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Birthday Blessings
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Nonprofit's library that supplies homeless children with books gets extreme makeover *Office Environments donates \$8,175 worth of shelving and installation to all-volunteer nonprofit Birthday Blessings*

(Charlotte, N.C., August 19, 2010) - Birthday Blessings, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that brings birthday joy and support to homeless children and their families, received a gift of its own recently. Thanks to the generosity of Office Environments, a Charlotte-based business that donated shelving and installation services totaling \$8,175, the nonprofit's Gift of Literacy Library Room is now professionally organized, with books displayed on tall and sturdy metal shelving units.

Birthday Blessings' Gift of Literacy Library Room was established at the end of 2009, following the successful outcome of a grant application through the Charlotte chapter of First Book, a national organization that supplies new books to schools and organizations serving needy populations. Birthday Blessings' grant award enabled the nonprofit to purchase over 4,000 new books to include with gift packages for the homeless children it serves. The good fortune continued when Barnes & Noble – Morrison Place held a holiday book drive, and collected a total of 2,350 books from its customers in that same year, further boosting the nonprofit's goal of giving the gift of literacy to homeless children across the Charlotte region.

But until recently, dozens and dozens of boxes filled with books consumed the small library room on plastic shelves and tables, and were stacked on the floor. "Book accessibility was a challenge for our volunteers, as was our ability to keep the books organized in age-appropriate categories for easy distribution," said volunteer executive director/co-founder, Amy Cervantes. "The day that Office Environments showed up and generously offered to step in and transform the room, we were beyond ecstatic!"

Within a week of their initial visit, a crew returned with beautiful shelving units, a large library cart, and a rolling library ladder. Soon after the installation, scores of Birthday Blessings volunteers set to work reorganizing the books and labeling shelves, a process that took several weeks to complete.

Said Office Environments president, Cindy Cox, "We are so happy to be able to help and to know what a great service Birthday Blessings provides to children who need our love." Office Environments has been improving business environments with custom furniture products since 1984.

"With a national ratio of only one age-appropriate book for every 300 children living in poverty and 3,237 identified homeless children enrolled in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, we feel moved to put books into the hands of every child we serve," said Cervantes. "Because of the generosity of Office Environments, First Book-Charlotte, and Barnes & Noble and its customers, we are now able to include two new books in every child's birthday gift package and in every Blessing Basket we deliver to babies born into homelessness, and for that, we are so thankful."

Once per quarter, Birthday Blessings also provides a new book to every child living at the shelters and housing facilities it serves as a special party favor along with traditional treat bags. In total, more than 3,500 new books will be distributed to homeless children each year through the programs of Birthday Blessings.

With thousands of homeless children served annually by Birthday Blessings, the all-volunteer nonprofit relies heavily on in-kind donations. If you would like to add to their Gift of Literacy Library Room, new books can be dropped at their offices, located at 200 Clanton Rd. in Charlotte, or at their retail partners' locations, which are listed at www.birthdayblessings.org.

Birthday Blessings began in 2005 as a family service project created by Mint Hill couple Amy and John Cervantes. In 2008, they incorporated their service venture as a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit, quickly expanding the organization's programs and services. To date, Birthday Blessings has celebrated more than 1,200 birthdays for homeless children and their families. The all-volunteer nonprofit currently serves 14 homeless facilities and programs across a four-county region, as well as transient homeless elementary and middle school students throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. The organization also provides Blessing Baskets filled with care essentials to help welcome and support the arrival of homeless babies.

Birthday Blessings began developing a national expansion program in 2009, with pilot affiliate chapters now getting under way in northeast Indiana; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Atlanta, Georgia.

For more information, go to www.birthdayblessings.org, www.office-environments.com, www.firstbookcharlotte.org, and www.barnesandnoble.com.

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