



Snow Hill Baby Equipment And Resource Closet Celebrates Ten Years

More than 7,700 families in need served since the Closet's inception.

Asheville, NC – July 24, 2016

In July 2006, a small group of people at Snow Hill United Methodist Church in Candler wrestled with a bear of a problem. They recognized a huge need in their community – low income families, single parents, and grandparents were struggling to provide basic necessities for their children and grandchildren. Disposable diapers can cost upwards of \$750 a year, and buying baby equipment like a car seat, stroller, and a crib quickly adds up. The church members felt moved to reach out to their neighbors in need, and the Snow Hill Baby Equipment and Resource Closet, better known as the B.E.A.R. Closet, was born.

That was ten years ago, and the Snow Hill B.E.A.R. Closet proudly continues to provide baby equipment such as strollers, bouncy seats, cribs, high chairs, pack-n-plays, diapers and clothing for preemies through age six to the Candler community every Tuesday afternoon from 1 to 5 PM.

The ministry also provides education and information to families on where they can access community resources for emergency food, housing, health care providers, and utility assistance. Clients are warmly welcomed and interviewed to determine their needs. They are given a list of baby items and equipment and can check off what equipment needs they have, along with sizes of clothing and shoes.

“There is no charge for any item,” says Volunteer Coordinator Susie Pike, who was recently recognized as WLOS’ Person of the Week for her volunteer efforts at the B.E.A.R. Closet. “We only ask that clients return the larger items such as high chairs, strollers, and cribs when the family no longer needs them, so another family might be able to use those items.”

Since Snow Hill B.E.A.R. Closet’s inception, twelve dedicated volunteers have selflessly given nearly 30,000 hours of their time, served more than 7,700 families, and given away nearly 1,900 large equipment items to their neighbors in need. Not only has Snow Hill B.E.A.R. Closet made an impact in their community, but with the help of Givens LifeMinistries, their ministry has been replicated at four other churches that serve families and children in Buncombe, Henderson, and Transylvania Counties. In 2015, the five B.E.A.R. Closets collectively served over 2,500 children and 1,400 families.

Givens LifeMinistries, a core partner in the launch of the ministry and a resource partner, hosted a ten year Anniversary Celebration in the Norma F. Pulliam Chapel at Givens Estates to honor the ministry, and presented service pins to Snow Hill B.E.A.R. Closet volunteers.

For more information on B.E.A.R. Closets, Closet locations and hours, or how to start a ministry at your church or community, please visit the website at www.bearcloset.org or contact Givens LifeMinistries Director Cheryl Wallen at (828) 230-1071.