Juvenile offenders pack meals for needy families in Northeast Ohio

BY: Homa Bash
POSTED: 4:32 PM, Feb 28, 2018
UPDATED: 5:49 PM, Feb 28, 2018

HIGHLAND HILLS, Ohio - More than 80 juvenile offenders packed meals for the needy Wednesday morning, partnering with a nonprofit to give back to the community.

There are roughly 170 juvenile offenders at the Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility, ranging in age from 12 to 21. It is one of three state-run juvenile facilities remaining in Ohio.
When asked if they would like to volunteer, more than 80 teens signed up — packing 50,000 meals to be delivered to food banks in Cleveland and Akron.

“They are kids at heart, so anytime you do something for them that’s out of the ordinary, you see a different side of them,” said Scott Sooy, the facility’s community service director.

For many of them, going hungry is a stark reality.

“We can help feed people that don’t have food. I was going through that struggle,” one teen said. “Going to sleep hungry, no food. I remember eating syrup sandwiches. Sugar sandwiches.”

News 5 spoke to an 18-year-old who was sentenced to four years for felonious assault with a gun. He said he was grateful he was sent to the facility because it helped him grow up.

“If I was out right now, I wouldn’t be doing this. I wouldn’t even think about doing this,” he said.

Floyd Hammer and his wife Kathy founded the nonprofit Outreach, Inc. and help adults and youths pack meals across the country. This was the first time they brought the program to a juvenile correctional facility.

“This isn’t going to solve the problem, but it’ll help,” Hammer said.
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