

A Holiday message from Helping Hands

Dear Friends of Helping Hands,

In your charitable giving this holiday season, please remember our homeless neighbors. I wrote the following letter during the snowstorm on Saturday night:

It's snowing, so we're at the United Church of Spring Valley tonight, our back-up site in case of blizzard conditions. We have a quiet little group tonight, only fourteen guests despite the weather (well, not so quiet really--it seems like every last one of them is snoring!) We're all staying downstairs in the Fellowship Hall, the large basement room that houses the Breakfast Program five mornings a week and just a few steps away from our recently opened Outreach Center. I'm looking forward to the New Year, as our plans for expanding services at the Outreach Center come to fruition. From the inception of Helping Hands, we knew that our homeless neighbors needed more than temporary shelter in order to be able to leave the streets--food, clothing, showers, medical and mental health services, and, most important, housing and jobs! Our goal for the Outreach Center is to help people meet all these needs.

The bleak employment outlook makes the prospect of finding work (the first priority of most of our guests) look like wishful thinking, but we are determined to find ways to help our guests. It's a question of human dignity. Life without any one of these necessities quickly becomes unbearable--we don't expect a fish to live out of water. How can we expect human beings to survive when they are hungry, cold, physically or mentally ill, and without a roof over their heads or work to sustain them?

The success of our Benefit in November guaranteed the survival of our effort for the coming year, but even a modest expansion of services will cost tens of thousands of dollars more, at a time when the County is once again cutting our only regular government support. If you have been a volunteer for Helping Hands, you have given a priceless gift to our guests--your loving service (and many of you have given it many times over). Without your devoted labor, Helping Hands could not exist.*

If you are able, please consider also giving a monetary gift of any size. Checks may be made out to Helping Hands and mailed to:

*Helping Hands
PO Box 240
Nyack, NY 10960*

Because most of the work of Helping Hands is done by volunteers, your gift will be "matched" many times over by our amazing volunteer effort.

Please join me in giving and in service. Wishing you warm and peaceful holidays and a prosperous and happy New Year,

*Raoul Cansino
President and Founder
Helping Hands Interfaith Coalition
for the Homeless of Rockland County*

**The County Executive originally proposed a 15% cut for all the contract agencies in the County, including Helping Hands. The Legislature restored half of the cut, resulting in a 7.5% reduction from last year's grant. On top of last year's 10% cut, and counting in inflation, this means that Helping Hands has lost about a fifth of its county grant, making us more dependent than ever on the generosity of private citizens.*