

Venice Lions forgo Christmas gifts to help the local needy



Lions Club members with Holiday Party night's food collection for the area disadvantaged

It has been the usual practice for members of the Venice Lions Club to exchange small token Christmas gifts valued around 15 dollars, at their annual Christmas/Holiday party. Starting in 2008, the members were instead encouraged to bring in a bag of canned / packaged food items to be donated to one of the food pantries in the area. That year the idea was received so well by the food banks in the area, the members started collecting food items every month since then, and deliver them to a local food bank.

At this year's Holiday Party the Club members collected food items valued about 1250 dollars, and was delivered to Bethesda House just in time for Christmas.



(Photo on left) Sandy Gallagher, Project Director (center) for Bethesda House, and Lion Keith Backhaus (right) a case manager at the Bethesda House accept the truckload of food items (in disposable bags) from Lion Barry Sullivan who made the delivery with his brother Mike.

Bethesda House is a Day Center founded by the Diocese of Venice to respond to the physical, social and spiritual needs of HIV infected and affected persons. The Center is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization committed to providing services to PWAs (persons with AIDS), HIV positive persons, their caregivers, friends and guests with compassion, dignity and respect.

According to Keith Backhaus, some **five hundred** affected persons in the area make use of the facility every month. Due to limited supplies, each family is entitled to receive only about 25 pounds of food items every week.

For more information about Bethesda House visit their web site at

http://www.catholiccharitiesdov.org/hivaids_ministries.html