

## All the Debris I Could Ever Use

“Down in the Dumps,” and happy to be so, is Springfield resident Vicki Valley. “Six years ago, when I was at the lowest part in my life, I prayed to God to send me good fortune. I never saw a lot of money, however, he answered my prayers by giving me all the debris I could ever use.”

When Vicki Valley became a roll off truck driver six years ago, she observed cute crafts, birdhouses, welcome slates, and paintings hauled off needlessly to landfills on a regular basis. Unable to understand why these useful items were being thrown away, Vicki began to think of ways to recycle them in an effort to preserve valuable land space.

As she sought to determine what could be done with these recyclables, Vicki had an idea to begin a program to restore the items to their original usefulness and sell them to raise money for abused and neglected children. In 1996, Vicki decided to name her program “Down in the Dumps.”

Vicki started collecting wood and other items that could be recycled, and she and her friends turned the items into unfinished crafts. The unfinished pieces were then distributed to volunteers at Essex Nursing Home, where they were transformed into finished crafts to be sold. On the first run at the nursing home, \$75 was raised for abused and neglected children.

“Down in the Dumps” has grown considerably since it’s beginning at Essex Nursing Home. Youth groups and other volunteers have become involved in finishing the crafts, a CPA has volunteered to handle the group’s finances, and Vicki has been asked to speak with various groups about her mission.

To date, \$500 has been raised for abused and neglected children. However, it is not only the children who are being given a very special gift. The nursing home residents, girl scout troops, and volunteer artists are being given a special gift as well- the opportunity to help others.

As a single mother of four, no one would expect Vicki Valley to spend her few free moments raising funds for abused children, allowing creative opportunities for the elderly, or initiating high school volunteerism, but then few would think of “Down in the Dumps” with such an enlightened perspective.

*If you or your organization would like to volunteer your talents to helping “Down in the Dumps” please contact Vicki Valley at (937) 215-9855.*