

## **Columbia-Greene Media - Fundraiser aids families of fallen deputy and local toddler**

By Melanie Lekocevic

8/19/2017

COXSACKIE — Not even a day filled with rain could keep donors away from a fundraiser to help two local families in need.

Corrections officers from Greene and Coxsackie correctional facilities held their annual fundraiser on Plank Road in Coxsackie on Friday, this time raising money for the families of Greene County Sheriff's Deputy Kevin Haverly and 1-year-old Clara Ray, who is battling a congenital heart defect.

"We have been doing this fundraiser every year for the kids at Albany Medical Center, but this year we decided to do it for these two families," event organizer and Corrections Officer Steve Humphrey said. "It is unfortunate what happened to both Kevin and Clara Ray."

Haverly died in a car crash in February while on patrol in his sheriff's cruiser. He is survived by his fiancée, two children and a stepchild.

Clara Ray is a toddler from Greene County who is fighting a rare congenital heart defect and other heart-related conditions.

Numerous fundraisers have been held by various groups around the area to raise money to help both families who, coincidentally, are close, according to Humphrey.

On Friday, the corrections officers pooled their resources and invited the community to a chicken barbecue that included a softball game, 50/50 raffle, T-shirt sales and children's activities.

Proceeds from the fundraiser will be divided between the two families.

"The situation is unfortunate — what happened to these two families — but we are trying to show the public we are part of the community," Humphrey said. "Some people think we are the bad guys behind the walls, but we are part of the community, we live and work here, and we want people to know that."

Over the past few summers, the corrections officers from both facilities raised between \$2,000 and \$8,000 to donate to the children's hospital at Albany Medical Center, and this year decided on a more local focus to help the two families.

And despite an all-day rain, they were able to raise around \$6,000, according to Humphrey.

“Right now, it looks like we will be at roughly \$6,000 total, even with the bad weather,” he said.

The rain did have an effect on the fundraiser, though. Beyond the soggy softball field where corrections officers battled it out, the rain kept away the LifeNet helicopter that usually flies to the fundraiser, to the children’s delight.

But everything else was still on. A team of volunteers staffed the grill to keep a steady flow of food available.

“It’s a good thing to help people,” Officer Jay James said. “Law enforcement has to stick together and do the best we can for ourselves, for our community and for our fellow man.”

Working beside him at the grill was Officer Nick Cantelmo.

“It’s always a worthy cause to give back to the community,” Cantelmo said. “If you can help someone out who is in need, that’s what you should do.”

Officers weren’t the only ones helping out throughout the day. One sergeant’s children also lent a helping hand.

“I have a 15-year-old and a 12-year-old working for a good cause today, and they were very happy to get up early and help out,” Sgt. Joseph Anderson said. “It’s looking out for one another over the long run. That’s what it is all about.”

One special feature at this year’s fundraiser was a memorial police car that traveled to the event from Dutchess County. The vehicle includes the names of every officer nationwide who lost their lives in the line of duty since 2016.

“The car is a tribute car purchased by Police Officer Mark Voeltz of the Village of Wappingers Falls Police Department,” said Officer Jeff Erns of the state Department of Corrections and the Wappingers Falls Police Department. “He has several donors who helped pay for things like graphics and painting the car, and it travels all over to events like this one today.”

“We lost 140 officers who were killed in the line of duty nationwide last year,” Erns said. “This remembrance car is dedicated to those lives that have been lost.”