

## KEVIN'S HOLIDAY ANGELS

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thinks that he would've loved how many lives this foundation has touched.

"He was just super big-hearted ... such a genuine guy," Baumelster said. "He always had your back. And he was such an unbelievable athlete."

Because of their son's love for sports, the Williams devoted their organization to sending children, who couldn't afford it otherwise, to sports camps or register them to play on teams in the area as a way to "do something with his love." Five years in, they received a call from Long Island Youth Mentoring, one of the many organizations they worked alongside, which asked them to help a local family that had recently been evicted from their home. The Williams took care of them and made sure the family had a holiday that year.



It wasn't long before they started helping other local families in similar situations.

This led the Williams' to start the toy drive, which targets the wishes and needs of children in the area — some of which range from video game consoles to clothes to even simpler needs. Patti Williams said one family had children asking for towels to sleep on because they didn't have beds. This year, 28 families were on the list and the pile of donations at the restaurant grew taller by the minute.

"Our community has been there for us since the beginning ... we are just so blessed," Patti Williams said. "When you've had such a tragic loss in your life, you have to make a decision. You can't just stay in that dark place. You have to decide — and it's not easy — what to do to make life better for others. Then that becomes your focus and really helps you through the grieving process."

Mike Williams said he couldn't believe how many people showed up to the toy drive this year, especially on a dreary, wet evening. When you surround yourself with loving people, he said, that's what happens.

"We're reaching out and trying to help people," he said. "We wake up in the morning and say 'All right, how can we turn this into something good?'"

On Christmas Eve, he recalls showing up to the residence of a family in dire straits. In one room, there was a metal bunk bed for the kids, similar to what would be seen in a military confine. The floor was covered in clothes and was nearly impossible to walk on. They asked the mother what she was planning on doing for Christmas dinner, and when she said nothing, the Williams' assured her the family would have a proper dinner.

When they returned the next day, Mike Williams said he was in shock.



Photos by Kevin Redding

Above, Mike Williams, his daughter Kelly and wife Patti host a toy drive in memory of son and brother Kevin. Left, Wayne and Patty Fellrath volunteer their time to help.

"The beds were made like West Point cadets made them," he said. "There wasn't anything on the floors. The woman looked 30 years younger, and I remembering thinking 'look at the transition we made with just one little family by caring. They were thrown away, and thought nobody cared.'"

It's Patti Williams' hope that the families they've helped get back on track, get out of their own dark places and "pay it forward" to others in need.

She said while she and her husband are the orchestrators of the toy drive, there's a huge community effort that goes into the donations, and wrapping and delivering them.

The Wading River Fire Department donates the community room to serve as gift-wrapping space for the 60 to 70 volunteer wrappers, and Wayne Fellrath, a retired New

York City firefighter, grows out his white beard and delivers toys dressed as Santa, with his wife Patty dressing as an elf.

The Fellraths said it's heartwarming they can bring joy to children who aren't well enough to leave their homes and see Santa.

"Patti [Williams] called me up and asked 'Did you get your flu shot this year?'" Wayne Fellrath recalled. "I said 'Yeah, what's wrong?' She said the doctor told her in order to have a visit from Santa, everybody had to have a flu shot. And I was never happier in my life to have gotten a flu shot."

Among the large pile of donated goods children in need can look forward to is a 150-piece art set, basketballs, bedding, an Xbox One and a Power Rangers toy set. On the morning of Dec. 17, the pile will be brought to the firehouse to be wrapped and shipped out.