

Pupils earn extra credit with Meals on Wheels

Home-schoolers work to aid the homebound



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Jeremy Coylewright makes twice-weekly Meals on Wheels trips with his three children — Izaia, 9; Indigo, 5; and 17-month-old foster daughter Angel. The volunteer program is “a natural conduit to having kids interact with their community,” he said.

By JESSICA GROOVER

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ANNAPOLIS | The twice-weekly trips Jeremy Coylewright makes for Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland have become less lonely for him and those receiving the meals since his home-schooled children started joining him.

“Meals on Wheels is a natural conduit to having kids interact with their community,” says Mr.

Coylewright, who brings his 9-year-old daughter, Izaia; son Indigo, 5; and his 17-month-old foster daughter, Angel, with him.

Mr. Coylewright and his children began volunteering in the spring. In September, the group, which prepared and delivered 760,000 meals to homebound clients last year, began including home-schooled children as volunteers so they could fulfill their community-service requirements.

The new program is an expansion of Moms for Meals — a two-year-old program that targets stay-at-home moms and offers opportunities for them to bring their children when delivering meals in the summer or during holidays.

Group officials said the change last month would be a useful way for Maryland children to attain their 75 or more service-learning hours for high school graduation. The hours are usually counted beginning in middle school, according to the state Department of Education.

The change occurred in September because it is the beginning of the school year and more Maryland families are home schooling, according to the group.

“I would speak highly of home schooling and Meals on Wheels,” Mr. Coylewright said. “Combining the two is why service learning is important and why home schooling is important because they allow kids to get out of school and interact in their community.”

Every Tuesday and Friday, he and his children start their shift at about 10:30 a.m. at Christ Lutheran Church, in Baltimore, and wait for the Meals on Wheels truck to arrive at the pickup site.

The family meets with the site coordinator, who prepares maps and a route book with each recipient’s name, address and special instructions. When the truck arrives, the family members load the meals and baskets into the van and travel to homes in Baltimore within 10 miles from the pickup site.

For most stops along their usual two routes, Izaia and Indigo carry one meal each.

“I don’t like the hot trays on Fridays,” Indigo said.

At each stop, the Coylewrights knock on the door, announcing, “Meals on Wheels.” Then they talk with the recipients briefly.

Izaia and Indigo not only know the recipients by name and home, they also know the names of the pets.

For those who receive meals, the children are a pleasant surprise.

“I like the children to come, and I like the meals,” said recipient Grace Bova.

The family stops at about nine homes before returning the cooler and hot box that carry meals to the pickup site. After they go home, Izaia and Indigo have journal assignments about their experiences.

“We’ll usually process how it went and how they feel interacting with people who are different from them,” Mr. Coylewright said.

Izaia said she enjoys walking in different



parts of the area and writing about what people say and how they look.

The Coylewright family and other volunteers are essential to Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland at a time when volunteer rates are lower than usual.

“It’s important life training for them, and it’s a lot of fun,” Mr. Coylewright adds. “Not only is volunteering important, but they can envision career opportunities. They get a lot out of it.”