

# Giving is Its Own Gift

By Christina Eckert, a staff member at Community Giving Tree

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When we were children, we loved to receive gifts during the holidays. As adults, we feel even more joy from seeing the happiness on a loved one's face when we give them the perfect gift. When you give to a charity, you rarely get to see the joy of the recipient of your generosity. But at Community Giving Tree, sometimes you can.

Last Tuesday, for example, Mark Laroche was donating his children's crib at the Giving Center just as a social worker was requesting a crib for a baby who was sleeping on the floor. Mark's crib never made it inside; it went right into the social worker's van, along with a set of gently used crib sheets and a bundle of baby clothes.

This serendipity happens often at Community Giving Tree: a caseworker requests a double stroller so that a single mom without a car can go to the grocery store with her two children – and someone walks into the Giving Center with a double stroller. A social worker helping a cognitively limited parent teach her baby to crawl needs a gate for that baby's safety – and in comes a donor with baby gates. The shelves of boys' clothes are empty – again – and a TriTown mom drops off her son's outgrown sweatpants and sweaters. Asked why she gives, frequent donor Michele Delfino offers: "It's a win all around. I get to clear out the closets, donate perfectly good clothes and help out other Moms."

If it weren't for donors like Mark and Michele, Community Giving Tree would not be able to meet the needs of caseworkers and the children they oversee. "The need is constant; our shelves are emptied every day," says Executive Director Leslie Levenson. "Every week we run out of cribs or clothes or diapers and we worry that we'll have to turn away social workers empty-handed. And then some

wonderful mom or dad walks in the door with bags of their child's outgrown clothes, and we're back in the business of helping people." She adds that the most desperately needed items are winter clothes, cribs or pack 'n plays, safety gates, and diapers.

While Community Giving Tree accepts donations of gently used children's clothing and baby equipment year round, this Saturday, December 10, 9-12, they will be open to collect new items for their annual Holiday Giveaway. New toys, pajamas, socks, underwear, hats and mittens, diapers and toiletries, as well as gently used coats, must be received by Dec. 10. Three days later, an expected 100-120 social workers will pick up these items for hundreds of children in need. "My clients are the working poor," explains one caseworker, telling the story of a single mom who works full-time but can't keep up with her two kids' expenses. "Her children need winter coats and boots, but she has no money to buy them." She is turning to Community Giving Tree to obtain those coats, and maybe even new hats and mittens as well.



Community Giving Tree volunteers are ready for the social workers to pick up new toys, pajamas, socks, underwear, coats and more at the annual Holiday Giveaway.

That caseworker and dozens of others will pick up many items on their lists, thanks to

Community Giving Tree's generous donors. "I'm thankful for what I've been given in this life, and I want to help those less fortunate," explains Kim Schwartz, who has donated many brand-new items like diapers, toys and coats. Adds Emily Esolen, another frequent donor: "Community Giving Tree provides an outlet to pass forward my blessings." Or as Michele Delfino puts it, "I love knowing that I can drop

off my children's gently used stuff any time, and a new baby will be using it the next day. What's not awesome about that?"

Community Giving Tree is open for donations Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays 9am – 12 noon at 572 Main Street in West Boxford. For more information, visit [www.CommunityGivingTree.org](http://www.CommunityGivingTree.org).