

Food need is up, but so is generosity — Salvation Army

By Suzie Rollins Singer
staff writer

Christmas could be a lot merrier for 3,500 Oakland County families who will receive Christmas food baskets from the Salvation Army.

"More people are contributing this year. Everybody is feeling the need in the community to help others. We're getting a lot of people applying for assistance this year who have never applied before," said Marian Gillis, case-worker for the Salvation Army in north Oakland County.

Hard times have fallen on many more people this year, and as a result of donations to the Red Kettles, food and \$25,000 worth of toys should wind up in the hands of needy youngsters.

THE SALVATION Army, an agency of United Way, is divided into three sections in Oakland County. Each runs its food basket program slightly differently, but the result of matching families with foodstuffs is the same.

All three chapter coordinators agree that the number of recipients is up this year, but so are donations.

"You would think because so many people are unemployed they wouldn't be giving, but that just isn't the case. People are dropping money in the kettles," said Gillis.

PEOPLE LIVING in the north end of the county applied for the baskets in November. A postcard assigning a time and date for the family to pick up their toy and food voucher will be sent to each recipient during the upcoming weeks.

"We give them a food voucher that they turn in at any grocery store. They range in price from \$10 for a single person up to \$40 or \$50 for a large family. They can't buy booze or cigarettes with the vouchers."

After showing Salvation Army workers proof that children live in the household, the parents can select a new toy for each child.

Anyone who produces proof he or she is on some sort of government assistance program — be it unemployment, ADC or general assistance — is eligible

'We're getting people who have never applied for assistance before . . . We try to give them more than food. We try to give them hope.'

— John Crampton

for the food basket program, Gillis said.

SOUTH OAKLAND residents are served by the Royal Oak branch. People can call in for assistance up until Christmas, said Sandy Kemp of south Oakland County social services. The number is 585-5500.

Instead of vouchers, families receive actual food baskets containing chickens or turkeys, potatoes, bread, margarine, vegetables, soups, juices and a Christmas stocking filled with candy.

They cost the Salvation Army \$20 a basket.

"Most of the canned goods are donated from school children, area clubs and Goodfellows," Kemp said.

The Goodfellows screen the applicants, Kemp said, and nearly everyone who requests help, receives it.

"The only time we turn people away is if they're trying to cheat us," she said.

THE WESTERN section of the county is served by the Farmington Hills branch, whose telephone number is 477-1153.

"We're a pretty small post. We've only had about 25 requests so far," said Envoy John Crampton, director of the Salvation Army Corps Community Center in Farmington Hills.

"People who apply to this office pick up their food baskets at the Evangeline Center on Trumbull. The toys are picked up in a shop in Dearborn Heights," Crampton said.

"We're getting people who have never applied for assistance before. They're frustrated. They realize they can't feed their families without help."

Transit taxes Little immediate help for SEMTA

By Suzie Rollins Singer
staff writer

Despite efforts by state representatives to move a \$600-million transportation package through the Michigan Legislature, SEMTA officials still say it won't bail them out of financial trouble.

"We're pleased that the House passed the package. But in terms of cutbacks we cannot say the passage of the package will forestall cuts in January," said Gail Whitty, manager of communications at SEMTA (the Southeast Michigan Transportation Authority).

"Unless the state Court of Appeals releases the \$9.2 million it's holding in escrow, our short-term operating needs will not be met. The package provides for money for mid-'83, '84 and '85, but not when we need it — for tomorrow," Whitty added.

SEMTA provides bus service throughout the metro Detroit suburbs and a commuter train from Pontiac to downtown Detroit. The transportation package is expected to earmark an ad-

ditional \$5 million for SEMTA next year, but House analysts could not estimate how much more the seven-county authority would get in the second and third years.

MORE OPTIMISTIC about the plan are Oakland County Road Commission officials, who are counting on the hike in gasoline taxes and vehicle registration fees to keep them running on smooth ground.

The five-bill package approved by the House last week is designed to boost state aid to highways and mass transit by more than \$600 million over the next three years.

"The Road Commission endorsed the bills when they came out of committee in November," said Dennis Pajot, public information officer for the road commission.

"It (transportation package) would put our revenues at the same place they were in 1979. We wouldn't be able to return to the 1979 level of services because of inflation, but we'd be a lot better off than we are now," he added.

THE SENATE Finance Committee is scheduled to take up the package at 7 p.m. today (Monday).

The House version calls for increasing the state's 11-cent-a-gallon gasoline tax as much as 4 cents by 1984. It also would boost annual registration fees for cars and commercial vehicles.

Sponsors estimate that the legislation would cost the typical Michigan motorist an additional \$20 a year.

The House-proposed formula would tie annual increases in the state gasoline tax to changes in gasoline consumption and the cost of highway maintenance.

The tax could rise by 2 cents a gallon in 1983 and 2 cents in 1984 to a maximum of 15 cents a gallon.

REVENUES from these taxes pay for most highway repair and construction in the state. Since 1979, when motorists switched to more fuel-efficient cars and drove less, those revenues have declined by more than 20 percent, road officials say.

The House also approved bills increasing car and truck registration

fees. Beginning Oct. 1, new car owners would pay a license plate fee equal to 0.4 percent of the sales price. Presently, license plate fees for new cars are based on weight.

For used cars or new cars bought before Oct. 1, the current weight-based fees would be effective. But they would increase by 15 percent in February. In 1984 and 1985, those fees would be hiked by the same percentage that personal income rose in the state the previous year.

Currently, the average license plate fee for a passenger vehicle is \$28 a year.

Registration fees for buses, trucks and other commercial vehicles would rise by 30 percent Jan. 1 and remain at that level through 1985.

Sponsors estimate that the transportation package, as approved by the House, would increase state revenues for highway, bridge and road repair and construction by \$488 million over the next three years. It would boost state spending on public transit by \$114 million over the same period.

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