



**Baby shower
donation drive
honors our
Blessed Mother
and provides
'the greatest
gift of all' ...**



(Photos provided/ Kym Alex)
Isabella Alex beams as she shows the many donations her baby shower donation drive received from members of SS. Peter and Paul Parish, Cary.

Hope for Moms in Need

Ahead of the March 25 feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, Isabella Alex, an American Heritage Girl (AHG) at SS. Peter and Paul Parish in Cary, wanted to celebrate in a big way.

How best to celebrate the Blessed Mother's "yes?" By bringing hope and courage to other mothers, Alex decided.

So an AHG service project began: a donation drive for 1st Way Life Center in Johnsbury, a Christian center which provides free pregnancy tests and counseling, parental training, baby items and more.

At the beginning of March, 14-year-old Alex spoke to her fellow parishioners after all Masses, inviting them to

participate in her donation drive. "My goal is that we are able to bring the greatest gift of all, hope, to the moms in need at this time," she said in her invitation.

During the month, parishioners were encouraged to drop off items at the parish and make donations online.

On the weekend of the Annunciation, at the end of the drive, Alex hosted a "baby shower" in honor of the Blessed Mother Mary with her fellow AHG Pioneers (12-14 year age level). By carrying out her project, she also fulfilled a step of earning her Harriet Tubman Award, the highest honor for her age group.

During the baby shower,



Isabella Alex and Patsy Hiller, a 1st Way Life Center volunteer, pose with some of Alex's donations.

Alex and her troop played games; made cards of encouragement for mothers; and met with a 1st Way Life Center volunteer who

encouraged them to share their gifts and talents.

After the parish drive and the party, Alex and her siblings sorted and created an inventory of the hundreds of donations they had received. Between monetary donations and the baby items, the baby shower donation drive raised over \$5,000 of baby items, including diapers, wipes, baby clothes, books, toys and formula.

When Alex dropped off the items, 1st Way Life Center volunteer Patsy Hiller said, "This is absolutely incredible! These items will give so many new moms hope and encouragement!"

Alex's Harriet Tubman

Award has requirements besides her service project and "baby shower" event planning, including holding a leadership position and completing other tasks.

But for Alex, it's about much more than checking a box.

"I believe people of any age can help serve the community through small or large projects. My goal was to spread hope to the brave moms and their families," Alex says. "Seeing this outpouring of hope through the many donations of my parish and community makes my heart so happy! I can only imagine how thrilled our Blessed Mother must be!"

—Information provided by Isabella and Kym Alex.

Good for You

West Dundee Student Wins Kane County Spelling Bee, Moves to Scripps National Finals

GENEVA—Francis Nnodi (right), an eighth-grade student at St. Catherine of Siena School in West Dundee, took the championship at this year's Kane County Spelling Bee Final, hosted by the county's Regional Office of Education at Thompson Middle School on March 15. He competed against eight students from Kane County elementary and middle schools, including two in the Rockford Diocese: Andrew Taing from St. Charles Borromeo School, Hampshire; and Tyler Hunger from Holy Angels School, Aurora (who took third place). After several rounds, Nnodi competed with the top three finalists before winning with the word "adhesion." Nnodi now has the option to attend the Scripps National Spelling Bee Finals, set for Memorial Day week in Maryland.

—Provided by Al Benson.



(Photo/ Al Benson)
Francis Nnodi

Hampshire Student Honored for Chemistry Research, Moves to State Competition

HAMPSHIRE—Caleb Lucas (right), an eighth-grade student at St. Charles Borromeo School, qualified for his chemistry research as a Region 5 semifinalist in this year's Illinois Junior Academy of Science (IJAS) Competition. The IJAS competition is Illinois' largest research competition for high school and middle school students. Lucas' presentation of his chemistry-based science project ("Natural Fibers vs. Synthetic — Flammability") will advance to the state finals on April 29 at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

—Information provided by Mary Beth Jordan, principal.



(Photo provided/ Mary Beth Jordan)
Caleb Lucas