

Newsday

Cedarhurst nonprofit recycles hotel toiletries for needy

November 12, 2010 By JENNIFER BARRIOS jennifer.barrios@newsday.com

The toiletries are destined for needy families who can't afford essential personal items.



Some stock collected at the Marriott in Uniondale by room attendants. (Nov. 11, 2010)

Housekeeper Esther Heshiki pushed her cart to a newly vacated room on the 11th floor of the Long Island Marriott Hotel in [Uniondale](#) Thursday, plucked the tiny unused bottles of shampoo and conditioner from a stand in the bathroom, and pulled the half-empty roll of toilet paper from its holder.

Instead of throwing the items in the trash, as many hotels do, Heshiki separated them into plastic bags. The toiletries are destined for needy families who can't afford essential personal items.

"This is a good idea," she said after she bagged the items.

Rock and Wrap it Up!, a Cedarhurst nonprofit working to reduce poverty through environmentally sound efforts, created the program to collect and distribute toiletries.

Founder Syd Mandelbaum said he hopes that other Long Island hotels will sign up for the Hotel Wrap! program, which also includes hotels in Manhattan and around the country.

"We want nothing to go into the trash," he said.

Sharon Gamblin, director of services for the Long Island Marriott, said the hotel's staff has been enthusiastic about the program.

"There are so many items that are disposed of," Gamblin said. "This was just perfect to help those less fortunate than ourselves."

Collected hair care products, toilet paper and tissues are boxed, then picked up by the [Hauppauge](#) food bank Long Island Cares. Since the first delivery in August, the food bank has received 334 pounds of goods from the Uniondale hotel, according to Jessica Rosati, supervisor for programs and outreach at Long Island Cares.

"We have to think above and beyond food," said Rosati, noting that people in need often can't afford shampoo, toilet paper and similar goods.

"Personal items are the hardest thing to get," she said. "They're not covered by food stamps. We find with our guests, it's something they struggle the most to obtain."

Long Island Cares distributes the shampoos and conditioners from the hotel at their two pantries in Hauppauge and [Freeport](#). The tissue and toilet paper go to the [Woodmere](#) food pantry run by the Jewish Community Center of the Greater Five Towns.

"When someone first comes in, I'll walk them around and when I get to the toilet paper, I explain where it's from and why it looks like this," said Ellen Warshall, pantry director. The items quickly became among the most popular at the pantry.

"As soon as someone comes into the food pantry, the first thing they say is, 'Do you have toilet paper?' " Warshall said. "Everyone's taking them. No one has turned it down."