

Helping during the holidays

BY HEATHER JOHNSON
DUROCHER
Special to the Record-Eagle

Charitable organizations always appreciate donations and volunteers, particularly during the holidays and local needs are even greater this season following natural disasters nationally that have taken a toll on these groups' coffers.

"All of our local funds get depleted because we have to deploy our own local people (to the disaster sites) and we have to send \$900 with each person," said Joyce Wittbrodt, executive director of the Northwest Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Wittbrodt called the outpouring of local donations immediately following the hurricanes "remarkable," but acknowledged it has since died down.

"And it's not enough," Wittbrodt said. "Everyone concentrates on the national needs and forget the local chapters. That's where we're struggling right now."

Other organizations are anticipating a pinch as well.

"I certainly understand the reasons and hope that goes along with the natural disasters, and I hope we continue responding, but it does have an effect on us," said Father Edwin A. Thome, spiritual director for the Father Fred Foundation.

Major Thomas Riggs, commander of the local Salvation Army, shares the concern but is optimistic about area residents' generosity toward their neighbors. His organization hopes to raise \$300,000 during its annual Red Kettle campaign.

"People have sent (through the Salvation Army) almost \$100,000 for natural disasters, 100 percent of which is used for disaster purposes, be it for hurricane Rita or Katrina, and there's some concern it may have an impact on our holiday efforts," he said.

"But I think people understand the need at home. I think we'll make our goal."

A look at the needs these local organizations are facing this holiday season, and how you can help:

Northwest Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross

Location: 735 S. Garfield Avenue, Traverse City
Phone: 947-7286
Web Site: <http://www.northwestmichigan.redcross.org/>

Red Cross services go well beyond blood donation, for which the organization is widely known.

"We respond to house fires in four counties:

Benzie, Leelanau, Grand Traverse and Kalkaska," Wittbrodt said. "We will provide families with vouchers so they can go get clothing, food. It's emergency help, it's not long-term help, to help them get back on their feet."

Last year, the local chapter assisted with more than 70 house fires. Wittbrodt expects that amount to double this winter because the organization has formed more partnerships with area fire departments.

The chapter, which relies on its 400 volunteers, also responds to any local disaster, such as a power outage or plane or vehicle crash. It also provides babysitter training, basic aid and CPR training, lifeguard training and Armed Forces Emergency Services, which involves assisting area military families.

"Our web site does have a listing of all the things we're looking for," Wittbrodt said. "People are out there, it's just a matter of finding them and matching them up with the right job."

Father Fred Foundation

Location: 826 Hastings, Traverse City
Phone: 947-2055
Web site: <http://www.fatherfredfoundation.com/>

While the Father Fred Foundation can't dole out as much financially compared with last year, Father Thome said the organization is "doing exceptionally well on the whole."

"We always have at least some funds for people," said Father Thome, who meets with those in need to determine how best to assist them. "Nearly 100 percent of what people give goes to the poor. We have very little overhead, and that's an attraction in and of itself. We were started to be the last resort, but now in many instances, because there isn't any help elsewhere, we become the first resort."

The foundation helps those who cannot pay their heating bills.

"They have to be in dire need, but there are a lot of people in dire need," he said. "We catch them about three hours before their electric is cut off. We save them by the bootstraps."

The foundation also participates in Toys for Tots and an annual Thanksgiving dinner at the Park Place, which serves some 600 meals to those in need.

The organization is excited about its latest venture: a daycare next door to its offices.

"That was a long dream of Father Fred before he died," Father Thome said. "In cooperation with St.

Michael's Lutheran Church and the Angel Foundation, we're making a building available for daycare which we hope will be readied in early 2006."

Numerous folks have donated their services to fix up the building, but the foundation continues to look for volunteers interested in donating labor to complete the project.

Salvation Army

Location: 1239 Barlow Street, Traverse City
Phone: 946-4644

The Salvation Army is seeking families, individuals and businesses to help with its adopt-a-family program.

"We have people coming in daily requesting help with Christmas," said Major Thomas Riggs, commander. "These families may need clothing or larger items such as a washer, dryer or chest of drawers. We're anticipating 300 families this year."

The local Salvation Army is seeing an increase in those using its meal program, which runs Monday, Wednesday and Friday each week.

"It's open to the public. Anyone can come," Riggs said. "We're serving anywhere from 200 to 250 meals every Monday, Wednesday and Friday."

The chapter also responds to local emergencies, runs a summer camp, and most recently has started an after-school program for kids.

Women's Resource Center

Location: 720 S. Elmwood (offices); Thrift Shoppe is 1719 Garfield Avenue, across from the Cherryland Center
Phone: 941-1210 (offices); 946-4180 (Thrift Shoppe)
Web site: www.womensresourcecenter.org

The Women's Resource Center has three major needs this holiday season,

said Carmen Stevens, the center's development director. People can participate in its adopt-a-family program, donate to its thrift store or help ready the center's new location on U.S. 31 South.

"The community has always been very generous to us, and I am confident the community's kindness will continue," Stevens said. "If someone or a business or family is inclined to be charitable this holiday season, give us a call and we will find something to match their wishes."

The adopt-a-family program matches up businesses and individuals with families in need who fill out confidential "wish lists."

"They have very basic needs — clothing, food — that we would take for granted," Stevens said.

Donations also are needed at the Thrift Shoppe, which through a voucher program averages about \$7,000 in free household goods and clothing to those in need. This fall, that amount has grown to \$13,000 a month.

"These families are diligently working, sometimes two or three jobs to make the money they need to support their family, and they're just not quite there," she said of those the Thrift Shoppe serves.

Come spring 2006, the center is moving into the former Long Lake Marina building on U.S. 31 South.

"We're really excited about it, it'll be a great location," she said. "The size is the same, but we had the opportunity to get into a situation where we have less overhead than we have at our current location."

The warehouse is in need of renovation, so the organization is seeking help, specifically in donated labor.

Heather Johnson Durocher is a local freelance writer.

Just some of those in need...

The Women's Resource Center sponsors a Holiday Needs program available to WRC clients who receive residential and non-residential services in our four-county service areas. Recipients are matched with donors who may be individual, families or organizations. Last year WRC instituted a gift card program that allowed greater flexibility for gift giving options for teenagers and grandparents who lived with a family. Donors deliver their wrapped gifts to Grace Episcopal Church in Traverse City which serves as a site partner as a central location for the distribution of gifts. WRC volunteers are assigned to assist donors and recipients who may need assistance. For more, contact Jody Smith, holiday needs coordinator at 941-1210 or email jsmith@wrcgt.com no later than Dec. 2.

United Way of Northwest Michigan

Give a gift...
Of friendship, become a YouthFriend.

Of your tax knowledge to low-income families and seniors.

Of your memories from your service to our country through the Veterans History Project.

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Of your skill in small home repairs for low income seniors.

Of your talents for making afghans for medical care facilities.

For more, contact Susan McQuaid, volunteer center director at United Way of Northwest Michigan 947-3200, Ext. 20

Goodwill Inn

Diaper Bags/Toddlers
► Filled diaper bags
► Diapers, all sizes
► Baby wipes

Ages 3 - 12 years

► Walkman
► Stuffed animal
► Craft kit
► Hand-held electronic games
► Coloring book
► Books

Ages 13 - 19 years

► Walkman
► Arts and craft kits
► Electronic hand-held games
► Game Boy
► Blank journal
► Inspirational books
► Manicure sets
► Make-up

Adults

► Umbrella
► Blank journal
► Inspirational books
► Stationary
► Hand lotion
► Shaving cream
► Manicure sets
► Disposable razors
► Flannel button-up shirts; large and extra large men and women
► Long underwear; men and women
► Medium/large/extra large, tops and bottoms

Common Necessities

► Fleece blanket
► Wash cloth
► Towel
► Shampoo
► Toothpaste
► Toothbrush
► Dental floss
► Winter hat
► Winter scarf
► Waterproof winter gloves
► Socks, all sizes
► Watch
► Haircut certificate
► Clothing certificate
► Fast food certificate
► Book store certificate
► Alarm clock
► Granola bars
► Tuna packets
► Bottled water
► Dried fruit packets
► Peanut packets
► Peanut butter
► Cheese/cracker packets
► Instant coffee packets

► Hot chocolate packets
► Canned pastas, flip top lid
► Small boxes of cereal
► Underwear: all sizes; men, women and children
► Feminine hygiene products
► First Aid kits
► Hooded sweatshirts; men, women children
► Batteries: AA/AAA/C

All items must be new and may be dropped off at the Goodwill Retail Store on South Airport Road. Please be sure to communicate these items are for the Holiday Needs Program. If you have any questions, call Monica at: 995-7717

Big Brothers /Big Sisters of Northwestern Michigan is asking for the gift of a little of your time this holiday season to brighten the life of a child. Their mission is to provide children in need with a caring adult mentor. Giving your time to help with the agency's annual Bowl For Kids' Sake event is another way to help BB/BS help kids. For more about becoming a Big Brother or Big Sister or to volunteer in other ways, call 932-7810.

The Antrim Baby Pantry

Their needs for distribution are: Baby wipes, diapers (sizes newborn to 6, and pull-ups), crib and receiving blankets, onesies, formula, cereal, baby shampoo, underwear and socks for children 2 to 5, children's books. Monetary donations are also accepted.

Address:
The Antrim Baby Pantry
205 Grove st.
Mancelona, Mi. 49659
Contact for any drop off:
Ann Corona, 587-9789
Mary Williams, 584-2363

As area residents try to stretch their giving dollars, a donation to the **Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation** and their Cornerstone Fund will help to support the more than 250 charitable endeavors established at the foundation.

Donations support these endeavors throughout the region, including in Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau Counties. The Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation can be reached at 935-4066 or by visiting www.gtcrf.org.

Red Cross

Volunteers needs:
► Web master to over see Web site fundraising committee/
► Volunteers special events committee

► Volunteers disaster services
► Office volunteers
► CPR/FA instructors
► Board Of Directors members
► Blood Service volunteers
► Lifeguards swim instructors
► Babysitting instructors

Donations:
► Monetary donations, either by check to the local chapter or by calling with a credit card.

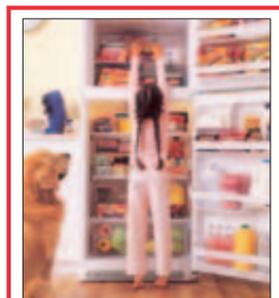
Also, the local chapter needs:
► Office furniture
► Communications equipment
► Office Supplies
► Also, Vintage Red Cross calendars will be for sale for the holidays, all proceeds will benefit the local chapter.

Contact Joyce A. Wittbrodt, executive director at 947-7286
Web site: northwestmichigan.redcross.org

The Father Fred Foundation has many needs this holiday season. They are a distribution center for the Toys for Tots program in Northern Michigan and are always in need of wrapping paper, cards and ribbons for the gifts.

The biggest need Father Fred foresees this holiday season will be home heating assistance, due the rapidly increasing prices and state cutbacks.

For more information or questions, call Michael Shockley at the Father Fred Foundation, 947-2055.



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