



Lisa Reisman / For Hearst Connecticut Media

BHcare volunteer Billy Ferraro, center, accepts donations of personal care items from Branford Optometric Associates staff in honor of his mother Karen Ferraro. 8/2/19

Branford Optometric Associates donates items in honor of BHcare volunteer

By Lisa Reisman

BRANFORD — A few months ago, Michele Hackley, manager of Branford Optometric Associates, saw in the paper that BHcare Clothing Bank was facing a shortage of personal care items for its clients. Pictured with the story was Billy Ferraro, a BHcare volunteer.

Billy's mother, Karen Ferraro, who died at 71 in December 2018, had been a patient over many years at the optometric practice. Billy routinely brought her in for her appointments.

"She was just a very special person," Hackley said. "She loved helping people, volunteering at the Clothing Bank. She'd do anything for anyone, and Billy is the same."

A light bulb went on in her head. Each Friday, she and her staff take up a cause — among them, the YNH Childrens' Hospital, the Dan Cosgrove Animal Shelter, and the Food Bank.

"It's our small way of giving back," Hackley said.

"We're so grateful and appreciative that Branford Optometric Associates took the time to acknowledge Karen and all she's done for the Clothing Bank. These are exactly the items that help many of our clients in their daily lives."

*Joan McFarlane-Nwagboli,
BHcare Clothing Bank coordinator*

A few Fridays later, there were seven bagfuls overflowing with bottles of shampoo and conditioner, bars of soap, body wash, deodorant, toothpaste, and toothbrushes donated by the staff of nine and two doctors.

"This is our way of honoring Karen, by helping an organization that meant so much to her, and also Billy, for everything he does," Hackley said.

The donation struck a chord with Anita Ruggiero, who worked with Ferraro at the Clothing Bank for years.

"Richly deserved," she said. "Karen got so much joy out of helping clients find just the right article of clothing. She was a real source of light here."

BHcare Clothing Bank coordinator Joan McFarlane-Nwagboli agreed.

"We're so grateful and appreciative that Branford Optometric Associates took the time to acknowledge Karen and all she's done for the Clothing Bank," she said. "These are exactly the items that help many of our clients in their daily lives."

BHcare Clothing Bank is in the Patricia C. Andriole Volunteer Services Building, 30 Harrison Ave. Donations may be made during Clothing Bank hours: Monday through Thursday from 9:30 a.m. to noon and 1 to 2 p.m.; Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Saturday 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. For information and for pickups, call 203-483-2643. To learn more about BHcare, visit BHcare.org.