

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Columbia Bank Foundation and Boys & Girls Clubs in New Jersey Joined Hands to Warm the Hearts of the Homeless with Blankets of Hope

Blankets Delivered with Children's Handwritten Notes of Love to People in Need

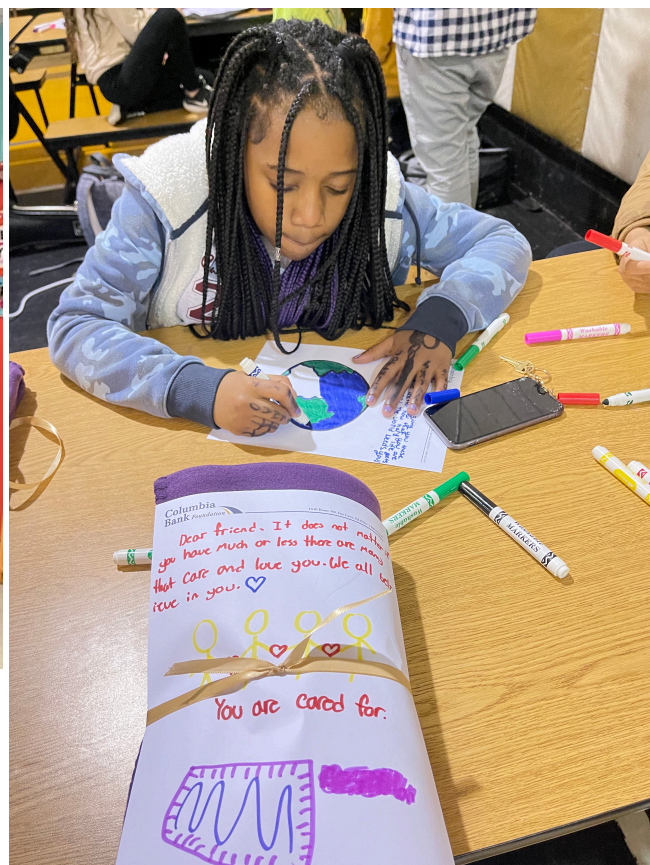
(FAIR LAWN, NJ MAY 31, 2022) — Columbia Bank Foundation, Boys & Girls Clubs in New Jersey, and Blankets of Hope, have once again teamed up to make a difference in the lives of the homeless and other New Jerseyans in need, by wrapping the less fortunate in the comfort of warm blankets. 1,536 "Blankets of Hope" were gifted to community members at shelters, military clubs and other nonprofits, to help uplift spirits and offer compassion.

Purchased by the Columbia Bank Foundation, the blankets were distributed to several Boys & Girls Clubs in New Jersey chapters, where children participated in Blankets of Hope's "Kindness Workshop." Youths were led through an empathy exercise to imagine what it's like to experience homelessness, then created colorful, handwritten notes of hope, love and encouragement, to pair with each blanket. The heartwarming, inspiring gifts were then delivered to local shelters and other organizations.

Said Allyson Schlesinger, Executive Vice President, Head of Consumer Banking for Columbia Bank, and board member of the Boys & Girls Clubs in New Jersey, "Columbia Bank and the Columbia Bank Foundation are always seeking meaningful ways to give back to the New Jersey community. We were thrilled to continue our partnership with Boys & Girls Clubs in New Jersey and Blankets of Hope, and assist with a program that's truly rewarding on so many levels."



Boys & Girls Club in Garfield, NJ with Blankets of Hope to be Delivered to Center for Hope and Safety, Rochelle Park, NJ. Image Courtesy of Columbia Bank Foundation.



Boys & Girls Club Member with a Warming Blanket of Hope. Image Courtesy of Columbia Bank Foundation

Boys & Girls Clubs in New Jersey contributors and blanket recipients are:

Boys & Girls Club in NJ Chapters:

Atlantic City
Camden County
Clifton
Cumberland County
Garfield
Hawthorne

Hudson County
Newark
Northwest

Shelters/Organizations in Need:

Covenant House, Atlantic City, NJ
Joseph's House, Camden, NJ
NJ Family Promise of Morris County, Morristown, NJ
Cumberland Family Shelter, Vineland, NJ
Center for Hope and Safety, Rochelle Park, NJ
St. Paul DCD, Paterson, NJ, Good Shepherd, Paterson, NJ & Paterson Task Force, Paterson, NJ
York Street Project, Jersey City, NJ
Covenant House, Newark, NJ
Eva's Village, Paterson, NJ

Military Clubs

Earle NJ Navy Youth Center - HAB Core, Asbury Park, NJ
Fort Dix Youth Center - Fort Dix, NJ
Lakehurst Navy Youth Center - Lakehurst, NJ
McGuire Youth Center - Joint Base: McGuire, Dix, Lakehurst, NJ

"We are incredibly grateful to the Columbia Bank Foundation for once again providing grant support to facilitate the Blankets of Hope program. This meaningful project engaged Club youth at Boys & Girls Clubs across New Jersey in an impactful service-learning experience focused on empathy and kindness. We want to thank the Columbia Bank team members for continuing this rewarding experience at Boys & Girls Clubs in local communities," said Susan Haspel, State Director for Boys & Girls Clubs in New Jersey.

Michael Fiorito, Founder Blankets of Hope added, "Thanks to the continued support of the Columbia Bank Foundation, there will be endless ripples of hope, love, and kindness spreading through New Jersey for years to come!"

About Columbia Bank Foundation

Columbia Bank Foundation is one of the New Jersey's largest charitable foundations with roughly \$60 million designated in funding for future community-based projects and charitable programs. The foundation was created to serve the needs of local communities, and provide grants and contributions to organizations recognized as tax-exempt under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Columbia Bank Foundation actively seeks to provide support in seven major areas: affordable housing programs, community investment and economic development opportunities, financial literacy and educational opportunities, health and human services, food insecurity, environmental sustainability and the arts. Special consideration is always given to programs that provide a measurable community impact. For more information regarding the Columbia Bank Foundation and grant eligibility requirements, please visit www.columbiabankonline.com/columbia-foundation.

About Boys & Girls Clubs in New Jersey

Boys & Girls Clubs in New Jersey is an alliance of 22 Boys & Girls Club organizations serving over 70,000 youth ages 5-18 throughout the Garden State. Boys & Girls Clubs in New Jersey is a collaborative effort representing all 22 Clubs with the purpose of building local Club capacity; raising public awareness; and securing resources and financial support to increase the impact and reach of local Clubs. Boys & Girls Clubs in New Jersey works to strengthen and grow the mission of Boys & Girls Clubs which is: To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring responsible citizens.

About Blankets of Hope: Story - Why two brothers from Brooklyn quit their jobs to inspire a global movement of kindness:

Blankets of Hope is an educational 501(c)3 nonprofit helping students practice empathy and kindness by donating blankets - each paired with an inspirational handwritten note - to those experiencing homelessness. Its mission: To inspire a global movement of kindness, one blanket at a time. Its Vision: To live in a world united in love.

It started as a small family project... It was Summer 2016 when Brooklyn brothers Mike and Nick Fiorito quit their 9-5 jobs in search of more meaningful work. For months, they jumped from one entrepreneurial venture to the next, failing miserably every step of the way. By the time Winter came around, Mike and Nick were losing all hope. To get their minds off their failures, Mike and Nick started a GoFundMe campaign to raise money to buy blankets for people living on the freezing cold streets of NYC. With the helping hands of friends and family, they hand-delivered 100 "Blankets of Hope" to those in need.

Little did the brothers know, their good deed would pay them back in ways they couldn't imagine... On the other side of the country, a video portraying Blankets of Hope had captured the heart of top Forbes-ranked venture capitalist, Todd Chaffee. Their guardian angel had arrived... With Todd's mentorship and financial support, the brothers transformed their small family project into a globally recognized non-profit organization! Blankets of Hope has now donated over 31,000 blankets and handwritten notes to those in need - and counting.