

Children's Mission Needs A Help Up

Helping families living in poverty, this children's mission is helping with clothing and education.

By **ANDREA DAVIS**
Daily Sun Senior Writer

Having raised three children on her own, BettyAnn Klein is taking her knowledge from raising three children on her own to offer Hispanic families living in poverty.

She works with around 20 children to better their lives in Center Hill

"You get so invested in these children, that it's hard not to make them part of the family," she said.

Klein helps these children by providing clothing and food, helping with homework and working with them to help them have a better future. She runs a nonprofit called Center Hill Children's Mission, at 55 S. Virginia Ave. in Center Hill, where she helps these local children whose families



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Director BettyAnn Klein runs the Center Hill Children's Mission.

are farmers, poor and cannot speak English. She is seeking volunteers to help mentor the children and donations of clothing, books and money.

"When we first started the after-school program, we just

wanted it to be about having a time when we could do Bible Study with the children," Klein said. "But as we got to know the children and the situations they came from, we knew we needed to help them

in more ways than one."

The Hometown Civitan Club is also trying to help these children in need.

"We just started working with BettyAnn, but we are already helping to make a difference," said Laura McLaughlin, a club member of the Village of Collier. "Some of our members went down to the children's mission and they went through and helped do some clean up. They helped clean up some rooms and created a book room for the older children to get some time away from some of the other kids and to work on their reading."

Klein said a lot of the children who come to the mission

for help are Hispanic and can't speak a lot of English.

"We once had children come through the mission, and now they are grown," she said. "We helped them so well, that they send their children to us so they can also benefit as well."

Working at the mission, Klein said the common goal is to make sure the children get the resources they need, while also helping them to improve their studies and get an education.

"When the children learn to understand the things they are learning and you see their eyes light up, it's so rewarding," Klein said. "Most of these children's mothers have worked their fingers to the bone, and they need help. I want these

children to be able to learn how to be part of the community without having to worry about how they will succeed."

While the Hometown Civitan Club has started to get involved with this group, Klein said she would love to have more Villagers volunteer at the mission.

"While I may be 71, when I work with these children, none of my aches and pains matter," she said. "It's all about the children and helping them succeed. I think Villages residents can share in that joy as they are a very active and giving community."

For more information about getting involved, contact Klein at 352-457-7457.