

Lend a Hand: Share your holiday spirit

November 15, 2009 2:00 AM - The holiday season is a great time to come together with your family. What better way to create memories and set an example than to sponsor a family or individual in need. Many people around the Seacoast are struggling simply to provide everyday necessities. So gather your family or friends and make a contribution this holiday season.

Adopt-a-Family

Community Food Pantry's mission is to help relieve hunger in Berwick, Maine, and in Somersworth and Rollinsford. It provides families with enough food for 15 meals or more per month. If the applicant is in dire need, the organization will provide this service as often as needed. Otherwise, applicants are allowed to use the pantry's services once a month. It serves canned, frozen, dry and ready-to-serve foods for a variety of meals that are planned to provide enough meals for five days. It also provides other extras, which help stretch the food supply over the month as those items become available. Most of the food is donated, but it does receive items from USDA foods and also orders from the Good Shepherd Food Bank in Auburn, Maine. It is seeking volunteers to sponsor a local family in need this holiday season. Volunteers should call to obtain a wish list for a local family.

Contact Tom or Diane Brown, co-directors, at 692-2907 or tdbrownnh@myfairpoint.net.

Location: Somersworth.

Provide a meal or gift to a family in need

The Housing Partnership helps families and individuals, struggling to make ends meet, to obtain quality housing they can afford. It provides affordable housing and offers related service for low to moderate income residents of the greater Seacoast of New Hampshire and Maine. It values economic sustainability and diversity, social diversity, and smart growth. It is seeking companies, organizations, families or individuals to help a family in need by providing a Thanksgiving or Christmas meal or a gift for the holidays.

Contact Renee Krieger, assistant, at 766-3129 or renee@housingpartnership.org.

Location: Portsmouth.

Be a star for a family this holiday

The Somersworth Early Learning Center is open to all children and families. It seeks to provide an environment where children can learn through play and daily interactions with their peers and teachers. It provides transportation to the Somersworth elementary and middle school throughout the school year including early release and snow days. The center has set up a giving tree this holiday season, where the names of families are displayed on stars. Volunteers can call or e-mail

to be given the names of one of the stars and some items that they may want this holiday season. Volunteers can then drop off unwrapped gifts at the center.

Contact Dawn Collins, director, at 692-2081 or dcollins@somersworthhousing.org.

Location: Somersworth.

Be a secret Santa this Christmas

One Sky Community Services assists people with developmental disabilities or acquired brain disorders to live as participating members in their communities. It is seeking volunteers to purchase gifts for families experiencing financial hardship with a loved one with a disability living at home who still believes in Santa. Volunteers would ensure these individuals have gifts under their tree Christmas morning. The individual may be between birth and elderly, although the majority of believers are school-aged children.

Contact Shannon Smith, resource coordinator, at 436-6111 or s.smith@oneskyservices.org.

Location: Portsmouth

Brighten someone's holiday season

The Dover Children's Home is a residential treatment facility for 12 disadvantaged youth, ages twelve to eighteen. It also offers a two-bed independent living program, the PILOT House, where older youth (ages 16-22) can practice living independently in a monitored apartment setting with budgeting, employment, academic, and time management opportunities. The youth will develop a wish list of 10 items they hope to receive for Christmas. Volunteers will help fulfill some of these wish list items.

Contact Donna Coraluzzo, executive director, at 742-4289 ext. 12 or dcoraluzzo@doverchildrenshome.org.

Location: Dover

LEND A HAND: These and hundreds of other opportunities to volunteer or donate goods are brought to you by the United Way of the Greater Seacoast Volunteer Action Center online at www.uwgs.org or call 436-5554, Ext. 136.