

# Dividend: Area firms 'get' from holiday giving

By Janice Brunson  
staff writer

The spirit of good will recently forged between 22 Realtors in a Bloomfield Hills office and an impoverished Oakland County family of six is likely to mature as gift giving continues through the new year.

"It's going to be discussed at a regular sales meeting, how we feel about remembering their birthdays and other events through the year," said Pat Whitledge of Max Brock Realtors, who coordinated efforts of the Bloomfield Hills staff in providing food and Christmas gifts for a Pontiac mother of two and her three young grandchildren.

Whitledge purchased clothing and jewelry for the mother and her two teen daughters. She purchased clothing and toys for the grandchildren, the youngsters of the eldest teen daughter. The family also received \$100 in food.

The money, some \$150, was contributed by the agents in the Hills office. The sum was matched by Bowen Brock who also owns realty firms in three other communities, including Birmingham and West Bloomfield.

Brock, who credits the original idea of holiday gift giving to employee Barbara Aussem, promised to match funds raised in each of the offices.

"THE CAMARADERIE was so great. We made Christmas for a family that wasn't going to have one. That feels real good," Whitledge said of the group project.

The family, referred by the Baldwin Avenue Human Services Center in Pontiac, was one of 130 to participate in the center's annual Adopt A Family program in which the needy are supplied during the holidays with gifts and food.

"This was one of the most joyful Christmases we've had. We had so many people who were helped and we had a whole community of people helping," said Alice Halston, director of the Baldwin Avenue shelter. Baldwin Avenue also maintains a soup kitchen, medical and furniture centers and a clothes closet.

On Christmas day, 185 meals were served in the center's soup kitchen by 37 volunteers and staffers, according to Halston.

In addition, area churches like Orchard Lake Community Presbyterian, United Methodist of Beverly Hills and St. Andrews Catholic in Rochester hosted holiday parties for youth who received gifts and turkeys.

This is the sixth year Diane Lucey of Rochester has participated in the St. Andrews Giving Tree project, wrapping, sorting and coding nearly 2,000 gifts and 37 baskets of food that were distributed to seven social agencies, including Baldwin.

"It's a very large project," Lucey said.

There are also many individual efforts.

PAT HARRIS, a college student from Farmington Hills who interns for Kelly & Co. in Southfield, has been collecting food and clothes for Baldwin Avenue since hearing a radio appeal during Christmas holidays a year ago.

Among his holiday deliveries this year — a seven-foot submarine sandwich contributed by a Kelly & Co. producer in celebration of the birth of her new child and a turkey from a waiter at E.G. Nick's in West Bloomfield who had received the

frozen bird as a holiday bonus from the restaurant's owners.

"It's usually older people who volunteer. Over 30, at least. I never see people my age, which is weird. You'd think younger people would have more free time," said Harris, who attempts to spend part of each Tuesday at the center.

Bob and Geri Brand of Birmingham, who own Eaton Nursery in West Bloomfield, also started volunteering at Baldwin a year ago by serving Christmas dinner 1988.

The Brands draw on such business resources as company trucks and

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Max Brock Realtors

paid employees to gather donations of clothing and furniture and to distribute food baskets. In addition,

they encourage others to volunteer at the center.

"On Christmas day (1989), we

must have had 10 or 12 friends serving dinner with us," Bob Brand said. Another friend supplied 25 turkeys for the dinner. After joining a non-denominational church in Birmingham earlier this year, the Brands convinced church members to "funnel energies into Baldwin as their charitable endeavor."

"I CAN'T IMAGINE another operation as responsive to the needs of people. The minute you walk in the door, you see what good they do," Brand said.

Volunteers, according to Baldwin

staffer Winkie Coventry, are "essential" if the center is to continue its present rate of assistance.

Based on 1989 figures, staff and volunteers served over 100,000 meals, including 500 turkey dinners the day before Thanksgiving. Another 650 individuals were provided emergency shelter and food.

"This is not just holiday work," Coventry said. "Hunger and homelessness doesn't go away when you throw out the Christmas tree."

For more information about Baldwin Center or to volunteer, call 335-7450.

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## Stay with recycling says DNR

AP Michigan communities should concentrate on recycling and delay building trash incinerators until technology improves, the director of the state Department of Natural Resources says.

The earliest incinerators in the state were developed before environmental problems were addressed, including production of potentially hazardous ash and smokestack emissions, DNR Director David Hales said.

"The technology does not produce the kind of results we thought we would get," Hales said Friday. "It's not just the ash problem. I have great concerns about the Detroit incinerator, concerns about toxic material coming out of the stack."

He said the state won't make any major investment in incinerators until technology for clean and efficient operation improves.

"Our investment now should go to recycling rather than incineration," Hales said.

DNR officials had encouraged development of Jackson's incinerator, which opened in 1987 at a cost of \$28 million. Municipal incinerators have since opened in Grand Rapids and Detroit.

A year after it opened, however, Jackson County's incinerator was closed for 10 months because of DNR regulatory problems. Although trash-dumping fees charged by the county more than tripled, the incinerator has a \$3 million operational debt.