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County employees giving back

Ellis County employees have launched a Christmas gift drive benefitting the children and teens served by the Presbyterian Children's Home in Waxahachie.

"Last year, we participated in Toys for Tots," said Sheriff's Deputy Ken Hatcher. "One of the first questions donors asked was whether the donation would stay right here in Ellis County. We live here, we work here, we pay taxes here, we want to take care of our own folks."

A single e-mail was all it took to round up a room full of volunteers to help Hatcher with the drive. Volunteers met with Steve Hurst of Presbyterian Children's Home on Monday.

"We have 10 homes on the Waxahachie campus – about 80 children – ages six to 18 years," Hurst said. "About 70 percent are teenagers, and it is about 50-50 male and female."

Hurst said the organization also supports children in foster homes and works with the Child and Family program that seeks to work with Child Protective Services to keep families together. In all, about 145 children are served.

Donations of new, unwrapped gifts of \$15 or less in value will be accepted at 17 different locations throughout the county's various facilities. Hurst said the following items are popular among the children and youth in the programs:

- Footballs
- Basketballs
- Rod and reel combos
- Curling irons
- Blow dryers
- MP3 Players
- Hastings or Wal-Mart gift cards

"The District Clerk's Office also has an Angel Tree up, for those that might want to be a little more personally involved," said Human Services Director Diana Buckley. "If you would like to pick out something that a child has specifically wished for – the Angel Tree would be the way to go."

Hurst also noted that there are many other volunteer opportunities at Presbyterian Children's Home throughout the year.

"We always need mentors, and people to help with school work in the evenings," he added.

Employees and members of the public alike are encouraged to participate in the Christmas Gift drive. For more info, contact Hatcher at ken.hatcher@co.ellis.tx.us or Buckley at diana.buckley@co.ellis.tx.us.