

"Weekends Are For Helping The Homeless"

by Carmen Juri of [The Star Ledger](#) 04/12/2003

Every Friday night, **Dana Vigilante** of Nutley, her sister, **Beth Iacullo**, and Iacullo's husband, **Carmin**, drive into Manhattan to distribute items to the homeless.

Throughout the week, they collect gently used coats, blankets, scarves, gloves, hats, socks and bags from friends, family members and business associates. They have coincided their schedule with that of the New York Coalition for the Homeless.

On Friday nights, the coalition makes 10 stops in New York, distributing soup to the homeless.

"We stop at those same stops and as the people are lining up for their free soup, we ask them if they have a need for any of our items," said Vigilante.

On Saturday mornings they go to St. John's Church in Newark and again meet with the needy people that are lining up for the soup kitchen.

So between Friday and Saturday, all of their collected items go to needy recipients.

"It's been wonderful," said Vigilante, 36. "We go to New York all the time for Broadway plays, restaurants. We have nice jobs. We said, 'Let's give back and see what we can do.'"

The first night of their mission, they drove out of the Lincoln Tunnel into New York and came upon a van from the New York Coalition that was parked by a soup line of about 50 people.

"We rolled down our windows and said, 'We have blankets. Can we help?' she said. "They ask for such little things."

Vigilante and the Iaculos want to do more. They are seeking additional help from the local communities and are asking anyone interested in donating items to e-mail them at biacullo@comcast.net or dana.vigilante@verizon.net.

The three are willing to drive just about anywhere in New Jersey to pick up the items.

"We can be making such a significant difference to so many homeless people throughout New York and New Jersey. We have decided just to do this as a way of giving back. We live in Essex County, so that's where most of our contributions come from," Vigilante said.

They do not ask for monetary donations, simply items that people are no longer using. Each week, a few friends take the ride in with them and help them distribute the items.

"So for a group of thirtysomethings, we walk away feeling like we've done our part to help the less fortunate," Vigilante said.

"It puts life in perspective," Vigilante said.