

# Many Reasons to Give Gifts of Hope

By Christina Eckert, a staff member at Community Giving Tree

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For every child there is a reason behind the need. In 2011, a record number of children received items from Community Giving Tree: 3252 bundles of clothing, 172 cribs, 130 strollers, 896 bags of diapers. But these are not just numbers. Each pack of diapers, each crib, every bundle of clothing went to a local child. These children's stories are as many and varied as their needs:

A caseworker from Early Intervention picked up clothes for a little girl who was placed with her grandparents. Because this was a "kinship placement," the elderly couple did not qualify for any aid. Proud to care for their beloved granddaughter, the couple stretched their limited income to provide for her basic needs – but it didn't stretch as far as clothing. For that their caseworker turned to Community Giving Tree, and the grandparents were relieved and grateful for this bit of help.

A local family lost their home and was forced to live in a single motel room; the wait list for rent-subsidized housing is 12 years long. Their 6-month-old baby was just starting to crawl but had no safe space available to her. At Community Giving Tree, their social worker picked up an exersaucer to address the baby's developmental needs – and to keep her entertained. It's not a new home, but it does solve one problem for this struggling family.

A young mother, abused as a child, found herself back in an abusive situation as an adult. Struggling to escape this vicious cycle, she found and maintains an apartment for herself and her four children. Her caseworker works closely with her to break the cycle of abuse, bringing her clothing, toiletries and diapers from Community Giving Tree so that she and her children can continue to afford their apartment and live safely.



Kindergarteners from the Village School in West Boxford donated new stuffed animals to Community Giving Tree's annual Holiday Giveaway.

Community Giving Tree can't solve all of these problems, but warm clothes, dry diapers, and safe cribs can help significantly. How is Community Giving Tree able to give so much to thousands of children? Through the support of the TriTown community, with both financial contributions and donations of baby goods. In 2011, the Giving Center took in nearly 700 donations of clothing and baby equipment, almost twice as many as the previous year. In order to process all of these items, Community Giving Tree used monetary donations to open the Giving Center to volunteers one extra morning per week. To get cribs and clothing to children in crisis more quickly, they also opened to social workers twice a week, instead of the previous year's twice-a-month schedule. In 2012, Community Giving Tree hopes to open some afternoons to accommodate student volunteer groups; they also plan to grow their summer VolunTeen program, and to expand their Diaper Drives, Coat Collections, and Mother's Day Basket Program.

If you'd like to help, send your contribution to Community Giving Tree, PO Box 508, West Boxford MA 01885; write "Gift of Hope" in the memo line. Or better yet, stop by the Giving

Center at 572 Main St. in Boxford, and see your donation in action. The enthusiastic staff will be happy to give you a tour and share more stories about the families they serve. Your gift might end up providing the ray of hope that a struggling family needs.