

Local Realtors aid needy family

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12/29/2005



Sue Rhoades with, from left, Dujunna, Radsheda, Ashly and Jakia celebrating a merry Christmas in the Manning household.

A group of Haverford Realtors are lending a helping hand to a pair of needy families this holiday season.

In August 2002, life for Radsheda Manning, then 19, and her three younger sisters took a turn for the worse when their mother passed way following a long battle with heart disease.

Manning had to drop out of business school in Norristown to raise her sisters, Dujunna, 13, Ashly, 12, and Jakia, 18, and make sure they stayed in school.

She tried supporting the family on her \$6-an-hour job as a manager of a dollar store in Norristown, but when her son, Isheed, was born eight months later, she left the job because it would cost more money to place Isheed in day care than she could earn at the dollar store.

Her boyfriend, Ivan Freeman, helped out as much as he could, but three weeks ago, his car hit a patch of black ice and skidded off the road. The car was totally destroyed and he spent three days in the hospital. Now, a simple trip to the grocery store or the Laundromat means asking for rides from neighbors or walking.

Despite the hardships, Manning kept one goal in mind. "I was trying to keep the family together," she said.

And this holiday season, the family was able to celebrate together thanks to help from an unlikely source -- a group of Realtors from Haverford. The Haverford office of Weichert Realtors got together and adopted the Manning family for the holidays.

Last Wednesday, Sue Rhoades, a real estate agent from the Haverford office of Weichert, took several bags of Christmas gifts for the kids. She also dropped off grocery store gift cards for Radsheda so the family can have a good Christmas

dinner.

"I'm always grateful of what I get," Manning said. Rhoades met Manning through an organization called Mommy's Light. The group helps families who have lost their mother. Rhoades contacted the group and asked if they knew of family in the area that might be in need of help.

For Rhoades, helping out the needy is something that everyone can do and not just during the holidays. "People can make a difference," Rhoades said.

Although the gifts will help and were an obvious welcome sight for Manning's sisters, the gifts aren't the most important part of the holiday season.

"It's not about what you get. It's about spending time with your family" Jakia said following Rhoades' visit.

The Mannings were one of two families adopted by the realtors this year. The second family was from Northeast Philadelphia. Rhoades added that this was the first year they adopted a family for the holidays, but they hope to do something similar next year.