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FEEDBACK

Deerfield-based organization prepares kits for children with chronic health conditions

By **KARIE ANGELL LUC**
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An antique fire truck is parked as, left, Yuyang Song of Evanston moves boxes for the assembly line at the Bounce Back Kits assembly event on April 17, 2021 at Deerfield-Bannockburn Fire Protection District. (Karie Angell Luc / Pioneer Press)

About 30 volunteers assisted an assembly event Saturday in Deerfield to benefit children served by the Deerfield-based Bounce Children's Foundation.

Fire and police personnel participated alongside community volunteers at the Deerfield-Bannockburn Fire Protection District. Bounce Children's Foundation was founded in 2015 by Deerfield resident Joan Steltmann. The foundation focuses on filling the gap in the continuum of care for pediatric patients with chronic conditions.

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“We created Bounce to help chronically ill children and their families,” said Steltmann, who serves as the organization’s CEO. “They get a lot of support when they’re in the hospital but not when they are at home and in the community.”

Bounce Children’s Foundation aims to provide community and connection, fun and friendship, education and resources, hope and encouragement and a place to belong until cures are found.

Deerfield police Officer Lauren Maldonado and Lt. Micah Montondo of the Deerfield Bannockburn Fire Protection District were volunteer coordinators for the Saturday morning event.

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“I heard about this organization and I just said, ‘Is there something that we could do together, police and fire (departments), with your organization?’ and so we started collaborating and figuring out what we could do,” said Maldonado.



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Volunteers work the assembly line the Bounce Back Kits assembly event on April 17, 2021 at Deerfield-Bannockburn Fire Protection District. (Karie Angell Luc / Pioneer Press)

Maldonado works as a student resource officer for Deerfield Public Schools District 109.

“I work very, very closely in the schools and with the children of Deerfield. I have a passion for children,” Maldonado said. “Both the police and fire, we all have children of various ages and to be able to give back to the community is what our organization is about, to serve and protect, and this is our serving.”

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Pete Delneky, chair of the foundation's Emerging Leaders Board, said the event is a fantastic opportunity to partner with police and fire personnel.

The foundation has a program called Bounce Back Kits that delivers family care packages to combat the isolation and boredom that can accompany long amounts of time spent at home.

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"They're locked in at home, even when there's not a pandemic," Steltmann said.



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In celebration of Earth Day, Bounce is shipping 425 Bounce Back Kits, one to every family it serves. To organize more than 25,000 individual components into these kits, the volunteers who took part on Saturday assembled the kits inside the fire station.

“It’s a small gesture, and it really gives these kids hope,” Delneky said.

Kat Montondo, Micah’s Montondo’s spouse, was also a volunteer.

“I think it’s absolutely amazing,” Kat Montondo said. “I think the police and fire departments always come together, work really well in situations like this.

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The Kroll family of Wadsworth came out as volunteers, including siblings Cameron Kroll, 7, Keeley Kroll, 10, and their mother Hannah Kroll.

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From right to left, are volunteers and members of the Kroll family of Wadsworth, Cameron Kroll, 7, Hannah Kroll and Keeley Kroll, 10, at the Bounce Back Kits assembly event on April 17, 2021. (Karie Angell Luc / Pioneer Press)

Included in the care boxes were face masks, treats and movie DVDs. The Deerfield High School Student Council built more than 1,000 wildflower planters in advance as an amenity in each kit.

“There is goodness in the world,” Hannah Kroll said. “It’s always nice to do things for other people.”

Volunteer Yuyang Song of Evanston, a Northwestern University graduate student, prepared boxes to help with the workflow on the assembly line of volunteers. Song said a friend asked if she would like to volunteer.

“I love it,” Song said.

Karie Anaell Luc is a freelance reporter.

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