

Newport Holly-Day Solutions

Remember people in need this Christmas

By Heather M. Lightner

The holiday season is a time to remember the blessings in our lives and a time to give back to the community however we can. The holidays can be a difficult time for many, but the good news is that there are many local churches and organizations where one can reach out to those in need, and perhaps make someone's holiday a little bit easier, a little more joyous.

Women's Resource Center of Newport and Bristol Counties' "Adopt-A-Family" program is currently seeking help in making the holidays a little brighter for victims of domestic violence. The program, which runs from late October through December 19 matches donors with clients and their families in order to meet family needs during the holiday season. Clients of the Women's Resource Center provide a "wish list" and donors providing needed materials.

Donors can sponsor a client or a family in need by dropping off a bag of food to the center located at 114 Touro St., Newport, providing unwrapped gifts from a client of family wish list and/or gift certificates to stores such as WalMart, CVS, Old Navy, and Stop & Shop or such things as movie passes or gas cards.

"We're always in need of other items — diapers, toilet paper," explained Executive Director Laurie DiPersio. DiPersio said it's the more mundane items that are really needed at the center. "I know they don't sound exciting, but gift certificates are huge," she noted.

The center is in need of grocery store gift certificates not only during the holidays, but year-round, explained DiPersio. The center's safe home, whose location is confidential, draws in people who often come in with nothing except the clothes on their back. The grocery store gift cards help these victims meet their basic need for food while they are waiting to be worked into the system for food stamps or other government programs.

Individuals, families, groups of citizens, friends and neighbors are encouraged to donate to the program, as are local restaurants and businesses. In the past, Raytheon, Newport Auto Center, Trattoria-Simpatico, and the Viking Riders have all given to the Adopt-A-Family program.


The Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County, located at 61 Main St. in Wakefield, is also asking for the community's help. The community is welcome to donate year round to the organization or to their "Adopt-A-Room" at the center's safe house for victims of domestic violence. In addition, the center has prepared a special Christmas "wish list." The list, which can be accessed by visiting <http://www.wrsc.org/InKind.htm>, includes items such as phone cards, new women and children's underwear of all sizes, gift cards, new or used cell phones, cleaning supplies, and paper products.

Director of Public Relations Garrie Leitner recommended that those interested in donating give gift cards, due to the center's limited storage capacity. In addition, Leitner explained that victims of domestic abuse experience a therapeutic benefit when they receive a gift card. "So many (victims) have such low self-esteem," said Leitner. "Giving gift cards really empowers them — it's really a nice way to give them back a piece of themselves."


Lucy's Hearth, a home which provides shelter for women and children who have been displaced from their homes, is participating

in a community outreach program that began before Thanksgiving. "Thankfully we are able to extend it for Christmas," explained Interim Director Joyce Edmonson. With the help of various local organizations, Lucy's Hearth has been able to provide gifts for mothers, kids, and families in the local area. Local markets like Clement's Marketplace and Stop & Shop have graciously donated to the Hearth's Adopt-a-Family program.


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