How to Help the Needy This Holiday Season

AMY FORMAN
Jewish Journal Staff

Despite recent positive economic news and improving employment numbers in the state, there is still considerable poverty on the North Shore and throughout the Greater Boston region, and many in the community are looking for ways to help those in need.

At age 90, Sarah is one of many low-income people across the region facing a financial challenge. Although she lives independently with the support of several North Shore agencies, she will be unable to manage the high cost of heat this winter. Typically, low-income

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Fortunately for Sarah, and many other people with low incomes across the North Shore and Greater Boston area, Jewish Family & Children's Service (JF&CS) stands ready to help. JF&CS is the only organization that provides a comprehensive response to the issues most commonly facing people living with low incomes, with the specific mission of serving those in need in the Jewish community — a mission that has been at the core of the organization for the last 150 years.

By providing 40 programs for the full gamut of populations including seniors, parents with young children and people with disabilities, JF&CS is able to expand resources for clients seeking assistance for basic needs (financial assistance, food and legal services), and help leverage additional resources through community relationships and knowledge of government benefits. And in Massachusetts those needs are great.

“People often wonder who is in need within the Jewish community,” said Meredith Joy, director of Basic Needs at JF&CS. “Most of the people receiving assistance from Basic Needs are families with children or seniors. Others are single people living alone or couples that are struggling to get by. Many have experienced a hardship such as the loss of a job, reduction in hours or a family illness.”
Last year Basic Needs worked with over 1,000 families in 75 towns, providing 20,000 bags of nutritious groceries and over $100,000 in emergency financial assistance grants and interest free loans. On the North Shore alone, 194 people benefited from the services provided by Basic Needs; $17,000 was given to 20 families for emergency needs and Family Table is currently providing monthly food for 44 North Shore families.

“There are too many people in our community who struggle to provide basic needs for their loved ones, particularly during the winter,” said CJP President Barry Shrage. “One in eight Jewish households lives in poverty. There is no better way to come together as a community than to support our most vulnerable. We invite everyone to participate.”

Here are several ways to help:

**Holiday Gift Card Drive**

Providing $25 gift cards will ensure that the 400+ children whose families are receiving assistance from JF&CS will receive a holiday gift selected for them by their parents. The deadline for contributing is November 26. Mail gift cards to: Holiday Gift Card Drive, JF&CS, 1430 Main Street, Waltham, MA 02451, or donate online at jfcsboston.org/GiftCardDrive.

**Volunteer with Family Table**

On the North Shore, the JF&CS Family Table kosher food pantry is hosted by Temple Sinai in Marblehead. One Sunday per month, volunteers help by packing and delivering grocery bags of nutritious food to North Shore families. Children ages 5 and over and their families are invited to help. Contact Lisa Katz, Family Table Volunteer Coordinator, at 781-647-5327 or lkatz@jfcsboston.org.

**Donate food**

JF&CS Family Table collection bins are at eight sites on the North Shore: JCCNS, Cohen Hillel Academy, Congregation Shirat Hayam and Temples Emanue-El, Sinai, Beth Shalom, Ner Tamid and B’nai Abraham.

Family Table is in need of tuna, cereal (whole grain), peanut butter, crackers (whole grain), canned fruit (packed in juice), toilet paper (4 roll pack), tomato products and canned vegetables (both low-sodium).

**Fuel/Utilities Assistance Fund**

Donations go directly to help provide heat to low-income families. Send checks to JF&CS, Fuel and Utilities Assistance Fund, 1430 Main St., Waltham, MA 02445.

Visit jfcsboston.org.