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## Scout honored for service project

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Between golf lessons, swimming lessons, student council meetings, three choir programs, two church groups and keeping up his "A" average, there isn't much time left for 13-year-old Nicholas Cobb to do much else. But the Ereckson Middle Schooler has performed more community service hours than most adults.

For his service to the homeless population in Collin County, Nicholas was honored in a special ceremony on Wednesday for his commitment to serving others.

The Prudential Spirit of the Community Celebration is a program based on volunteerism and recognizing the community service projects of nearly 70 young people from throughout the Dallas area for outstanding volunteer service in their communities.

What started as a simple question turned into a passion for serving at the Samaritan Inn, Collin County's only homeless shelter.

"When I was about 4 years old I saw a homeless man under the bridge, and at the time, I didn't understand why," he said. "My parents told me, but I just couldn't believe that he didn't have a home to go to."

Two years later, with the help of his parents, Nicholas began helping the homeless at Samaritan Inn.

"First, we collected soaps, shampoos and other toiletries for the people there," he said. "The next year we collected food, and the next year we collected cleaning supplies. Through the years, it just got bigger and bigger."

As the number of people seeking shelter at Samaritan Inn grew, so did Nicholas' efforts.

One bitter winter night while he was volunteering at the shelter, Nicholas saw that many residents did not have coats to keep warm.

"So I started an organization called Comfort and Joy, which would raise money to provide



Submitted photo courtesy of the Cobb family - Nicholas Cobb peruses the aisles at a local Burlington Coat Factory for coats. In October, as part of his Eagle Scout project, Nicholas started a nonprofit, collected donations and purchased coats for residents of the Samaritan Inn, Collin County's only homeless shelter.

coats for the homeless," he said.

Nicholas recruited the help of friends, family, church members, his Boy Scout troop and the Allen community to spread the news and raise money to purchase coats. The collection was part of his Eagle Scout project.

"There are many homeless people in Allen, and it always surprises people to hear that the Samaritan Inn is full," he said. "Some people told me that I wouldn't be able to raise enough money, or that the project would not be as successful as it was, but I figured that any little bit of help would make a difference, no matter how big or how small."

Soon, Nicholas' nonprofit raised \$3,400. The funds were used to purchase coats for the 129 people seeking shelter at Samaritan Inn.

And he's not done yet. Comfort and Joy is still active and still collecting donations, even as Nicholas contemplates what his next service project will be. Whatever it is, Nicholas said it will definitely benefit the Samaritan Inn and Collin County's homeless population.

"I hope people hear about my efforts and are encouraged to help the community in some way," he said. "Any help, no matter how big or small, will make a difference, and that's what's important: people making a difference in their community."

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