

Pappas School Project

For the fourth consecutive year, the Merrymeeting, Inc. (MMI) Phoenix office participated in the Thomas J. Pappas School ("Pappas") holiday drive. Pappas is a public school catering solely to homeless children, founded with the purpose to provide them with services that are not offered by other public schools in an environment where the children are surrounded with other kids faced with similar issues and problems.

Although Pappas does receive funding from the state, unlike other public schools, it does not receive secondary funding through property taxes, overrides, bonds, etc.; therefore, the school depends heavily on gifts, donations and grants to cover the cost of operating the school and to provide additional outreach services to its students and their families.

Unfortunately, Maricopa County has approved a plan that will close the Pappas schools at the end of this school year. Pappas supporters and staff are fighting vigorously through the court system to keep the schools open and would not allow the upcoming closure ruin the holiday season for the families that attend school there.

Historically, MMI had been assigned a specific family and had been given a wish list of items completed by each family member. As this was the practice school-wide, it often resulted in some donors over buying for some families, while other donors purchased very little for others. In an effort to equalize the items given to the families, Pappas decided to produce a generic wish list that was given to all donors and distributed the donated items as they saw fit.

With the assistance of the MMI Cleveland office, an abundant number of the requested items were collected. Among the items donated by MMI employees were clothing, toys, gift cards and household items. The delivery of the donated items to the school were dropped off to be sorted by the staff and assembled into family gift packages. Even though the faces of the recipients remain unknown to us, we can all take satisfaction in knowing that we contributed to making someone's holiday special. Even more so, as this very well may be the last holiday season the Pappas students are able to attend the school.

Pappas has a scheduled court date in February regarding their effort to overturn the County's decision. Although the staff and Pappas supporters remain optimistic, the reality is that unless a judge makes what at this point would be a pretty radical decision, the schools will be closed by summer. In an effort to prepare for the worst, Pappas is exploring other options that would allow them to remain open under a different format (i.e. charter school).

In the meantime, the MMI Phoenix office will continue to support the school throughout the remainder of the school year through various drives. For more information on the Pappas School Project, please contact MMI Charities at learn.more@mmicharities.com or visit the contact us page and submit an online inquiry.