

FMS student has homeless in RI's backs

Samantha LaSalle donated backpacks to Cranston's House of Hope shelter

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COVENTRY — Thanks to the efforts of Feinstein Middle School student Samantha LaSalle, the homeless will have a way to carry their belongings.

LaSalle, a member of the Westminster Unitarian United Church, completed two projects for her Coming of Age. One was a game board similar to any game such as Monopoly. Her second project, on a larger scale, was collecting gently used backpacks to give to the homeless at the House of Hope

Shelter, located in Cranston.

Coming of Age is similar to a confirmation and marks a teen going from eighth to ninth grade.

LaSalle submitted her outline of the plan to her church, which included a detailed plan of how she planned to proceed with the project.

She began collecting the backpacks three days before school ended, which was perfect timing.

"I know all the homeless need a place to put their things and it's easier support for their backs," she said. "At

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Submitted photo

Samantha LaSalle, left, with fellow 8th grader, Jennifer King, organized a drive to collect backpacks during the last week at school at Feinstein Middle School.

Homeless get backpacks from student

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the end of the school year, the kids who didn't want their backpacks anymore donated them. I went around the school and collected 46 packs."

LaSalle explained that in any

given night, the shelter has 100 people overnight. She's happy she was able to collect a pack for nearly half that amount.

"It's a really good feeling to help others and it helped me be more outgoing," she said.

As a Girl Scout, LaSalle has

been participating in service projects for years but this one was "all her," as her father put it.

"I'm so proud of her and I love the way she organized this and was so independent," he said. "I offered some of-

fered some advice for different ideas but it was her. It makes me feel so good to watch her mature and I thought the idea was great and different. We can't give them a house, but we can give them a place to put their things."