

Bryant: Meeting an unspoken need

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Erica Bryant



Women at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Webster assemble kits of sanitary products for women in need. (Photo: Provided)

Around this time of year, you see charitable drives for things like canned goods and toys or winter hats, coats and mittens. You do not see a lot of requests for donations of sanitary napkins and tampons. Ann Germanow has a theory as to why.

“It’s taboo,” she said, referring to what occurs every month when a woman’s uterus sheds its lining. “But women menstruate and they need supplies.”

A few years ago, Germanow started The Scensible Source, a company that produces disposal bags for feminine care products. As word got around, homeless shelters and other organizations that aid women started contacting her to ask for donations of sanitary napkins and tampons.

Her company doesn’t produce those things, but the numerous requests inspired her to start hosting parties to generate donations of sanitary products. Feminine supplies cannot be purchased with SNAP or WIC benefits, and there are sad stories of women trying to make do with inappropriate substitutes like paper towels. Or using tampons for too many hours, which can be very dangerous.



Volunteers bring in supplies for a P.A.D. Project kit making party at Charles Settlement House (Photo: Provided photo)

Germanow informed Greater Rochester’s Section of the National Council of Jewish Women of this problem, which prompted the organization to launch The P.A.D. Project. The acronym stands for Providing Access and Dignity to women during their menstrual cycle.

With The Scensible Source as its corporate sponsor, the P.A.D. Project organizes efforts to collect sanitary supplies and distribute them to women and girls in need. Last week, for example, the Canandaigua Middle School Modified Basketball team hosted a P.A.D. Project party to collect sanitary supplies for the Victor Food Cupboard. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Webster hosted a party to benefit Hope Ministry. P.A.D. Project parties also have benefited organizations like Center for Youth Services and Sojourner House.

The P.A.D. Project also wants to make it easier for women to afford sanitary products on their own. Toward that end, it advocates for Assembly Bill 7555, which would eliminate sales tax on female hygiene products in New York state.

In a blog for the NCJW Insider, P.A.D. Project Chair Gina Horowitz encourages women to contact their state representatives in support of the bill, noting that Canada and Minnesota, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Pennsylvania do not tax sanitary products.

"Sanitary napkins and tampons are not luxuries: they are necessities," she wrote. "It is not possible to conduct a normal life without them."



Athleta employees prepare to sort sanitary supplies collected for women in need. (Photo: Provided)

Germanow would eventually like to see a local sanitary supplies bank, similar to diaper banks that are being launched around the country. For now, she is happy that more organizations are hosting P.A.D. parties and providing sanitary products for women who can't afford them.

"It's not something that people think to donate," she said. "It's really an overlooked need."

Erica Bryant is the Pay it Forward Columnist. Contact her at ebryant@gannett.com or like her at [facebook.com/BryantDandC](https://www.facebook.com/BryantDandC).

Twelve Days of Giving

This column is the third in a 12-day series that spotlights organizations that are helping people in the Rochester area.

How you can help

Anyone interested in donating packages of sanitary products or in hosting a P.A.D. donation party can

contact the P.A.D. Project at ncjwgrs@gmail.com or (585) 234-3475.

List for Erica Bryant's Twelve Days of Giving Project is getting longer:

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