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## Holidays a time for sharing

DECEMBER 14, 2008

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Everyone has been affected by the economy, but some a lot more than others. This year, the need is greater than ever for charities caring for the less fortunate. I was reminded of this last week when I spoke to nonprofit organizations in our communities. Even though we might not be able to give as much as in the past it's important to do what we can.

### ADVERTISEMENT JA'NOAH HOUSE

Audrey Mattson of Livonia is still taking clothing and food to the poor and homeless in the Norwayne area of Westland, Brightmoor, Cass Corridor, and Brewster Projects even though her husband, Carl, died in April 2007. The Livonia woman continues their work through the Ja'Noah House. Call (734) 522-5077 to help.

In years past, the couple was able to fill 250 holiday gift bags for children, this year only about 50.

"Every little bit means a lot even socks for the homeless, hats and gloves," said Mattson. "We're seeing more homeless on the streets. Even though they can go to the shelters at night, they have to walk the streets during the day and they're hungry."

### CAPUCHIN SOUP KITCHENS

Sister Nancy Ann Turner is concerned about those with homes, but no heat. The Livonia nun runs the tutoring program at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen's Conner location. She's asking for educational and hand-held games for the 60 children and socks, blankets and hand and body lotions for everyone. Call (313) 822-8606, Ext. 210.

"I try to give the moms a food card. We have a lot more coming for meals," said Sister Turner. "For the low income it's kind of their way of life. Others they're struggling for the first time because they lost their job. Last year, we had families living without heat and people got sick."

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Brother Vincent Reyes used to collect toys for the children at the Meldrum kitchen. This year, he's asking for caps and gloves for the kids in addition to underwear and tube socks for the homeless shower program. Call (313) 579-2100, Ext. 203.

"We're seeing more people at the Meldrum kitchen," said Reyes. "The family pack we give feeds a family of four for a week and usually includes 15 pounds of chicken now only 10 pounds, and the numbers jumped from September to October from 4,300 families to 5,100 families. It's going to be even worse next year. The economy is becoming more of a problem and people can't give what they haven't got."

#### FIRST STEP

Judith Barr has been busier than ever at First Step which helps survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Around 75 families need to be adopted for the holidays by this week. Call (734) 416-1111.

"When the economy is hurting and people are underemployed there's more stress which leads to an increase in family fighting and domestic violence. We're seeing more calls to the 24-hour line, seeing more women afraid to leave and prosecute because they need the income, the bread and milk," said Barr, associate director of the agency based in Plymouth. "We're in need of coats, pajamas, sweat suits used for assault response. When they go to hospitals and police stations, clothes are generally taken. We do need underwear, all sizes of socks, gas cards. People can't afford gas anymore to go to court, to park. We need disposable phones with minutes, food cards. We're trying to help people sustain. For children, we're giving nonviolent, durable toys. We still have hats and mittens because of the generosity of churches last year."

First Step does need small or individual sizes of juice, protein bars and canned goods for the shelter that provides a haven for women and children.

"First Step is in a transition. We're looking for a new way to house people to be safe. Our building is 60 years old. We're halfway in a capital campaign for a new facility. If someone makes a cash donation then we're able to go out and buy what a family needs, an alarm system to ensure their safety."

If you need help, call (888) 453-5900.

Linda Ann Chomin is the health and community life reporter for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. She can be reached at (734) 953-2145 or [lchomin@hometownlife.com](mailto:lchomin@hometownlife.com).

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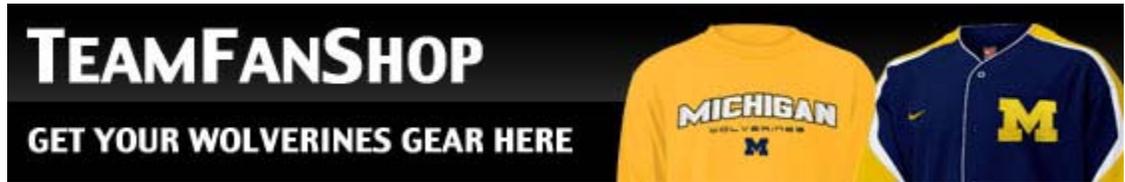
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