

### **Programs Cont.**

From newborns in the hospital, we move on to toddlers and preschoolers attending Growing Minds Child Care Centers, of which there are four in Escondido. These centers are dedicated to working parents who otherwise could not afford child-care and enables them to work and provide for their families. Assistance League provides diapers and clothing for those unpredictable “accidents” during the day and even more importantly, provides hands-on reading and playing side by side with the children. We have organized parents’ night at the centers and invite a children’s author to engage both children and adults learning to love reading and encouraging them to make time for reading at home. Through these efforts, we are helping to prepare these children for kindergarten, and a successful educational journey ahead.

In grade school, middle school and high school, Operation School Bell® provides school clothing and shoes to low-income, foster and homeless children who might otherwise have nothing but a pair of worn-out flip-flops to wear. Assistance League volunteers shop with the children and their families and partner with JC Penney at the North County Mall to help the students get the most for their allocated funds. Studies have shown that children who have well-fitting shoes and clothes like their peers will be motivated to do better in school and have far better attendance records. Aside from these studies, our volunteers need only see the looks on the children’s faces as they check out with their new treasures!

Our Scholarship programs have been transforming the lives of high school and college students for many years. We provide scholarships to deserving high school seniors as well as previously enrolled students at Cal State San Marcos School of Nursing and Palomar College students in the Nursing program, the EMT, and Trade Tech programs, which prepare students for careers in the Emergency Medical field as well as Welding, Woodworking and Auto Mechanics. We were recently honored by Palomar College by having 2 classrooms named for us in recognition of donating over \$500,000 in Scholarships since 2008. Cal State San Marcos has just presented Assistance League of Inland North County with its first-ever Distinguished Partner of the Year award in honor of the support we have provided to their students.

Project Seniors program provides services to homeless and seniors to make their lives easier such as grocery gift cards and miscellaneous gifts that are determined as needed through communication with various local facilities that support these individuals. For those seniors who are shut-ins or have no families, our volunteer members shop and bring necessities and gifts to those who are unable to shop for themselves.

Through every phase of life, the various programs of Assistance League of Inland North County illustrate how we do transform lives and strengthen communities. Nowhere has that manifested itself more clearly than in two situations we have experienced this last year:

A gentleman came into our Thrift Shop to purchase some items and struck up a conversation with one of our volunteers about his deceased wife who was a recipient of new school clothing back east over 60 years ago. She never forgot that kindness and always donated sellable items to Assistance League whenever there was one nearby.

A thank you letter came to us from one of the recipients of a recent scholarship. She recalled while in the 2nd grade, she was lucky enough to benefit from Operation School Bell and was so thrilled to have new clothes and shoes for school. She is now on her way to a major university!

Improving the lives of children and adults through our hands-on programs is what we do; Assistance League of Inland North County is who we are!