept. 26. In making his pitch for the décor sale, Eldred gave a detailed description of his Eagle Scout project to the board.

He was recognized by the board for his efforts when Superintendent Ron Roberts presented him with a We Make It Happen award and a Dairy Queen gift card.

“James is a poster child for what we as educators tell, or suggest to our students, that they do, and that is to be involved in the school. To not be going in the door and going out at the end of the day type of student, but find something that motivates you in school,” Roberts said during the meeting, referencing Eldred’s involvement not just in Boy Scouts but in band and sports.

The fall seasonal décor sale was held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 1 at Cherokee Elementary School in Clinton Township. Eldred said his family offered support and provided the initial funding to purchase the needed pumpkins, hay bales and cornstalks from Boyka’s Farm Market in Macomb Township. He sold small pumpkins for \$10, \$12 for large pumpkins, \$15 for extra large pumpkins and hay bales or corn stalks for \$8. Eldred said that he earned a total of about \$3,600. Funds will go into creating 150 bags of hygiene projects for the Capuchin Services Center.

“Initially before the fundraiser, I planned to do 50 bags, but the fundraiser did so well I’ll make up to 150 bags,” Eldred said.

The remaining funds of between \$500 and \$600 will be donated to the Capuchin causes, according to Eldred. As the products were purchased and shipped via Amazon, he anticipated being able to assemble them by Oct. 8 and deliver them on Oct. 9 or 10.

Eldred anticipated he would have his Eagle Board of Review this winter, and could obtain the Eagle rank shortly after.