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Belk corporate event raises thousands for area homeless children

Women's Leadership Network anniversary event honors local nonprofit Birthday Blessings

(Charlotte, NC, November 17, 2009) -- On Thursday, October 15, more than 150 Belk employees came together at its Charlotte corporate headquarters to celebrate the first anniversary of the company's Women's Leadership Network. The event kicked off a corporate collection drive to benefit the programs of Birthday Blessings, a Charlotte-area nonprofit that brings birthday joy and support to homeless children. Belk and its employees donated a total of \$2,500 in financial and product donations.

The Belk Women's Leadership Network was developed to grow women leaders at Belk through opportunities to learn, lead, and make a positive impact in the community. During its first year of service to the company and to the community, the group amassed 239 members and held more than 25 internal and community-based projects. To commemorate the success of this new initiative and to celebrate the group's first birthday, anniversary event organizers found it fitting to highlight and support Birthday Blessings.

John and Amy Cervantes, Birthday Blessings co-founders, were recognized at the event for their volunteer efforts on behalf of homeless children and families. John gave a brief presentation about the organization, and volunteers were on hand after the event to provide additional information and answer questions.

"We are truly overwhelmed by the generosity of Belk and its employees," said Birthday Blessings volunteer executive director and co-founder, Amy Cervantes. *"Especially during these difficult economic times, it is inspiring to see so many people reaching out to support those less fortunate. We are grateful to the Women's Leadership Network and Belk employees for their enthusiasm and support."*

Birthday Blessings, a Charlotte-based 501c(3) nonprofit organization founded in 2005, currently serves homeless facilities and programs across Mecklenburg, Union, and York counties, as well as homeless elementary students throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Birthday Blessings operates three core programs: Shelter Parties—monthly birthday celebrations at local housing facilities; Classroom Parties—birthday snack bags and treats provided anonymously for homeless elementary students; and Blessing Baskets—care essentials and gifts that welcome and support the arrival of homeless babies.

To date, Birthday Blessings has celebrated birthdays for more than 850 local homeless children, bringing joy and support to thousands of needy youth and families across the greater Charlotte area. The organization continues its local expansion, and will begin serving Cabarrus County in January 2010 through a partnership with Smart Start/Cabarrus Partnership for Children. Birthday Blessings recently launched a national expansion program, with affiliate chapters getting under way in northeast Indiana; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Atlanta, Georgia.

For more information, please visit www.birthdayblessings.org and www.belk.com.

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