

Couple gives 50 bikes to Chester kids

By Loretta Rodgers

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Fifty children, last week, received new bicycles and helmets from a couple devoted to Chester children, who felt the need to encourage and help youth.

Malvern residents Don O'Brien and Jodi Gaunt approached their neighbor, Aaron Johnson, a former professional basketball player in Europe, and asked if he was aware of a pro-

gram that works with inner city youth.

Johnson told the couple about the Andrew L. Hicks, Jr. Foundation and its founders, Andrew Hicks, Sr. and his wife, Karen, were more than happy to help.

The children were selected by the Hicks Foundation to receive the bicycles and the surprise giveaway event took place at the Chester Fire Station on the east side of town.

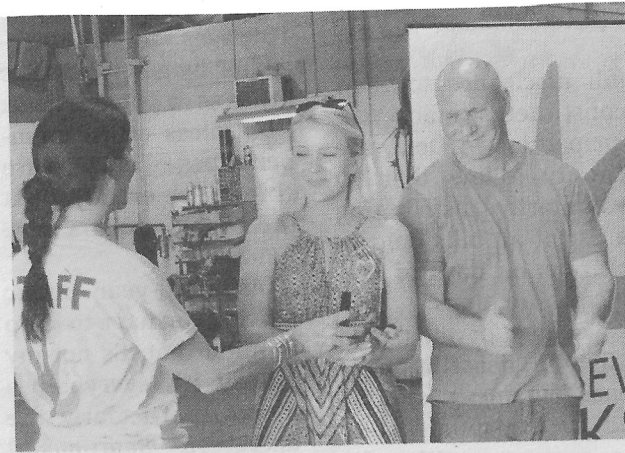
The street in front of the fire house was blocked off and children could be seen happily riding their bicycles.

"My bike was stolen, so I am really happy today," said eight year-old Cameron Baird, of Chester. "I am so happy to have a new bike."

O'Brien told the children that as a boy, he did not have a bicycle



Jayden Williams is proud of her new bicycle.



Karen Hicks, of the **Andrew L. Hicks, Jr. Foundation**, presented **Jodi Gaunt** and **Don O'Brien** with a plaque of gratitude for organizing the bike giveaway.

because his parents couldn't afford to buy him one. He said he tried to hide his disappointment, but it was very difficult and not having a bike made him sad.

"This is a special day for me," O'Brien said. "I am living my dream and every one of you are part of the fulfillment of that dream."

O'Brien told the children and their families that, in his opinion, the most important pillars of life are to dream, believe and love. "We are all in this together," O'Brien said. "I don't even know you, but I love you already."

Bike recipient Jady Williams said she was grateful and appreciative to the people who made it possible.

"I feel happy and very supported," Williams said. "I just can't say 'thank you' enough."

The Hicks couple presented O'Brien and Gaunt with an engraved glass plaque for their generosity.

O'Brien said he and Gaunt purchased 35 of the bicycles and when their friends heard about what was happening, they joined in and paid for the other 15.

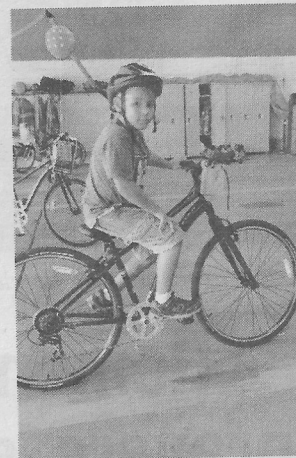
The Hicks Foundation was started in memory of a young man who

spent countless summers working with underprivileged youth in Chester.

Andrew Hicks, Jr. died July 19, 2010 at age 17. He was hiking the coastal trail in California when he lost his footing and fell to his death.

His parents said he had great love for Christ and enjoyed being with children in Chester. They organized the foundation to continue their son's work.

"It is just wonderful to see the looks on the faces of these children," said Hicks, Sr. "Our son would have loved experiencing this today."



Chester resident **Cameron Baird** tries out his new bike.