

GOOD CITIZENSHIP

Helping Can Be The Greatest Holiday Gift ®

(NAPSA)—Many people find that it can be a struggle to see beyond the commercialism of the season to find the joy and fulfillment that lie at the heart of the holidays.

However, this year, more people are said to be discovering what they've been looking for by extending a helping hand to those less fortunate. And, in many cases, young people are setting some of the best examples.

For instance, Jessica Field, 17, of Manassas, Va., was searching for a community service project when she learned that a "merry" Christmas was not possible for needy families living in local shelters.

In an effort to help, Jessica solicited donations of new toys, books and clothes from her community and then invited families from three area shelters to "shop" for free presents for their children.

Dozens of volunteers assisted in stocking shelves and wrapping gifts for the 60 needy children who ultimately benefited from Jessica's holiday shop. "After helping those less fortunate than me, I realized what the season was all about," said Jessica.

Christopher Clark, 14, of

Cleveland, Ohio, discovered at an early age that people don't need to be homeless or unemployed to need help during the holidays. He had a friend whose mother earned enough to pay the bills—but had nothing leftover for gifts.

So Christopher, who was only five at the time, asked his family to help him contact local businesses to sponsor children like his friend so they would have gifts to open on Christmas morning.

He also began organizing an annual breakfast with Santa for these kids. Today, Christopher's "Christmas Angel Project" brings holiday cheer to more than 200 children each year.

Jessica and Christopher's strong desire to lend a helping hand to those in need earned them Prudential Spirit of Community Awards this year.

The Awards are a nationwide program that honors young Americans for outstanding acts of volunteerism.

For more information on what young Americans are doing to help others, or on how they're being recognized for their volunteerism, call 1-973-802-4568, or visit the Web site at www.prudential.com.