

## RVHS student helps individuals on the road to recovery

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SOUTH BETHLEHEM – Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan once said that, “young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace...Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies.”

Such is the experience of Redbank Valley high schooler Mitchell Parker, who turned his eighth grade civics project into an opportunity to help a local organization.

According to RVHS teacher Dr. Joe Harmon, students in his eighth grade Civics classes must complete a Civic Action project twice a year from a variety of categories — such as volunteering, making a difference in the community or raising money for a good cause.

“While remote learning has posed some challenges, there are many eighth-graders able to do their Civic Action from home,” he said.

For his project, Parker — the son of Dennis and Tina Parker of South Bethlehem — organized a “Dress for Success” donation drive to help better the lives of individuals seeking help through Roads to Recovery in Clarion.

Roads to Recovery “provides advocacy, empowerment and opportunities for personal growth and recovery” for clients in Clarion, Jefferson and Clearfield counties. The program connects individuals with a peer mentor who helps the client on the road to recovery.

“The individuals at Roads to Recovery have faced homelessness, incarceration, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, or mental health crises,” Parker said, noting that he wanted his project to help an organization that benefits the local community.

“Everyone makes at least one poor choice in their life,” he continued. “I feel we all deserve a second chance.”

To that end, Parker decided to host a clothing drive to help provide individuals at Roads to Recovery with the necessary materials to prepare them to reenter the community and the workforce.

“We collected new or gently used coats, shoes and clothing appropriate for job searches, interviews or court appearances, [as well as] personal hygiene products” Parker said, noting that monetary donations were also accepted to purchase additional items.

Held throughout February and March, Parker said news of the clothing drive spread through Facebook and by word of mouth, and several community members reached out to donate items.

“I feel the donation drive was a success...[and] I would do it again in the future,” he said, adding that he hopes the items collected give the recipients the confidence they need to accomplish their goals. “I’d like to express appreciation to all who helped make my Civic Action project a success. We have a lot of good-hearted in our community, and it makes me feel good to brighten someone else’s day.”

Stephanie Seidle-Weaver, Roads to Recovery office and public relations manager, said that Parker’s donation will go a long way in helping individuals enhance their lives and realize their full potential on the road to recovery.

“This was a wonderful example of giving back within his community,” Seidle-Weaver said. “We genuinely appreciate the time and effort Mitchell put into this project for our agency.”

For more information on Roads to Recovery, call (814) 226-5126, or email [sseidle@r2rinc.org](mailto:sseidle@r2rinc.org).