

MEND, Meet Each Need with Dignity, our Name, our Mission.

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MEND's Annual Adopt A Family Program Impacts the Lives of Those In Need and Those Who Give

(December 29, 2003) One of the most ground breaking and life altering programs at MEND happens each year at Christmas. Prior to the holidays, MEND's team of volunteers home visit 1000 - 1200 families who apply for the annual Christmas Basket Program to assess needs, and to determine which families are the most needy. While all of the approved applicants must meet federal poverty income guidelines, the most needy – those who live in garages and shacks and trailers – are recommended for the MEND Adoptions Program in which they are matched with community groups and individual families who will buy extra household and clothing items for these very poor families. This year, 321 MEND applicants qualified for the Adoptions program, and the remaining families received boxes of food, toys and blankets from the MEND Center.

Rebecca Ivanoff, a volunteer through CalState Northridge, joined MEND's efforts last year. "I assisted in visiting the homes of the families requesting adoption. One family made a huge impact on me. Maria C. and her five-year-old son lived in a single room home without a stove or oven and had to use an outhouse. Her son was without shoes. But even with these challenging living conditions, the love in their home knew no bounds. Everything Maria C. did was for her son's benefit and his devotion to his mother was riveting."

"MEND provides an opportunity for volunteers like me to make an immediate difference in the lives of families in need," said Ivanoff. "I brought shoes to her son the next day and through MEND's holiday program, provided a Holiday meal and presents of clothing, household items, and toys for them. I adopted the same family in 2003, but throughout the year, I was able to provide other forms of assistance."

MEND adoptee Maria C. shares her thoughts on the program: "I am grateful for the help MEND provides to us. I have no money to buy anything. I am thankful from all my heart."

MEND Executive Director Marianne Haver Hill notes, "Our Christmas Program would not be a success without our volunteers and the families that step up each year and take on additional expense and commitment to an already hectic time of year. Our volunteers have demonstrated in very tangible ways the highest calling to look beyond themselves and to serve those in our community with great need. They are my inspiration, and I am deeply grateful to be partnering with them as we together

MEND, Meet Each Need with Dignity, our Name, our Mission. work to "meet each need with dignity". MEND continues its outreach to those in need throughout the year and we request that the public keep MEND in mind as they close out their yearly donations.”

ABOUT MEND:

MEND's Mission & Philosophy

Mission

Our Mission, as a volunteer-driven organization, is to provide services that meet the basic human needs of individuals who reside in the northeast San Fernando Valley. These services are provided in a manner that safeguards the dignity of all recipients while promoting self-reliance.

Philosophy

Our philosophy rests on the principles that every person, created in the image of God, has innate human dignity and the right to be treated with respect; and every person has the fundamental right to what is needed for a fully human life.

Meeting Each Need

In the early 1970's, MEND (Meet Each Need with Dignity) opened its doors in an effort to transform the lives of the neediest residents of the San Fernando Valley - poor children and their struggling families. Starting as a small group of volunteers working from a garage, MEND has grown primarily by word-of-mouth into one of the leanest operating non-profit organizations in existence. More than 95% of the donations received by MEND -- now the largest poverty agency in the Valley -- goes to providing emergency food, clothing, medical and dental care, job skills training and job placement assistance, English as a Second Language classes, , and a Christmas program to more than 35,000 people each month. In 2003, MEND provided 462,316 units of service .

People Helping People

Each month, more than 7,300 hours are donated by volunteers from a broad range of backgrounds and income levels; all joining together to act as “people helping people”. Each person plays a vital role in meeting the mission of MEND. From the distribution of food, clothing, and furniture, to assistance in job training and placement, our volunteers give MEND life.

MEND's Unique Characteristics

- 99% volunteer driven
- Privately funded - **NO** government grants
- Low overhead costs (less than 5%)
- All public relations and fund raising work done by volunteers
- Seeks to develop self-reliance among recipients
- Staff is hired only when programs grow too large for volunteers to handle
- Sells no items or services -- Small donations are accepted, based on the recipient's ability to pay

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