

## Masons bring Christmas to Clairvaux Farm families

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EARLEVILLE — With about a week left until Christmas, Clairvaux Farms sent out an email to local organizations asking for help: they still had five families who hadn't been "adopted" for the holiday.

The farm – a homeless shelter operated by Deep Roots Inc., a Delaware-based nonprofit – hoped to be able to provide more than 30 families with clothing and gifts for Christmas. But with time running out, not every family had been adopted.

One of the people who received that email was Stephen Blumberg's wife, who works at Upper Bay Counseling and Support Services. She showed the email to her husband on Dec. 20 and Blumberg, worshipful master-elect at the Masons of Union Lodge No. 48 in Elkton, decided to reach out to his Mason friends to see who could assist.

"I said, 'There's still five families with 15 kids who need help,'" Blumberg said.

By the next morning, one member had already adopted a family. At a Mason's meeting that next night, members were handing Blumberg cash donations. And 72 hours later, all five families had been adopted and the Masons had a car full of clothes and Christmas presents for the families.

"They didn't even hesitate," Blumberg said of the lodge members. "They couldn't move fast enough."

Lori Goldsmith, administrator at Clairvaux Farm, said after she put out the call for help she got "numerous calls" from the lodge. When a family is adopted, the donor gets a list of the children's needs, such as clothes, as well as gifts and toys they'd like for Christmas. The children that are helped include not just the 12 families living at the farm, but other families who have been through the Deep Roots program as well.

"I thank the Masons for stepping forward and providing for children who otherwise wouldn't have had a Christmas," Goldsmith said.

Deep Roots took over the 20-acre farm in January 2014 and began renovating the property to better serve children and their families dealing with homelessness. In addition to providing transitional housing, the nonprofit runs a mentoring program and puts on activities for both the farm's residents and for those who had previously lived on the farm.

Though the Masons have helped families in need before, this is the group's first time working with Clairvaux Farm. Blumberg, who will take over as head of the lodge in 2016, said he plans to reach out to the farm to see how else the group might be able to pitch in.

"We're just happy we had the opportunity to help," he said.