



Connie Hutchinson: Comfort Cases

Tell us a little about how long you've been a member at BUMC, how you came to be connected here, and what ministries you have been active in over the years.

Connie: *I have been a member of Bethesda United Methodist Church for about 40 years serving in many different capacities. In the early years I taught and assisted with the Sunday School program. I was also a choir mother when my two kids were participating in the children's choir. I volunteered with Vacation Bible School and the angel tree for many years. As my children got older our family was very involved with the summer mission trips. My late husband and I ran the "For Us and Others" financial campaign which raised money for our church including the organ and also raised money for people in need in the community.*

You became involved in volunteering at Comfort Cases several years ago. Share with us about the organization, the work that you do for them, and some of the groups that you've taken there to volunteer.

Connie: *A friend of mine told me about Comfort Cases and their need for volunteers so I signed up and volunteered one morning. They gave me a tour and told me about their mission which is to provide proper bags filled with comfort and essential items for children and youth entering the foster care system. Rob Scheer who started Comfort Cases was a foster child himself and now has four foster children that he has adopted. The organization started out packing cases for children in DC, MD and VA and now is shipping to 36 states. At that first visit I knew that I wanted to be involved and have since become a regular volunteer. Two summers ago I took some of the youth from BUMC for an afternoon of volunteering. They did a fabulous job and packed about 50 backpacks [editor's note: some of those youth have continued volunteering and collecting donations for Comfort Cases based on this experience]. This fall I took a group of adults from our church and we worked to do several jobs including rolling and tying blankets with ribbons, as well as packing backpacks. Over the years I have taken many friends to acquaint them with this great organization. I have done a real variety of tasks including making tags for the cases, packing toiletries, sorting through donations and other jobs as needed.*



What about your faith leads you to be part of this kind of work?

Connie: *I have always had a desire to help the less fortunate and I guess it is my Christian calling to serve people in our community and elsewhere.*

How can someone sign up to volunteer? Are there other ways to support the work of this organization?

Connie: *Comfort Cases sends out an email every Sunday listing their open hours for the week. Most of the sessions are for two hours each and you can sign up online. If you have a group you can make arrangements to have a special session. Volunteers help with processing donations, counting inventory, assembling bags, and preparing for deliveries. In addition to volunteers, Comfort Cases needs donations (check their website for a link to their Amazon wishlist) and monetary contributions to cover the cost for mailing cases out of the area. Each backpack contains a new blanket, pj's, a stuffed animal, a book, and toiletries. Younger children get a coloring book and crayons and older children get a journal with pens and pencils. Comfort Cases operates with two paid employees and lots of volunteers. For more information about the organization, go to www.comfortcases.org.*

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