



May 9, 2022
For immediate release

Oh, baby: Big Giants earn statewide honor for supply drive

Isaac Lyman, Gunnar Johnson and their fellow Big Giants members knew the pandemic had hit many of their Northfield and Dundas area neighbors hard, but they never imagined they'd receive a statewide award for helping others.

In February, Lyman and Johnson accepted the 2021 Association of Minnesota County's 4-H Community Leadership Award on behalf of the club. The award honors organized 4-H youth development programs for outstanding contributions and service to their local communities.

After members of the 4-H club decided to hold a supply drive to benefit the Community Action Center of Northfield, they contacted the center to learn more about the needs. Doing so, they believed, could help them target their request.

It was then they found that both baby and cleaning supplies would be most helpful for the CAC food shelf's clients.

People receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can't use the benefit to purchase many of the most important baby supplies, including disposable diapers or wipes. Cleaning supplies, and personal care and paper products also can't be bought with SNAP funds.

Adult leaders helped contact local churches and childcare centers to set up eight drop off locations in Northfield and Dundas. Members then local made fliers and signs to create aware of awareness of the month-long drive, which ran from Nov. 15-Dec. 15, and to solicit donations.

Johnson and Lyman were also interviewed on Northfield's KYMN radio about the drive.

By the end of the drive, members tallied their haul, pulling in about 500 pounds of supplies. A second drive, held in late 2021, brought similar results.

"We were surprised that we were able to get so much," said Johnson. "And they (CAC staff) were really thankful. It make me feel like we were doing something very good; a favor to the community."

Lyman says he had a similar reaction, but added that conducting the food drive made him aware of the needs of so many in his community.



Rice County commissioners congratulated Big Giants 4-H members Isaac Lyman and Gunnar Johnson on the club's supply drive and statewide award. Pictured arefront, from left, 4-H Program Educator Kelly Chadwick, Commissioner Jeff Docken, Lyman, Johnson and 4-H Extension Educator Ashley Purry. Back, Commissioners Jim Purfeerst, Steve Underdah, Galen Malecha and Dave Miller. (Rice County photo)

“This baby supply drive has made an enormous difference in the lives of children and their parents,” wrote CAC Executive Director Scott Wopata, in a letter endorsing the club’s project. “Families with young children want access to clean diapers. This basic need has never been more evident than during the pandemic.

Five hundred plus pounds is a terrific number, but numbers alone cannot truly capture the difference this supply drive has made. Every box of diapers and supplies make a family’s life a little easier and more financially secure.”

Rice County 4-H Extension Educator Kelly Chadwick says the Big Giants learned a lot about themselves and their community from conducting the supply drive.

“They came together as a club,” she said. “It was a total team effort. It’s cool that they saw a need in the community and took it upon themselves to do something about it.

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