

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS -

The "Joe 15" Team

People volunteer at *SERVE* for many reasons: to help those less fortunate, to do something productive or to give back after receiving some form of aid in the past. And then there are those who volunteer at *SERVE*, not only for the above reasons, but also as a result of a tragedy that has affected their lives.

The Joe 15 Team is a group of family and friends of Joseph "Joe" Page, who was the innocent victim of a gunshot wound in 2008. On Super Bowl Sunday of 2008, Joe was at a party with friends. Suddenly, intruders who had crashed the party earlier, caused a fight and been thrown out, came back for revenge. Joe didn't see or know the intruders, and he didn't know there had been a fight. One of the intruders fired into the house from an adjacent yard, and Joe was in the path of the bullet. After five hours of surgery, Joe died at the age of 20 on February 7, 2008 at 2:05 a.m.

At the funeral, many of Joe's friends struggled to make sense out of this random act of violence. With the guidance of Joe's mother, Debbie Page-Maples, *The Joe 15 Team* was born. Joe 15 is so named because the number 15 had been Joe's favorite number (he told his mother that being 15 was the best year of his life). This amazing group of volunteers is dedicated to keeping Joe's memory alive by doing various

service projects throughout the Manassas and Prince William County community.

SERVE is blessed to be the recipient of several of their projects. The group's first project for *SERVE* was a food drive which resulted in the collection of over 1,500 pounds of food. Last summer, the group conducted a School Supplies drive outside a local WalMart and collected over \$500 worth of school supplies and backpacks for *SERVE*'s annual "Ready to Learn" School Supplies Drive. Earlier this year, the Joe 15 group made bag lunches for the adult residents of the shelter. And finally, two bowling teams from Joe 15 signed up to participate in *SERVE*'s 18th Annual "Strikes for *SERVE*" Bowl A Thon held on March 14.

Each month, Joe 15 visits the Family Emergency Shelter for children's activities. Their visits are eagerly anticipated by the shelter children because activities are always unique (the children recently made "Cat in the Hat" hats to celebrate the birthday of Dr. Seuss). When the kids see Joe 15 members come through the door, they often run to the members, arms wide open, ready for big hugs! Sherry Fullerton, Child Services Coordinator, has this to say about The Joe 15 Team: "This amazing group is so highly organized! They are always prepared, and very accommodating of our children's schedule. Parents and children alike always enjoy this group's visits, and have lots of positive remarks to make about activities afterwards."

The Joe 15 Team stands as a shining example of turning hate and violence into random acts of kindness that helps those less fortunate. *SERVE* is extremely fortunate to be associated with such a wonderful and caring organization that does so much to keep their friend Joe Page's memory alive.

Update: On January 23, 2009, Joseph Page's shooter was sentenced to 35 years in prison. Joe would have turned 21 years old on January 26th.

