

Underwriting the dream

Group helps finance soup kitchen and scholarship program in King's honor

By PATRICIA STEELE

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THE VILLAGES – It's easy to agree with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s philosophy on education for all children and feeding the hungry, but for members of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Committee, it's another thing to make a commitment to helping realize his vision.

Dana McCarthy of the Wildwood Soup Kitchen and Carol Lutgen of Dollars for Scholars were the recipients

Wednesday afternoon of more than \$1,000 each from the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Committee.

Lew Jones, president of the Commemorative Committee, said his organization holds an annual breakfast each January to honor King and to raise funds for local organizations that share the slain civil rights leader's vision.

Proceeds from this year's breakfast exceeded last year's total, raising \$2,247.11, which was divided between the soup kitchen and Dollars for Scholars.

Members of the Commemorative Committee not only remember King's teachings, they translate his words into actions with their financial donations to feed the hungry and provide educational

opportunities for children.

"Last year, we served 52,000 meals to Wildwood-area residents," Dana McCarthy said. "Each month, we spend \$3,000 to \$4,000 for the Wildwood Soup Kitchen."

According to McCarthy, the soup kitchen operates each day on the faith that local organizations, individuals and area churches will provide the funds to prepare the 200 meals they serve daily.

"We do not receive any county, state or federal funds," McCarthy said. "Each day is a leap of faith that our needs will be met, and they always are."

McCarthy is president of the Wildwood Soup Kitchen Advisory Board and volunteers in the kitchen each Thursday.

"There have been times when we wonder where the funds will come from to keep the doors open," McCarthy said. "Then someone like Lew comes along as an answer to our prayers."

The other recipient of funds from the breakfast is Dollars for Scholars. Co-organizer Carol Lutgen and friends accepted the check from Jones on behalf of that group.

"Our organization is raising funds for scholarships at Wildwood High School," Lutgen said. "There are organizations that target the students with the excellent grades. Our program targets the 'gap' students – those kids who fall through the gap. Their grades aren't quite high enough for academic scholarships for whatever reasons, but they want to attend college or a vocational school."

The group's goal is to award \$10,000 in scholarships this year. Members would like to see the program grow to include students in other parts of the tri-county area.

"The guidance counselors at Wildwood High School have applications and guidelines for students who want to apply," Lutgen said. "We want to open these scholarships to students who want to extend their education, including Exceptional Student Education students."

Lutgen said it is important for area residents to invest in education since today's children are the community's future work force.

"They need the opportunity to excel. They need our support," Lutgen said.

Jones is pleased that his organization is able to help so many people in the Wildwood area. He said they look for different organizations to assist each year.

"We have a number of people on the committee, and this year we asked for member suggestions," said Barbara Jones, wife of Lew Jones. "Immediately, the soup kitchen and Dollars for Scholars was mentioned. We knew we wanted to help an organization that involved children, so the Dollars for Scholars was a perfect fit."



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The Rev. Zachariah Harris III, left, of Rock Of Ages and Lew and Barbara Jones of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Committee present a check for \$2,347.11 Wednesday to Dollars For Scholars members Russ Noyes, Carol Lutgen, Ree Noyes, Judy and Lee LeFavre, Rebecca Weaver, Rosemary Draves, Mary Banks and Wildwood Soup Kitchen representative the Rev. Dana McCarthy of St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church in Wildwood.



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Barbara and Lew Jones, left, representing the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Committee, talk with Dollars for Scholars leaders Russ Noyes and Mary Banks.