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Generosity makes Easter sweet

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Paul Zasadny, 35, knows what it's like to see the dawn after difficult times.

That's one reason why he cares about **Easter** baskets and the inner city kids who might not get one without his help.

To the casual observer, he is a man who might seem more likely to ask for help than to give it. His speech is slow, deliberate, sometimes a bit awkward.

In his youth, a brain tumor caused him to have epileptic seizures and behavior disorders. He spent time in treatment centers. Surgeries and radiation treatments provided some help. He still has some disability but says it's not severe.

Five years ago, he started using his time and money to assemble candy-filled **Easter** baskets for children in the Riverwest apartment building where he was living. That private ministry grew annually as he networked with people and later became active at Metrobrook Church, which worships at 10 a.m. Sundays in a Milwaukee Area Technical College auditorium at 1036 N. 8th St.

On Saturday, a team of Metrobrook volunteers that Zasadny organized were at City on a Hill ministry, 2224 W. Kilbourn Ave., to pack about 330 baskets. Most of the baskets and their contents were provided by Zasadny, who solicits donations at the church and elsewhere to get baskets, candy and small toys. Here's Life Inner City, a resource ministry for churches, will distribute those baskets, along with about 270 from other sources, to needy children through 11 churches and ministries in the city, from the Milwaukee Rescue Mission to midsize and storefront churches, said Juan Valencia, compassionate products coordinator for Here's Life.

"I have a heart of helping children out there," said Zasadny, who lives on the east side and is a maintenance worker at an area Pick 'n Save store. "I have a pure heart of trying to help others. The reason why I want to is because I want to just let people know that there are people out there that have struggled in the past, but they have recovered and are helping in the community in return. And that's what I have been doing. And I'm proud for what I have been doing."

Dozens volunteer to help

Brian Sonderman, lead pastor at Metrobrook, said about 40 people at the church donate or help Zasadny's **Easter** basket ministry as volunteers. This is the second **Easter** that the church, which Zasadny began attending about a year and a half ago, has been involved.

"He is very passionate about mobilizing the congregation to help kids in the central city who otherwise wouldn't have an **Easter** basket on **Easter** morning," Sonderman said. "It was his idea, and obviously he's been doing it for five years. He really gets very excited about that and being able to serve, especially alongside other people. The thing that is so great about Paul is that he didn't just want to do this on his own. He wants to involve other people, and that gives him great joy."

Sonderman described Zasadny as "incredibly generous" with what he has to share.

"I love to have people be around Paul because his faith is contagious in both his trust and belief in God, but also in terms of just living out his faith in a very practical way to help out other people who don't have as much," Sonderman said. "That's been really special for our congregation to be able to learn from him."

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