

THE 6th (or 7th) ANNUAL

BIG SUNDAY

**HOLIDAY VOLUNTEERING
AND GIVING OPPORTUNITIES LIST
2008**

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Thanks for your interest in this list. Please note that for our holiday list we post requests but, unlike on Big Sunday week-end, we do not sponsor the projects. Rather, we put this out to the Big Sunday community and hope for the best. (We have found, however, that this list gets forwarded, printed, posted and copied way beyond what we might have imagined. You can feel free to pass it on, too!)

This list will also be available on our website, www.bigsunday.org. Please check the web for updates and additions.

Thanks as always for all your help and generosity, and all our best wishes from everyone at Big Sunday for a happy holiday season!

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ASAP. SOVA is a wonderful **Jewish Family Service** organization that runs food pantries that serve more than 6,000 poor people of all faiths, including those with no income, low income, the elderly, the homeless, and immigrants. This year they are requesting non-perishable canned and boxed food, toiletries such as shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, soap and lotion. They would also appreciate gently-used or new children's books. If you can help, please contact the tireless **Maxine Meyer** at or mmeyer@jfsla.org or **818-988-7682, x116**. Per Maxine: "We appreciate any help you can give us." SOVA has 3 locations: 7563 Beverly Blvd (at Curson), 8846 W. Pico (near Robertson), and 16439 Vanowen Street in Van Nuys. Call for hours.

Throughout November and December. Meals on Wheels West serves approximately 250 homebound clients in Santa Monica everyday, ranging in age from 26 to 103. Many of these clients are frail and isolated and see no one other than the volunteers who deliver their meals every day. Because so many are alone, Meals on Wheels makes a concerted effort to remember their birthdays with a gift, cake and card. They are often the only ones that do remember. They also share the holidays with them, and for Thanksgiving and Hanukkah/Christmas there are extra special meals delivered along with a gift. Per Meals on Wheels: "The holidays are always a very

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difficult time for our clients, and we want our clients to feel like there is someone who cares about them and wants to bring them some joy.” They need volunteers to deliver meals Monday thru Friday, between 11 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. (Though it usually takes much less time.) Volunteers can use their own car or team up with a driver. The Meals on Wheels folks also welcome new and 1-time only volunteers. If you'd like to volunteer, please contact **Joanna** between 9 am and 1 pm at 310-394-7558. *If you'd like to donate books, flowers, gifts, or holiday cards to make the meals more fun, please contact **Kevin McNulty** at mealznwheelz@aol.com OR 310-394-5133.*

By Friday, November 14. The **Asian-Pacific Women's Center** is a wonderful organization – one of my favorites – that helps women and children who are survivors of domestic violence. Some of you may have helped them on Big Sunday. The families in their confidential Transitional Housing Program are having Thanksgiving dinner together. There will be 20 people there. Every year, the very nice folks at APWC ask for a very small amount of money to cover the cost of the dinner. And, like every year, I tell them that they are asking for such a small amount of money, that I refuse to accept their request. (This is what happens when you get a Jewish guy raising money for the Asian-Pacific Women's Center; I was worried that there wouldn't be enough food.) Anyway, they need someone to donate just **\$400** to cover the cost of their food, decorations, etc. Or, they'd also gratefully appreciate gifts of cooked turker, stuffing, corn, mashed potatoes, pies, or bread. Per their request: “For our clients, Thanksgiving dinner is a symbol of their new start in life and a time to reflect on how far their family has come on their path to self-sufficiency, dignity, and inner peace.” They have asked if they could have this donation by November 14. If you want to cover this, please contact **Yining Wan** at ywan@apwcla.org or **213-250-2977**. *See also: Saturday, December 13th.*

By Friday, November 14 (Thanksgiving donations), Wednesday, December 12 (Christmas donations) and Saturday, December 13 (holiday party volunteers). The YWCA of the Harbor Area and South Bay serves hundreds of low-income families in the San Pedro, Wilmington, Long Beach, Harbor Gateway and Greater South area. They are requesting turkeys and other food for Thanksgiving dinner for the families. They are also planning their **18th Annual Breakfast With Santa** on Saturday, December 13th. This is always a great event, and this year Santa (and the YWCA) needs toys for kids who are babies to 10 years old. (Toys should be in the \$10-15 range, and wrapped or unwrapped in fine.) They could also use holiday baskets and toiletries of all kinds. Holiday decorations are also greatly appreciated. Finally, if you'd like to make a cash donation to be used either towards the party of gifts for the guests, that is also greatly appreciated. The breakfast is incredibly popular and always fills up fast – and the Y folks gratefully welcome any volunteers to want to help make the party great. If you can help in any way, please contact **Luz Flores** at luz@ywcaharbor.org or **310-547-0831**. *A shot in the dark: If there's anyone out there who still has Polaroid film, they'd love to be able to take pictures of the guests at the party. Contact Luz about that, too.*

Saturday, November 15 and Sunday, November 16; Saturday, November 22; Friday, November 28 and Saturday, November 29; Saturday, December 13 and Sunday, December 14. **Operation Gratitude** is an extraordinary organization that has sent hundreds of thousands of gift packages to brave American soldiers serving in the Middle East. This holiday season they plan to send another 70,000 packages! (Which will include the sending of their 400,000th package on December 14!) They are looking for donors to help provide items for the packages, or cash donations to help them buy these items. Among the items they need are travel-sized board games; commercially wrapped individual packets of trail mix, beef jerky, nuts, energy bars, sunflower seeds, candy, gum, boxes of girl scout cookies; baseball caps; screenprinted t-shirts; socks; DVDs; prepaid phone cards; and disposable cameras. *The full wish list is available at www.operationgratitude.com; there are many military rules that must be followed, as well as many terrific giving suggestions, so it's a great idea to check this website out.* The cost of shipping each package averages \$10 (pretty amazing since it represents more than \$125 of value!); if you want to donate money to ship any number of packages, know that that is very much needed, and *greatly* appreciated, too. Operation Gratitude will also be holding a bunch of incredible 2-day package-packing events at **The National Guard Armory, at 17330 Victory Blvd. in Van Nuys**; the dates of the packing extravaganzas are listed above. Many volunteers are needed! (12 and over only, please. Kids 12-16 *must* be accompanied by an adult. By the way –

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community service credit is given to students; just bring whatever forms you have.) They also need volunteers during the week to help prep for the big weekend packings. If you want to help in any of these ways, contact O.G.'s tireless volunteer coordinator, **Penny Alfonso** at pennyalfonso@yahoo.com. You can also call the Operation Gratitude Hotline at 818-909-0039. For more information or to make a donation, contact Operation Gratitude's awesome founder and guiding spirit, **Carolyn Blashek** at CBlashek@aol.com. (Just reading their schedule and trying to figure out how Carolyn does it makes this writer thoroughly exhausted. Check 'em out – it's a great cause.)

By Tuesday, November 25. The Hooper Healthy Start Program is a collaborative of fifteen agencies in the Vernon/Central Community. The program provides many services and great support for students and families at the **Hooper Avenue Elementary School** – which has more than 1300 kids! Every fall HHSP conducts a turkey/food distribution program for their families. Their goal this year is to distribute 200 frozen turkeys to feed our children. Per their program coordinator, **Aydee Valle-Amescua**: "99.1% of Hooper students are eligible to receive free or reduced lunch. 44% of our students are recipients of Temporary Aid to Needy Families. Many of our families are working two to three jobs and are struggling to cover their daily needs. A *Thanksgiving meal is usually not celebrated due to other immediate needs.*" This year they need a total of \$2000 to cover the cost of the turkeys. Checks or grocery store gift cards are great. They would also gratefully accept frozen turkeys, too. To make a donation in any amount, please contact Aydee at aydee.valle-amescua@lausd.net or 323-232-5327 or 323-232-3571. *For Christmas needs, please see December*

Thursday, November 27 (Thanksgiving Day). The Children's Lifesaving Foundation is a great Santa Monica-based organization that helps at-risk, homeless, and very low-income youth, in four different impressive and important programs that promote self-sufficiency, confidence, and leadership. This year they are hosting more than 1000 homeless people from 14 area shelters and missions to a beautiful and delicious Thanksgiving Gospel Brunch – with fantastic music – at **The House of Blues**. Volunteers need to arrive at 9:00 a.m. (for a brief training) and be available until 2:00 p.m. If you want to help at this memorable and moving event, please contact **Francesca McCaffery** at fran@childrenslifesaving.org or 310-450-3701. *The House of Blues is at 8430 W. Sunset Blvd. in West Hollywood, 90069. Parking is free, but very limited. Please try and carpool if possible.*

Thursday, November 27. Thanksgiving Day. Food on Foot is an incredible grassroots organization that helps and feeds particularly difficult-to-place and hardcore homeless people every Saturday in Venice and every Sunday in Hollywood. They need volunteers for their **BIG Food on Foot Thanksgiving Day Event** on Christmas Day. It's an incredible 3-hour event where more than 600 homeless folks will not only get great food, but they'll also get a food and sleeping bags. Volunteers must arrive by 2:00 p.m. sharp. The event will end by 5:00, so volunteers can get home to enjoy Thanksgiving with their own families. All volunteers (kids, too) are required to make a \$100 donation (kids, too), payable in advance by credit card. There are just a limited number of volunteers accepted – the good folks at Food on Foot want to make sure that every volunteer has *plenty* to do, and no one is left standing around. The location is **1625 N. Schrader Ave. in Hollywood**. If you wish to volunteer, or just want to donate, please e-mail my buddy, the awesome **Jay Goldinger** at info@foodonfoot.org. Space is limited, so please sign up asap. *Check out all the details on their website, www.foodonfoot.org.*

Thanksgiving Weekend (November 27-30), Christmas Weekend (December 25-28), and New Year's Weekend (January 1 -4). St. Vincent Meals on Wheels serves many frail and homebound people who are unable to cook or shop for themselves. Many of these clients are isolated and see no one other than the volunteers who deliver their meals every day. This year, since the holidays all fall near a week-end, Meals on Wheels will be short on volunteers to cook and deliver their tasty meals. They need volunteers each of these days from 8:00 am – 12:00 noon to prepare meals. (And a note from the Meals on Wheels folks: "*If you want to work in the kitchen, it is advised to wear comfortable close shoes. The kitchen is cool so bring a jacket to be on the safe side.*") They also need drivers and runners to deliver meal from 10:00 am – 12:00 noon. All are welcome, including children (provided their parents are with them). The Meals on

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Wheels folks also welcome new and 1-time only volunteers. If you'd like to volunteer, please contact my pal **Carol Martinez** at carolmartinez@yahoo.com or **213-484-7494**.

Sunday, November 30. Kitten Rescue Sanctuary is a wonderful private no-kill shelter that helps saves all kinds of kittens and cats. They are looking for volunteers to help clean their sanctuary in preparation for their annual holiday party, which is the following week. Volunteers must be 18 or over, unless their parent or guardian signs a waiver of liability form. If you're interested, please contact **Chantalle Moffatt-Blue** at csmb28@yahoo.com or **310-699-9812**. *By the way, any volunteers are cordially invited back the following Sunday for Kitten Rescue's great holiday party at KR's guest!*

Throughout December. Project New Hope has many wonderful group homes throughout the greater Los Angeles and Long Beach area that serve low-income families and individuals living with HIV/AIDS. We have gone to many (all?) of these houses for the past couple of years on Big Sunday. We're glad that this year they've alerted us to their holiday needs, so that the Big Sunday community can help out. (Editor's note: Most of the Project New Hope homes are not too big, so most of these projects are quite do-able, especially if you gather a group of friends, co-workers, or some other community or group who want to help some nice folks who are struggling.) Here are the various homes, and what the need:

- Project New Hope's **Silverlake Apartments** are planning a holiday party meal for 32 adults and 7 kids (3 girls and 4 boys, age 1 - 11). They are hoping to provide gifts for all 39 residents, but have requested gifts for the kids first. To help, contact **Anthony Garcia** at agarcia@projectnewhope.org or **213-250-9481, x22**. They need the gifts by **Wednesday, December 3**.
- Project New Hope's **Main Street Apartments** has 41 adults and 29 kids. Here too, they'd like to be able to provide gifts to everyone, but want to focus on the kids first. They have also requested season decorations for their big holiday party. To help, contact **Anthony Garcia** at agarcia@projectnewhope.org or **213-250-9481, x22**. They need the gifts by **Wednesday, December 3**. Main Street's holiday party will be on **Tuesday, December 9**.
- Project New Hope's **Santa Monica Apartments** is home to 25 adults and 11 kids. Once again, they'd like to give gifts to everyone, but want to be sure that at the least they have enough for the kids (4 girls, 7 boys, ages 3 – 17). This residence also needs help getting holiday meals for the folks who live there. And, once again, the person to contact is the very hardworking and big-hearted (he filled out three applications in the hopes of helping all these nice people!) **Anthony Garcia**. Contact Anthony at agarcia@projectnewhope.org or **213-250-9481, x22**. In Santa Monica they need the gifts by **Friday, December 5**. Their holiday event will be on **Wednesday, December 10**.
- Project New Hope's **Padua House** is in Long Beach. (In fact, it was one of our first Big Sunday projects in Long Beach!) Padua House is a transitional center with 11 male residents. They would like to provide a gift card as a gift to each of the residents. (Remember: gift cards to many stores can be bought at any local supermarket. They have also requested new board games to be used for resident activities. They also need food and decorations for their holiday party (and they are expecting 25-30 guests). If you can help, please contact **Maria Vasquez** at an_vasquez@hotmail.com or **562-432-2000**. They need the gifts by **Wednesday, December 10**. The holiday party will be on **Tuesday, December 16**.
- Project New Hope's **Benton/Dallas Homes** are in Lawndale. They house 10 people (9 men, 1 women) and would like to give gifts to all of them. Here are some suggestions, all of which are easy to get: movie gift certificates, socks, bath towels, twin sheets, pillows. (Everything unwrapped, please.) They have also asked for gift baskets and/or amusement park tickets. Finally, if anyone can help provide Christmas

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dinner for the residents and their guests (a total of about 25 people), that would be fantastic. To help, please contact **Myesha Hickman** at myeshahickman@hotmail.com or **310-675-9942**. All gifts are requested by **Friday, December 12**. The holiday party will be that night, at 6:00 p.m.

- Project New Hope's **Laguna Senior Apartments** is home to 65 low-income seniors with disabilities. Their big holiday bash will be on **Monday, December 15th**. About 70% of the seniors are expected to attend. The Project New Hope folks would love to be able to serve these deserving seniors a delicious holiday meal. They need donations of food and decorations. In addition, they'd love to be able to give each of the seniors a holiday gift, to let them know they're not forgotten. If you can help in any way, large or small, please contact **Anthony Garcia** (who, if this list is any indication, is working overtime this holiday season) at agarcia@projectnewhope.org or **213-250-9481, x22**.
- Project New Hope's **Our House**, near downtown L.A. (and a Big Sunday favorite) is going to host a really fun holiday party on **Friday, December 19th** at noon. They expect 40-45 guests, and they need friendly volunteers to help make the party great. They could also use cheerful holiday decorations. Lastly, they have a very specific request: Mens' jackets and/or sweaters – 5 medium, 4 large, 1 extra-large. (Just 10 jackets. Anyone out there in the schmatta business?) If you want to donate in any way, please contact **Vanessa Bradshaw** at ourhouse06@hotmail.com or **213-384-5031**. *Please note: all gifts are requested by Friday, December 15.*

By Monday, December 1st (but they can extend, a little...) **The Children's Lifesaving Foundation** is a great Santa Monica-based organization that helps at-risk, homeless, and very low-income youth, in four different impressive and important programs that promote self-sufficiency, confidence, and leadership. They are hoping to provide gifts for the hundreds of children and teenagers in their program. Specifically, they're asking for brand-new toys for kids ages 6 through 9, and 40 \$20 gift cards at local stores (like the Gap or Old Navy) for teenagers ages 13-16. (We keep saying this, but we'll say it again: Please don't forget the teenagers: they often get short shrift when it comes to holiday gifts for the underprivileged!) Please deliver gifts unwrapped. For more info about this wonderful organization, check out their website: www.childrenslifesaving.org. Or, if you want to help, please contact **Francesca McCaffery** at **310-450-3701** or fran@childrenslifesaving.org. *One more thing: The Children's Lifesaving Foundation needs volunteers to help at their Thanksgiving Day dinner at the House of Blues. Check out the listing for Thanksgiving Day, November 27th.*

By Wednesday, December 3rd (plus the event on Monday, December 24th). **United Friends of the Children** provides many essential programs and services to current and former foster youth (ages 4-23), including transitional housing, independent living skills, career planning, emergency assistance and college readiness and sponsorship. They would like to give new, unwrapped gifts to the kids in their programs. Here are some of the things UFC are looking for this holiday season: Playstation and Xbox games; MP3 players; tickets to movie theatres or sporting events; gifts cards for \$25, \$50, or \$100 to all kinds of stores, such as: Target (how many times have we pitched Target on this list? I swear, they owe us a kickback), Old Navy, Gap, Macy's Burlington Coat Factory, Footlocker, Amazon, Best Buy, Borders, and Barnes & Noble. (You don't need to go directly to these stores – gift cards are available at many supermarkets now, too.) Other requested items include necessities such as furniture, twin size bedding, and gift cards to stores like IKEA, Ralph's, Stater Brothers and Food for Less. For the full wish list, including a list of hoped-for CDs (including Jennifer Hudson, Ne-Yo, Robin Thicke, anMonica) and DVDs (including *Wall-E*, *Kung Fu Panda*, and *I am Legend*), please go to www.unitedfriends.org. It would be great to get them at least 25 CDs or DVDs. (Anyone out there at a studio or record company promo department? You know you have all this stuff lying around! You can come up with 25 in no time!) All donations should be unwrapped, please. *Finally, UFC is looking for a few basic things to help their kids celebrate the holidays: Christmas decorations, or gift certificates to Honeybaked Ham and/or Marie Callendar's. (This is in italics because it's a simple, fun, much appreciated, and gratifying way to give.)* Their holiday event is

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on **Monday, December 24th**. Per UFC: “Everyone is welcome, as long as they are able to help out.” If you want to help this great organization in any way, please contact **Emily Larsen** at **213-580-1849**, or Emily@unitedfriends.org.

By Friday, December 5. The Aviva Center, a longtime Big Sunday favorite, is a residential facility for abused and neglected teenaged girls. There are 42 adolescent girls in their residential treatment program, and the nice folks at the Aviva center want to get gifts for the kids. Their list includes fiction and non-fiction books; G, PG, and PG-13 DVDs; appropriate posters (PG-style, musical groups, motivational, etc.); t-shirts (med – XXL, and nothing sexual or suggestive, please); board games; back packs; make-up sets; and wall calendars. *Diaries and journals are especially popular.* It would be *great* if we could get them at least one gift for each girl. The other thing they’d love are \$10 gift cards for stores like Target, Borders, Ross Dress for Less, etc., and/or 20-30 minute phone cards. *They could also use gifts for boys and girls ages 5-18 in their foster family program.* Their full wish list is available at www.avivacenter.org. Please donate gifts unwrapped. If you’d like to make a donation, please contact the hardworking **Arlene Joye** at **323-876-0550, x104** or at ajoye@avivacenter.org. *Also: No aerosol can or candles, please.*

Saturday, December 6 and Sunday, December 7. The National Council Of Jewish Women is having their amazing **Annual Free Clothing Giveaway**. (Some of you may have helped at the great NCJW giveaway last spring on Big Sunday.) This year, they’re expecting more than 2000 needy and deserving people (of all faiths) at this incredible event. There are three ways you can help: 1) Clean out your closets and make a tax deductible donation of clothes; 2) help sort clothes on **Saturday, December 6**, from **9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon**; 3) Volunteer at the Giveaway. There are two shifts: The first shift is **7:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.**, and the second shift is from **9:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.** The Giveaway will be at the NCJW parking lot at 543 N. Fairfax Ave. (1 block south of Melrose, at Clinton). If you can help in any way, please contact **Melissa** at Melissa@ncjwla.org or **323-852-8505**. *If you are with a social service agency and your clients need clothing, please let them know about this!*

By Saturday, December 6. Hillside Home for Children is a group home for emotionally troubled kids in Pasadena. These kids have experienced abuse, neglect, poverty and abandonment. Hillside has been helping kids and families in crisis since 1913. Their kids are unable to have contact with volunteers on a one-shot basis, so each year on Big Sunday we fill beach bags for them. This year, their kids have two pressing needs: 1) While many are very generous to the less fortunate over the holidays, one underprivileged group that always gets less (because they’re way harder to buy gifts for) are *teenagers*. The Hillside folks have made a special request to see if people would be willing to donate \$10.00 gift certificates to stores like Target, WalMart, The Gap, Old Navy, Barnes & Noble, Borders, etc. We are hoping to get at least **40 \$10 gift certificates** (that would cover just over half the kids at Hillside). 2) Some of the kids are unable to go home at all, even over the holidays. Per Hillside, the holidays are a particularly difficult and sad time for these kids. So, they like to be able to take the kids on an outing or two – specifically, I was hoping we could get another **40 \$10 gift certificates** for restaurants like Islands, or Baja Fresh, or California Pizza Kitchen (for the other half of the kids). *(And, if you’re really feeling flush, know that there are 66 kids there.)* And, any movies passes, or G, PG, or PG-13 DVDs you could throw in would be great, too. (Anyone out there work for a studio? Do you have extra promo stuff?) Hillside also has an **Adopt-a-Family** program for the holidays to help the families in the program. They also gratefully accept donations in someone’s honor or memory; a card will be sent to the honoree or their loved ones. Suggested donation is \$10 per card. If you can help, fully or in part, please contact my pal **Laura Kelso** at kelso@hillsides.org or **323-254-2274, x251**. *Laura also has a nifty Hillside holiday pamphlet, and a very comprehensive wish list she can send you.*

Sunday, December 7. The Annual Veteran’s Holiday Celebration is something to see: Each year for the past 15 years, there is great food, new gifts, entertainment and a huge holiday party for men and women who have, per the V.A. “given everything of themselves for our freedom and out country.” We agree. It’s always a great event, and this year they are expecting more than **2000** guests! **The Annual Veterans Holiday Celebration** is produced jointly by **the Veterans Administration of Greater Los Angeles Department of Voluntary Services** and **Men’s Divisions International (MDI)** and the **Family of Women (FOW)**. They welcome *all* volunteer

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and sponsor involvement. Here are the things they could use, both from individuals and corporate donors: 1) *Cash donations* (this event costs \$50,000 to put on)(we told you it was an amazing thing!); 2) *toiletries*; 3) *gifts* for the vets, including t-shirts, baseball caps, cd's and dvd's, sports and movie tickets, new clothing and underwear, phone cards, and gift cards (in all amounts, to local stores and chains); 4) *transportation* for the vets from Long Beach, the Valley and elsewhere to the V.A. grounds in West L.A. (FYI: To rent a school bus is about \$350 each. Is there someone out there who can sponsor one or two?); 5) *Food donations of all types*, from restaurants, grocery stores, and home-baked, too. In addition, they could use lots and lots of *volunteers* to help make the event run smoothly. If you would like to become involved in any aspect of the event, please e-mail info@vaevent.org or call **866-955-VETS**. *This will be a wonderful and memorable event for wonderful people who deserve a nice time.*

Sunday, December 7. The 17th (!) Annual Friends and Helpers Foundation Holiday Party.

Friends and Helpers is a fantastic grass-roots organization that has been helping battered women and kids for many years now. Their annual Christmas wrapping party is amazing to see. Right now Friends and Helpers has more than 2000 (!!!) women and children they are helping, each one of whom needs to be "adopted" for the holidays. When you adopt a family, you will be given the family's own, specific Christmas wish list. Buy the gifts when you can, then join Friends and Helpers on December 7th to wrap them. This great event is a wonderful project for families. (Not only is there lots of stuff for people of all ages to do, there's always great food, too!)(I'm telling you: not only is this a great cause, but it's also really fun!) If you want to shop but not wrap, or wrap but not shop, that's fine, too. Finally, if even the thought of shopping around the holidays makes you want to commit hari-kari, but you still want to help, Friends and Helpers happily and gratefully accepts checks and gift certificates, too. Check out their website: www.fandh.org. To help, or to get more information, call my great pal, the amazing and indefatigable **Melissa Beyeler** at **818-757-1905** or e-mail her at info@friendsandhelpers.org. *Something else to consider: **Sponsor a Stocking**. For just \$25, you can provide a teen or foster child with a colorful Christmas stocking filled with loads of candy and a \$25 Target gift card so they can do a little shopping for themselves. If you can't adopt a whole family this year, this is a wonderful way to provide some young people with a healthy dose of holiday cheer!*

Sunday, December 7. The Annual From The Heart Book Sort and Giveaway. Each year, **From the Heart** provides *thousands and thousands* of new books to kids living below the poverty line all over Los Angeles. For many kids it's the first book they've ever owned. This year they are collecting new books for kids *plus* new and used books for adults. Books will be collected until **December 7th**. Then, on **Sunday December 7th**, from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm, volunteers are invited to help sort books in preparation for the book giveaway. This is a family-friendly event, and kids ages 5 and over are welcome. (Dress casually – book sorting is dusty work!) The sorting will be at 919 Santa Monica Blvd., in Santa Monica, 90401. If you want to help you *must* rsvp to booksortsrsvp@aol.com. **The Big Book Giveaway** will be on **Sunday, December 21st**, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. From the Heart will be sending volunteers to Head Start Centers all across Los Angeles to "put brand-new books into the hands of children at Christmastime." They need drivers, schleppers, and hander-outers. This is an incredibly festive and inspiring family-friendly event, but best for kids ages 10 and up. (Dress casually – and warmly – for this, too.) *Please note: Those who volunteer will need to stay for the entire time specified.* If you have books to donate, or if you want to volunteer sorting or delivering at any of these amazing and inspiring events, e-mail my friend, the tireless and awesome **Barri Evins** – officially named one of the 10 biggest mensches in L.A. by *The Jewish Journal* – at FromTheHeart345@aol.com, or call her at **310-657-7733**. *Unable to volunteer? Consider a tax-deductible donation. Thanks to From the Heart's partnership with First Book, just \$25 puts books into the hands of a dozen delighted children!*

By Monday, December 8th (donations). Friday, December 19 (party). The Women's Care Cottage is a lovely place in the San Fernando Valley that helps homeless women and their children. (Some of you may have been there on Big Sunday the past three years.) They are having a big holiday bash on December 19th and the theme is *Holiday in Candyland*. The have asked for gift certificates or cash donations so that they can buy gingerbread centerpieces, foam jumbo candy canes, and pink cellophane. In fact, "any holiday decorations with a candy theme

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would be great.” They also need donations of food (turkeys, especially) and music to make the party great. They would also be very appreciative of anyone who could donate a Christmas Tree. In addition, the nice folks at WCC would love to be able to give their clients some holiday gifts. The women at the WCC range from 26 to 51 years old, and there’s lots of kids (of all ages) there, too; the moms would be thrilled to get gift certificates to stores like Target and Marshall’s. All gifts must be donated, unwrapped, by **December 8**. To make a donation, and for all the details, including the ages and numbers of women and kids who need gifts, please contact **Leslie Sanchez** at lsanchez@womenscaredc.org or **818-985-2880**. (*This might be something your office, club or congregation might want to take on.*)(*Just a suggestion.*) Finally, they could use some friendly volunteers (18 and older only, please) to help facilitate the party on **December 19th**. Please contact my friend, the very kind **Irma Pasaye** at **818-753-0899**, or ipasaye@gmail.com. *And by the way, Irma mentioned that if there’s singers or musicians out there who want to come to their holiday party and sing for (or with) the residents, that would be greatly appreciated, too.*

By Wednesday, December 10. The Weingart YMCA Wellness & Aquatic Center is in a very low-income area, the corner of Vermont and Century Boulevards, (90% of their members are on financial assistance) and they do not turn anyone down for membership. They serve all ages, youth to seniors, in all kinds of ways. Their goal is to *“build strong kids, strong families, and a stronger community.”* The folks at the Y are looking for gifts of all kinds to give to their members of all ages. *Even better: They are looking for a way for the youth and the seniors to volunteer together this holiday season! One way they will do this is to wrap the donated gifts for one another. Then again, if there is someone out there with a volunteer opportunity, please contact Mykol Lewis at 213-639-7517 or mykollewis@ymcala.org.*

Also by Wednesday, December 10. Haven Hills Outreach is another division of Haven Hills. They also work with battered women and children, and are hoping to get donations of holiday gifts to make this time of year happier for these people with difficult lives. They have asked that all items be given unwrapped, and this is what they could especially use: personal care items for moms; sports equipment and gifts for teens; and non-violent toys for younger kids. They would also be very appreciative of gift cards in all amounts from grocery stores, or large discount stores like Target, WalMart and K-Mart. If you can give, please contact **Linda Sparks** at outreach@havenhills.org , or **818-887-7481, x14**.

By Thursday, December 11. The Giving Spirit is another amazing, non-denominational, non-profit founded to assemble and deliver 1500 (!) incredible survival kits full of clothes, toiletries, and food to the homeless of Los Angeles. They are mandated to return *95 cents of every dollar raised* back to the homeless. They are very successful at raising money because their mission is simple: *They raise money, spend it on necessities for the homeless, then pack it and deliver it to those in need.* The Giving Spirit is run by the indefatigable **Tom Bagamane**, and, per Tom, this is what they need from us. 1) 1500 bottles of water; 2) 1500 pairs of athletic socks; 3) 1500 pairs of new wool knit hats; 4) 1500 new t-shirts; 5) 1500 new baseball caps. (*Editor’s note: Anyone out there in the promotions business? You must have some hats or t-shirts lying around!*) Also: From **December 11th-13th**, many volunteers are needed to assemble the kits to give away, while still more volunteers are needed to help distribute them. This is a great and inspiring project. You can sign-up and donate at their website, www.thegivingspirit.org. (There’s also a full wishlist on the site.) Or, if you have other questions, please contact **Tim Ingram** at **310-386-9179** or tingram@aol.com. Finally, if you have an SUV and can schlep stuff, let ‘em know! *Families are welcome for assembling, though minors must be accompanied by an adult and have a signed release from parent or guardian. All participants must register and sign releases. Adults only for distribution.*

By Friday, December 12. M.E.N.D. (Meet Each Need with Dignity) is organizing their 36th Annual Christmas Basket program, in which 1200 needy families(!) who live in the northeast San Fernando Valley will receive food, clothing, new blankets and new toys for each child for the holidays. (Whew!) So, this is what they need: 500 frozen turkeys and other holiday meats, packages of flour and sugar, hot chocolate, oatmeal and other non-perishable food items; as well as new, warm blankets, and new toys/gifts for kids ages 10-14. The huge M.E.N.D. event is on

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the 12th, so they need everything on or before then. They could also use volunteers on the 12th. If you can help in any way, please contact **Maggie Torres** at Maggie@mendpoverty.org or **818-896-0246**. *Something to think about: If 50 offices buy just 10 turkeys each – not so hard to do, really – those needy families will get those turkeys in no time!*

By Friday, December 12. The Mid-Valley Family YMCA is a non-profit that builds strong kids, strong families, and strong communities in the Mid San Fernando Valley. No one is ever turns away due to lack of person funds. They are having two big community holiday fiestas for nearly than 300 (!) needy kids, ages 2 – 12. Most of these children are from single parent homes that are vastly below the poverty line. For most of these kids, the gift they get at this party is the only Christmas gift they'll get this year. Their suggestions for the older kids: movie tickets, sports equipment, and craft sets. They gratefully accept all new donations, yet cannot accept video game toys, violent toys, and things that don't promote healthy lifestyles (e.g., junk food themed Play Doh sets, etc.) They are especially in need of board games, craft kits, art supplies, and sporting equipment. They could also use dolls for the younger kids. Please bring all gifts unwrapped. *They could also use two special items. 1) A new pre-school sized bike or two to give away as a door prize at their party and 2) 10-20 turkeys and/or grocery store gift cards for their food gift baskets. (Editor's note: Just a couple of hundred bucks will go a long way towards making these things happen.)* If you can help in any way, please contact **Suzanne Lazear** at **818-989-3800, x7575**, or suzannelazear@ymcala.org. *Per Suzanne: "Thank you so much for all your help last year. We couldn't have pulled our parties off without Big Sunday's support."*

By Saturday, December 13. VAMS (The Visual Arts and Music for Society) utilizes and develops the talents of high school students in the areas of visual arts, performing arts, and music, with the focus on benefiting society. Per their president, **Ernestine Fu**: "Regularly, each VAMS club prepares and hosts events at various institutions, such as hospitals, foster care centers, homeless centers, and convalescent homes. These events occur about once every month or two and consist of performing orchestral and choral selection and/or musical skits, plus interacting with the residents through chatting, craft-making, dancing, and other similar activities." (Per this writer: "Sounds amazing – let's sign 'em up for Big Sunday in May!") This year, VAMS is having their annual holiday event to benefit homeless families and cancer patients. They have asked if there's anyone out there who might be able to donate gifts and other items to these folks make this event great. Here's what they need: *Wrapped candy, chocolate, stuffed animals, toys, children books, holiday decorations (tinsel, ornaments, lighting, etc.), or any monetary donations. No sharp or violence-related toys, please.* If you can help, please contact **Ernestine** at vams@vamsinternational.org or **818-359-5594**.

Saturday, December 13: The Asian-Pacific Women's Center is a wonderful organization – one of my favorites – that helps women and children who are survivors of domestic violence. Some of you may have helped them on Big Sunday. This year APWC is organizing their first-even crafts fair, "**The Not from the Mall Holiday Boutique.**" They are looking for help with set-up, clean-up, gift-wrapping, and general assistance. They also need items for their bake sale, such as cupcakes, pies, cookies, brownies, pretzels, muffins, scones and croissants. Baked goods must be store-bought or bakery-bought. Per APWC: "Your support in this event will allow APWC to give the most memorable Christmas ever to our clients!! It was also allow APWC to continue to provide confidential transitional shelter for battered women and their children." The boutique will be from 10 am – 4 pm at 405 North Stoneman Avenue, in Alhambra, 91801. If you can help in any way, please contact my pal **Yining Wan** at ywan@apwcla.org or **213-250-2977**. *And, if you can't volunteer or donate, stop by and shop and eat!*

Saturday, December 13. Our great friends at **St. Michael and All Angel's Church** in Studio City will be hosting an all-stops-out holiday party for more than 150 homeless and needy people (up more than 25% from last year) from all over Los Angeles, including other Big Sunday friends, the kids from **The Good Shepherd Center, M.E.N.D. (Meet Each Need With Dignity)**, and **The Women's Care Cottage**. There will be a buffet lunch and entertainment, holiday crafts, cookie decorating, new outfits, arts and crafts, knitting lessons and about a zillion gifts. (And singing, too!) The party is all being planned by indispensable Big Sunday vet, my friend **Jane Wilson**. Each donor will be given a specific child (or children) to buy gifts for. Jane can tell you the age

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and sex of each child that needs a gift. You'll be asked to wrap them and bring them to St. Mike's. There will be goodie bags and flower bouquets for each of the moms, too. (They also need unwrapped gifts, as there are always extra disadvantaged kids who show up, too.) If you don't feel like shopping, but would like to contribute to either the gift drive or the party, please make out a check to: St. Michael and All Angels (and don't forget: on the memo line write "Holiday Cheer Party"). Then, send it to **St. Michael's, c/o Social Action Committee, 3646 Coldwater Canyon Ave., Studio City, CA, 91406**. They've asked that all gifts be received by **Friday, December 12th**. (Any florists out there who want to donate some flowers? Call Jane!) Another important thing to remember: This magical party also needs lots of volunteers – starting at 9:00 am – to keep things going great. These will be a wonderful party, with wonderful people. *This event is nonreligious, and everyone is welcome to help.* If you want to help, please contact Jane at superqueerjane@yahoo.com or **818-343-8438** or try the **church office at 818-763-9193**. *Please note: They could also use lots of travel-sized toiletries and crafting supplies.*

By Saturday, December 13. The 7th (!) Annual Big Sunday Holiday Sox Drive (sorry) and 4th Annual Big Sunday Holiday T-Shirt Drive. The Metropolitan Region of Catholic Charities is a great organization that serves more than 44,000 needy people (!!!!!) (better than us) of all faiths in the greater Los Angeles area. Due to greater cutbacks and greater needs, they are having greater trouble filling their client's needs. Among their greatest need is *new white tube socks*. They need at least **500** pairs. All socks are okay, but white is especially good as many of their clients are homeless and have sores on their feet which are irritated by the dyes in colored socks. These socks can be purchased inexpensively (e.g., something like \$1.50 a pair at Target) at many discount stores. They also need *t-shirts*, preferably new, all sizes. They need **500** of them, too. (T-Shirt Warehouse sells nice ones -- brand new, all cotton, with nice designs -- for \$2.00 apiece.) (And, if you tell them it's for charity, they may even make 'em cheaper.) *If you're in the schmatta business, or in a promotions department and see this, please know that all t-shirts are appreciated!* If you want to just write a tax-deductible check to cover the cost of some of these socks or t-shirts, feel free – you can do the math. To donate, please e-mail the wonderful, hard-working **Marlene Rodriguez** at mrodriguez@ccharities.org or **323-662-4392**. (And get this: Not only is this a great thing to do, but if you have a big enough donation, Catholic Charities will even come to **you** to pick it up!)

Sunday, December 14. Join us at the **1st Annual Big Sunday Holiday Open House!** (It's such a big deal we put it in bold *and* red type.) Last year's Big Sunday was great, but we missed you guys. So, we've decided to invite everyone from the Big Sunday community to an old-fashioned holiday-time open house at our office. There will, of course, be great food and good cheer. You can see some of the great pictures from Big Sunday '08 (and every other year, too!). And, if just being in the hallowed walls of Big Sunday makes you want to do some community services, we'll also be working with a bunch of Big Sunday non-profit partners, so you can write a letter to a soldier stationed overseas for **Operation Gratitude**. You can buy some great holiday gifts from Oakwood School students selling clothes made by **Las Mujeres de Maiz en Resistencia**, a women's collective in **Chiapas, Mexico**. You can also buy a nifty pair of **Tom's Shoes**. Tom's has become famous for donating thousands of shoes to impoverished people around the world who have no shoes. Now, Tom's and Big Sunday have a great new partnership, where you can buy a pair of shoes and they will donate a portion of the sale (\$8!) to Big Sunday. There will also be some very cool new Big Sunday tshots to buy. *We are also collecting much-needed powdered milk, canned tuna, and peanut butter to donate to SOVA. Please bring some to donate. But, if you forget – you can buy some right there!* (Ah yes, here at Big Sunday we don't miss a trick.) There will also be a special holiday-time **Big Sunday When Life Gives You Lemons Make Lemonade Stand**, with all the proceeds going to buy holiday gift cards for homeless teens. The party will be at **7319 Beverly Boulevard in L.A., 90036** (our office) from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. *Of course, everyone is welcome. Accepts only. Please RSVP here: <http://tinyurl.com/holidayopenhouse>. Questions? Contact Rachel at rlinton@bigsunday.org or call 323-549-9944. It will be a fun time to get together, and we hope you all can come!*

By Monday, December 15. Our old friends at **L.A. Family Housing** house many homeless families and individuals at three different shelters. (Maybe you've gone to one of them over the years as part of Big Sunday.) This year they are requesting gifts (unwrapped, please) and some

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necessities for their residents. These include: Movie gift cards, restaurant gift cards, and gift cards to stores like Payless Shoes, Target and Old Navy. They could also use diapers (sizes 4, 5, and 6), deodorant, sanitary napkins, tampons, soap, and gift cards to grocery stores. They would also greatly appreciate new twin sheets, new blankets of any size, and new pillows. As you can see, these requests are quite simple and basic. (Editor's note: At discount stores, pillows can often be found for \$5 each, twin sheet sets on sale as low as \$10.) *Is there a group out there – school, office, faith group – that wants to collect even 50 sheet and pillow sets? Or maybe provide even 50 \$10 gift cards?* If you can help in any way, please contact the tireless **Ruth Devine** at rdevine@lafh.org or **818-982-4091**.

By Monday, December 15. The Heart of Los Angeles (HOLA), an important and very active organization that helps disadvantaged and at-risk youth living in L.A.'s Rampart District – which is the second most densely populated area west of the Mississippi – in all kinds of ways. (This past spring on Big Sunday we worked with them for the first time, and it was great!) This year they will be holding their annual Christmas party for more than 600 families. (Yikes!) They will also be giving away more than 3500 (!!) toys to HOLA kids, ages 5-17, living below the poverty line. So... they need *"all shapes and sizes of new toys for youth of all ages."* Per their case worker, Antonio Serpas, this year, because of the economic downturn, they are in "desperate need." This is a great project for a school, church, temple, office, club or team to take. Look: If 100 groups provide just 35 toys each, we'll be at 3500 in no time!) All gifts should be unwrapped, please. One last thing: the party will be on **Thursday, December 18**, and they need volunteers to help bag the gifts. If you can help in any way, large or small, please contact **Antonio** at **213-389-1148, x226**, or tserpas@heartofla.org.

Also by Monday, December 15. The Ettie Lee Youth & Family Service Center works to save lives, change lives, and build hope for kids with all kinds of serious problems, in a family-like setting. They have a number of wonderful and successful group homes throughout town, serving more than 150 kids, and they've asked us if there's any way to help get holiday gifts for the kids in their program. They have a long and helpful wish list for kids and teens who would love to know that they are not forgotten this holiday season. The wish list lists each child by his or her first name and age, and 3 wishes. Especially popular are *gift cards* to stores like Best Buy, Marshall's, Old Navy, Guitar Center, Wal-Mart, Target, and shoe stores. A whole bunch of kids have requested Van's. (A few have asked for Nikes, too.) For what it's worth, there are a number of requests for clock/radios, too. If you would like to help – maybe your group would like to "adopt" one of the Ettie Lee Homes (each has an average of about 10 kids) – in any way, or see the wish list, please contact the awfully nice **Vicki Mastro** at **626-960-4861** or Vicki_m@ettielee.org.

By Monday, December 15. Many of you know of the great works of **Beyond Shelter**. Each year they help hundreds of homeless families, representing thousands of children. The families they serve are in dire need of assistance. The majority are headed by single mothers raising their children alone. Many of them are homeless because of domestic violence. These families are surviving on extremely limited incomes and struggle to afford the most basic of necessities. Providing Christmas presents for their children is a luxury out of their reach. It is Beyond Shelter's goal during the holidays to provide each of these kids with high quality Christmas presents. So, here is their request: New and unwrapped toys and gifts for homeless children between 0 and 18 years old. Suggested gifts include board games, educational toys, sports equipment, art supplies, stuffed animals, multi-cultural dolls, video games, books, building blocks, music, DVDs, and age-appropriate gifts for teens (e.g., movie passes, gift cards for music or clothes). If you would like to donate this great cause, please contact **Rebecca Tull** at **213-252-0772, x 120**, or rtull@beyondshelter.org. *Beyond Shelter also has a great Adopt-a-Family Program, which connects sponsors with families to adopt by providing a detailed family profile and wish list. This is a great program for individuals, communities, or corporations. Rebecca has all the info on that, too.*

Tuesday, December 16th. We recently got this from our old friends at **The Saban Free Clinic (formerly the Los Angeles Free Clinic)**: "The Saban Free Clinic is a four-facility non-profit agency that provides free quality health care, dental care and social services to the most vulnerable members of our community. This year, the Clinic will provide over 90,000 free patient

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visits to the people who need them most. On **Tuesday, December 16th**, the Clinic will hold its 19th **Annual Patient Holiday Party** for low income families and at-risk youth. At the party we traditionally serve a hot meal and give out basic clothing, toiletry items and toys for the children. For most of our patients who attend, this event provides the only gifts they will receive for the holidays and brings a little brightness to the season. The Holiday Party will be held at our Hollywood site at **6043 Hollywood Blvd.**, at the corner of Hollywood and Gower. We are looking for volunteers to help throughout the day, from 9 am -4:30 pm. There are a host of tasks for volunteers to help out with during the day, including; setting up, passing out items, helping control the flow of people, serving food and clean-up activities. The Clinic is also looking for donations of items to pass out to our patients. We specifically need donations of toiletries (regular and travel sizes), underwear and socks, as our low income and homeless patients are asking for them year round." If you are interested in making an in-kind donation or volunteering please contact **Lenna Vanerian** at **323-330-1653** or at lvanerian@thesabanfreeclinic.org. Gifts are needed by **Friday, December 5th**. *The full wish-list is on their website www.thesabanfreeclinic.org. It includes car seats, jackets, and blankets. They especially need clothes for toddlers, and underwear for people of all ages. (And thanks, Lenna, for making this so easy!)*

By Wednesday, December 17. The 9th (!) Annual Barbies of Color Drive. An annual holiday favorite. **Beyond Shelter** is an outstanding organization that helps more than 300 homeless families each year find affordable housing and get back on their feet. (And, at this point, many of you have outstandingly helped Beyond Shelter on Big Sunday, too!) Many of their clients are African-American or Hispanic. Unfortunately, many of their toy donations are of blonde, blue-eyed dolls. Help us again collect *at least 100* African-American and Hispanic Barbie dolls to give to homeless girls of color. (And by the way, the dolls don't have to be Barbies. Any African-American or Hispanic doll will do.) We do this project every year because it's important for these kids' pride and self-esteem. (Usually you can buy a Barbie at Kay-Bee Toys for about \$6-7 each.) If you want to donate anything, please contact **Rebecca Tull** at Beyond Shelter; she can be reached at rtull@beyondshelter.org or at **213-252-0772, x 120**. *We always list this one separately because people start collecting the Barbies even before we post this. Some years we've collected hundreds of them. (By the way: Anyone out there know someone at Mattel who can help us out?)*

By Wednesday, December 17. My Friends' Place is a Hollywood drop-in center for homeless and runaway youth. Here at Big Sunday we've worked with them (and admired them) for years. They have a rather simple request this year: they have requested 200 new journals or composition-style books. That's it. Really. (They don't even need them gift-wrapped!) The young people who go to My Friend's Place (ages 12-25) really enjoy keeping a journal, and it's a great treat for them to be able to get one that's nice and new for the holidays. This is so doable: If just 10 people e-mail 20 friends, or 5 people write not-even-so-big checks – or 1 large-ish office sets up one collection – it can be done in an afternoon. If you can donate these journals in any amount, please contact My Friends' Place's tireless, cheerful, and helpful volunteer coordinator, **Camilla Brannstrom** at **323-908-0011, x 107**, or cbrannstrom@myfriendsplace.org.

By Wednesday, December 17. Para Los Niños is a fantastic agency that provides dozens of educational, financial, health and family services to 3,500 children per week and 5,000 families per year. Some of you may have run a Big Sunday lemonade stand last spring to raise money for this great organization. We received this note from them: *"Our holiday toy drive will be kicking off in two weeks. Many business, donors and friends of Para Los Niños will be donating new unwrapped toys. We will separate the toys into categories and then deliver the toys to our 28 sites prior to the holidays. The children so look forward to this time of year and our supporters have always provided wonderful toys in the past. However this year, while our supporters are continuing to provide us with toys, they are not able to provide as many toys as in the past. As a result, we have to reach out to new friends to ask for their support to make up the difference. While this email may seem out of the blue, I have heard others speak so highly of Big Sunday that we felt you may be able to help us collect toys for most needy children, youth and families in Los Angeles."* Okay, folks: Let's show these nice folks at Para Los Ninos what we can do. If you – or your school, office, team, faith group, fraternity, bowling league, book club – can donate new toys in any amount, please contact **Avery Bell** at abell@paralosninos.org or **213-250-4800**.

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By Thursday, December 18. The Hooper Healthy Start Program is a collaborative of fifteen agencies in the Vernon/Central Community. The program provides many services and great support for students and families at the **Hooper Avenue Elementary School** – which has more than 1300 kids! This holiday season, HHSP is hoping to give new clothes and new shoes to kids ages 6 through 11. In addition, they'd like to provide new toys for the kids. (New books for 1st through 5th graders would be great, too!) Per their program coordinator, **Aydee Valle-Amescua**: "The Hooper Healthy Start Program has a special link to the community since we are housed at the school. We receive all our referrals through teachers who have daily contact with the children and their families. The families with special needs are referred to our office through their classroom teachers. I work with our family advocates, college interns and community collaborators to formulate a list of needy families. As soon as we have secured a donation we contact our families. We truly appreciate any donation you are able to make this year." To make a donation in any amount, please contact Aydee at aydee.valle-amescua@lausd.net or **323-232-5327** or **323-232-3571**. *For Thanksgiving needs, please see November 24.*

By Friday, December 19. Haven Hills is a wonderful group that helps victims of domestic violence in the San Fernando Valley. They help both women and kids. Haven Hills has a number of facilities, with all kinds of great plans lined up for the holiday season. They will be hosting a big holiday party on December 22nd and they'd love to be able to give gifts to all the moms and kids in their program. They have asked for educational toys for kids, as well as computer games for kids from kindergarten through high school. They would also really love gift cards, in all amounts, at any of these stores: Target, Wal-Mart, Marshall's, Ross Dress for Less, DSW, Payless, Staples, Office Depot, Best Buy, and Toys R Us. They could also use cards to supermarkets, drug stores, and beauty supply stores. Gift cards for movie theatre or amusement parks are also greatly appreciated. Please leave cards unwrapped. *Remember: Gift cards are available at most supermarkets now, so they're convenient to get.* If you can donate any cards for these deserving women, please contact **Marcella Cramer** at **818-346-7640** or e-mail her at mrcramer@havenhills.org.

By Friday, December 19. PROTOTYPES provides both residential and non-residential supportive services to survivors of domestic violence and their children. We enjoyed working with PROTOTYPES for the first time last spring on Big Sunday, and we're happy to help them this holiday season. PROTOTYPES has an extensive and helpful wish list full of easily bought items for the 30 women and 15 children in their program. They would like to be able to give each woman and child a gift card to stores such as Target, Toys 'R Us, Michael's, Office Depot, Ross, CVS, or Walgreen's. They'd also greatly appreciate gift cards to any local supermarket or movie theatre. There's also a couple of bigger-ticket items they could use, relating to fitness and recreation, which is crucial to increasing self-esteem and healing from trauma: a Wii console and Wii Fit addition; 20 yoga mats (\$20 each); 10 exercise hula hoops (\$25-\$35 each); healthy cookbooks; and healthy cooking classes. Also: is there anyone out there who wants to underwrite a membership at 24-Hour Fitness or yoga classes (usually about \$20 per class). (I'm including all of these because some of them are unusual requests and hopefully they'll appeal to some of the health-conscious folks out there!). They'd also greatly appreciate food baskets or welcome baskets for their clients. *Finally, it would be fantastic if there is someone who will underwrite the cost of a fun trip to a theme park, play or musical, or museum for the women and their kids. (Anyone have access to comps at any of these places?)* To help, or to get the full wish list, please contact **Jennifer Chen Speckman** at **323-461-4118** or jchenspeckman@gmail.com. *PROTOTYPES is also always looking for tutors ages 18 and over.*

By Friday, December 19. St. Mary's Center is a **Catholic Charities** organization that serves many homeless families. They're hosting a holiday party on December 20th, for 400 children, ages 3 to 11. They have also asked for *new*, unwrapped toys for the kids. They would also like to give basic clothing to all members of their client families, and have sent us a modest wish-list which includes: new socks, new t-shirts, pants, sweaters, and shoes. (Editor's note: If I were hosting 400 kids I'd add Tylenol to the wish list, but that's just me.) *Something to think about: \$1000 would go a very long way to offsetting the cost of this party.* If you want to help in any way, please contact the kindly **Marlene Rodriguez** at **323-662-4392** or mrodriguez@ccharities.org.

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One more thing: St. Mary's could also use some volunteers to help with the party (December 20th) this year. If you can help, please rsvp to Marlene.

By Friday, December 19. Barnsdall Arts is a great program that brings art to kids all over Los Angeles. Their **Ragan Art Academy** is a unique 2-year sequential program in the visual arts for 12 – 17 year old young artists. The students produce individual portraits with an emphasis on life drawing from professional models. There are 70 talented students enrolled at their four sites (up from three last year): **The Armory** in Pasadena, **Barnsdall Art Park** in Hollywood, **Clinton Middle School** near Downtown, and **Hamilton High School** in West L.A. Over half of these kids are on full scholarship – a huge financial crunch for Barnsdall is this tight economy – and are considered highly at-risk youth. Donations of materials would be a *huge* help in keeping this program successful. Here is what they need: large sheets of drawing paper and watercolor paper (in both cases, “as much as possible”), canvas boards, acrylic paint, tempera paint, white gesso, gel medium, small bamboo brushes, paint brushes, markers, 4B and 6B pencils, 3M Magic Tape, glue sticks, magic rubs erasers, and scissors. (Clearly these guys are serious artists.) If you can help please contact my friend, **Shelah Lehrer-Graiwier** at lehrergr@aol.com or **323-655-4763**. *Caveat emptor: Shelah works really hard on this great program – and is hard to say no to.*

By Friday, December 19. The Exceptional Children's Foundation's well-regarded Early Start intervention program helps infants, toddlers and preschoolers with developmental disabilities who are at serious risk for delays. The kids in this program are from very needy families and have conditions including mental retardation, cerebral palsy, autism, epilepsy, developmental delay, pre-natal exposure to drugs, and premature birth. Some of these families have more than one special needs child. They have locations in L.A., the San Fernando Valley and the South Bay. They have specially contacted us (by way of exceptional adult volunteer, Big Sunday vet, and all-around good egg, **Karen Gilman**) and asked us to “stock the shelves of our ‘*Big Sunday Food, Diaper and Toy Bank*’ with toys for babies, toddlers and preschoolers.” (Some of the toys they've requested: *CandyLand, Lincoln Logs*, glitter or sparkle pens, and costumes to dress up in.) They could also really use *diapers* (especially size 4 and 5), baby wipes, food staples or developmentally appropriate toys for ages 0-3. They would like them unwrapped, and in time for their holiday parties on December 17th, 18th, and 19th. *At the least, our goal is 100 packs of diapers.* (Up from last year, but why not? C'mon, there must be someone out there who can collect that!) As a parent of former babies, I can say that diapers were always surprisingly expensive, and not always the world's most, um, exciting purchase. So, think of this as a gift not just for the babies, but for their moms and dads, too. If you'd like to make all or part of this donation, or would like the full wish-list, please contact Karen at **323-350-9225** or gilperson2@aol.com or **Gabriella Kayacan** at gakayacan@ecf.net or **818-470-5757** or **Janell Plascencia** at jplascencia@ecf.net or **323-735-1424**. *One last thing, per ECF: “Thank you so much! We are happy to make delivery or drop-off easy for any and all potential donors in Los Angeles, the South Bay and the San Fernando Valley!”*

By Friday, December 19. The Magnolia Missionary Baptist Church in South Los Angeles is hoping to help some of their neighborhood's neediest residents have a very Merry Christmas. They could use help in a whole bunch of ways. Some of these families need holiday food and gifts. Some need clothes And some of the families could really use some help getting a Christmas tree. Here are some of the food items they need: Turkeys, hams, chickens, cranberry sauce, rolls, corn bread mix, stuffing mix, chicken broth, turkey gravy, cooking oil, sugar, brown sugar, butter, celery, eggs, milk, sweet potatoes, pumpkin pie mix, onions, string beans, oranges, apples, walnuts. (You get the idea – and I don't know about you, but based on this list, I wouldn't mind being a guest at one of these dinners.) They could also use new, unwrapped toys for kids of all ages. Finally, this year they could use some new or gently used coats, jackets, hats, scarves, sweaters and gloves, as well as new socks or underwear. All sizes are great, including adults. If you can help in *any* way, please contact MMBC's kindly member who reached out to Big Sunday, **Lisa Burton** at jhburton@hotmail.com or **323-491-8475**. *Some of these families could also use food for Thanksgiving. You can contact Lisa about that, too.*

By Friday, December 19. Alexandria House is a wonderful transitional facility for homeless women and children. They want to give their current and past residents (kids and moms) both

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necessities and fun holiday items. Their wish list includes: non-perishable food, diapers (all sizes – always expensive, always a drag to have to buy, but great to give or receive), new children's clothes, and new toys for kids (unwrapped, please). Gift cards are also very much appreciated. *Please deliver any donations by **Friday, December 19th**.* For all the details, please contact my pal **Michele Richards** at **213-381-2649** or Michele@alexandriahouse.org.

By Saturday, December 20. The folks from **Covenant House** are giving gifts to 125 homeless and at-risk youth, from babies to age 24. Their wish list includes MP3 players, iPods, and disposable cameras; sporting goods (such as basketballs, soccer balls, footballs); personal items like wallets and watches (you can't believe how cheap some of these are at places like Target) (brand new!); and school supplies. They also need clothes in all sizes, especially extra large and XX-large and baby clothes. And, speaking of babies, they can *always* use diapers! Gift cards (Old Navy, Gap, Target) and phone cards and movie passes are always *very* much appreciated. They would also love a rotating membership at a gym, preferably Bally's, which is nearby. To donate, or to see the whole wish list, please contact my incredible friend, **Sister Margaret Farrell** at mf Farrell@covca.org or call her at **323-461-3131, x 237**. *A note from Sister Margaret: Our residents come to us with very few personal belongings. We use every opportunity to let each individual know that he or she is special and unique. Remembering these **older teens (18-21 yrs of age)** especially during the Holiday Season make them feel wanted and loved. If you wish to help, here are a few items on their wish list that you can donate. You may also offer monetary donations by using your major credit card on our web site at www.covdove.org. All monetary and in-kind donations are 100% tax deductible.* Editor's note: a couple of years ago we sent over a **Santa Claus** to distribute the gifts on Christmas morning. They asked if there was any way we could do it again. The cost for **Mr. Claus** is \$250. (Which includes a tip for Santa.) (Yeah, so it's a little more than the other Santas – give Santa a break: it's Christmas morning!) Is there someone out there who'd be willing to underwrite it? Er, him? If you are, please contact...**me**...at david@bigsunday.org.

Sunday, December 21. Project Chicken Soup has cooked and delivered home-cooked meals to people with HIV/AIDS year-round for many years. (We've enjoyed working with them on Big Sunday for a long time, too!) This holiday season they need 10 volunteers to cook extra-special and delicious holiday meals to their clients. They need another 5 volunteers to deliver the meals. If you'd like to help, please contact PCS's hardworking Associate Director, **Cathryn Friedman** at projectchickensoup@sbcglobal.net or **323-933-5402**. *If you'd like to help please RSVP to Cathryn asap so she knows how many to expect.*

Sunday, December 21. The 12th (!) (Wow!) Annual Christmas/Hanukkah/Kwanzaa Party at The Umoja Apartments in South Central L.A. Join us at this **Families in Need** sponsored event as we bring gifts to all the formerly homeless kids – and their moms and dads, now with jobs and apartments – at **Beyond Shelter's Umoja Apartments**. Our friends at Umoja always provide the food and the hospitality. We'll light a menorah and Kwanzaa candles, sing some Hanukkah songs and some Christmas carols, and even get to schmooze with **Santa** (cost of Santa: \$225, including tip)(hey, Santa's gotta eat, too). If you want to underwrite Santa, Santa (and we) would be very grateful. We'll caravan downtown at 1:30 pm. The festivities at Umoja begin at 2:00. If you want to buy gifts for the Umoja kids (each donor is told the name, age, and sex of the recipient) and/or just come and enjoy the party, contact **Families in Need** vets, **C/H/K/P/a/U** vets, and all-around good guys **Debi and Ofer Raveh** at draveh@att.net or o.raveh@att.net or call them at **323-650-1880**. As always, of course, the **C/H/K/P/a/U** regulars (you know who you are) will be back (they always are) but we could still use more people! *One last thing: This is a wonderful tradition, even for the scroogiest among us (e.g., me), and a great project for families. Join us – you'll be glad you did. Thanks also to my friend, Beyond Shelter's wonderful and funny **Barbara Hill**, for always helping to make this party so nice.*

By Wednesday, December 24. The Midnight Mission has a long and proud history of helping countless homeless and near-homeless people in Los Angeles. This holiday season they have asked us if we can simply help meet some of their basic needs: twins blankets and sheets, living room and/or bedroom furniture, kitchen appliances (large and small), 2 commercial washers and dryers, shower curtailnd, cleaning supplies, toilet paper, paper towels, toilet seat covers, soap,

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detergent, and bleach. (We told you the stuff they asked for is pretty basic!) If you can provide any of these simple items for a family in time for Christmas, please contact **Ricardo Rosales** at rosales@midnightmission.org or 310-677-9616 or 562-879-0064.

Thursday, December 25, Christmas Day. The 25th (!) Annual Temple Israel of Hollywood Christmas Dinner for the Hungry and Homeless of Hollywood. The Mother of all Holiday events, sponsored, as always, by **Temple Israel of Hollywood** and taking place at the **Hollywood United Methodist Church** (corner of Highland and Franklin, the one with the big AIDS ribbon on it). Last year volunteers fed, entertained and gave much-needed toiletries, blankets and holiday gifts to more than 1500 (!!!!!) homeless and needy people at this huge and wonderful event. All different kinds of help is needed before, during and after the event. **On Christmas Day, 8 am -4 pm, only those 13 and older, please. Younger kids and their parents are needed to help set up on Wednesday, December 24th, 10-4.** To volunteer, call 323-876-8330, x1006. In addition, the Christmas Dinner folks need *toiletries, disposable razors, toothbrushes, blankets and batteries. They also need 700 toys for kids ages 2 to 13. A special request this year is that they need 400 warm winter jackets. (Anyone out there in the schmatta business?)* Finally, they could also use people with trucks or large SUV's the day before and after. The budget for this event is \$8000; any additional money goes to "luxuries" (?) like the warm jackets. If you would like to volunteer; donate stuff or money; or help in any way please contact the hardworking **Stephanie Steingold** at StephanieS@tioh.org or call 323-876-8330, x1006. *If you'd like to make a monetary donation, don't hold back. Please make checks to TIOH Christmas Dinner, and send to TIOH, 7300 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles, 90046. And, if you can send donations by December 15, that's even better.*

By Wednesday, December 31st. Children of the Night is a wonderful and important organization that rescues children ages 11-17 from pornography and prostitution. For many of them, this will be the first year they've even had a Christmas Tree. *(An idea: You might want to be the nice person who donates the money for that Christmas tree.)* This year, they have requested "volunteers who can organize ethnic year-end celebrations for our *Holidays Around the World* month of December." Events are scheduled for Monday through Thursday nights, from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm. They have also requested gifts for the kids living in their group home, which include gift cards to teen-friendly stores (such as music stores), pajamas, fuzzy slippers, robes, purses, hoodie sweatshirts, nail polish, earrings and belts. Some higher ticket items include DVD players, CD players, and iPods. They could also use twin-sized bedspreads as well as used laptops (for their college-bound kids). The entire wishlist is online at www.childrenofthenight.org. Please check it out. For security reasons, please keep all gifts unwrapped. Please note: No gifts with any sharp objects that can be used for cutting. *Children of the Night would happily and gratefully welcome volunteers to wrap the gifts; however, any volunteer who wishes to work directly with the children is required to complete a volunteer application and be processed. Please don't wait until the last minute for this request.* If you'd like to help these kids celebrate the holidays in any way, please contact Children of the Night's inspiring founder, **Dr. Lois Lee** at 818-908-4474, x125, or LLee@childrenofthenight.org.

By Monday, December 31. Many of you out there know that here at Big Sunday we have a great soft spot for basset hounds. They're sweet, friendly, funny, and really cute. Our friends at **Daphneyland**, part of the **Basset Rescue Network**, have told us that they are up to a record number of hounds – 100! – looking for loving homes for the holidays. (Choose your holiday, starting with Veteran's Day.) (Bassets make great Christmas presents. Then again, have you ever noticed how many bassets have the same names as elderly Jewish people? So, they make great Hanukkah presents, too!) (And I know, I know: Before you give someone a dog as a present, make sure they're prepared to take of the dog for years to come!) These hounds come in all ages and sizes. And most of them are housebroken! If you have a soft spot for bassets, but not so soft that you want one in your house, Daphneyland would very gratefully accept monetary donations for sponsors who can help defray the cost of housing these great dogs as well at veterinary care. *They could also use these easily-bought items: Kirkland (Costco) dog biscuits, bleach, allergy-free Kirkland laundry detergent, new dog toys, new dog blankets.* There is a full wish list at www.bassetrescuenetwork.org. If you're interested, please contact the wonderful and tireless **Dawn Smith** at basset911@aol.com or 661-269-2682 (they're in Acton, way up in the Valley –

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not that far away at all). And, if you want the really hard sell, e-mail my friend **Beth Weisman** at bww_mommy@yahoo.com; the Weismans adopted not one, but two (count 'em) bassetts from Daphneyland after Big Sunday last spring – she can tell you how great they are.

By Monday, December 31. The Lung Cancer Foundation of America (LCFA) is a very important new non-profit who mission is simple: *to fund research to predict, treat and cure lung cancer*. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in America. In fact, every 3 ½ minutes, someone in the U.S. will die of lung cancer. Yet, up until now, most lung cancer monies have gone to preventing lung cancer, rather than curing it. LCFA is determined to change the course of this disease. They are giving hope, research, and life to those who have been affected by lung cancer. LCFA supporters will be hosting “friendraisers” throughout 2009, in cities all over the United States, to introduce people to this fantastic and important new initiative. If you'd like to go to a local friendraiser, if you'd like to get more involved with LCFA, or if you'd like to make a tax-deductible year-end donation to LCFA in someone's honor or memory, please contact LCFA's founder and guiding spirit, the incredible **Kim Norris** at KNorris@LCFAmerica.org or call her at **310-375-0211**. You can also find out more about LCFA at www.lcfamerica.org. *Make a donation by 12/31 to get a deduction. However, please know that LCFA would love your help and support any time.*

By Sunday, January 4, 2009. Providence Health and Services provides all kind of vital care to those who need it most: domestic violence victims, underprivileged children, poor seniors, and homeless people. Per their hardworking BJ Valencia: “There is such a great need that I'm leaving the date open.” BJ has specifically requested grocery store gift cards valued at \$10 or \$25. At **The Providence Center for Community Health Improvement**, they will be collected toys, toiletries (including toothbrushes and toothpaste, shampoo and deodorant), clothes, and shoes and sneakers for kids ages 2-17 in the Pacoima area. These basic items will be given to kids who received *nothing* else during the holiday season, and will handed out on January 6, The Day of the Three Wise Men. If you can help fill this request in any way, large or small, please contact BJ at hortencia.valencia@providence.org or **818-847-3846**. As BJ writes: “Thank you Big Sunday for being there so I can even make this request.”

PLANNING AHEAD:

Big Sunday '09. Big Sunday '09 will be on Saturday, May 2nd and Sunday May 3rd. As always, it will be completely *free* to all participants. And, as always, Big Sunday is *totally* funded by corporate, private and foundation cash and in-kind donations. The end of the year is a *great* time to make your donation. Please make checks payable to **Big Sunday**, and send them to our office: **BIG SUNDAY, 7319 Beverly Blvd, Suite #7, Los Angeles, CA, 90036**. You can also donate on the web. Go to www.bigsunday.org and press “DONATE.” All donations *are* tax deductible to the full extent of the law. For information on corporate sponsorships, please contact the incredible **Tracy Austin** at tracy@bigsunday.org. (It's a great way for your company to very publicly support a terrific community project. Plus, many companies come out and use it as a terrific work day and family day, too.) If you have any other questions, or for the *really* hard sell, contact david@bigsunday.org. *And if you're interested in volunteering, or getting your group involved in Big Sunday – and don't forget, we're now in Orange County, Ventura County and the Inland Empire, too – please contact the awesome Sherry Marks at sherry@bigsunday.org or 323-549-9944.*

*

Remember: Check out www.bigsunday.org throughout the holiday season for updates and additions to this list. (And yes, if you have something to add to this list contact the amazing, tireless Rachel Linton at rlinton@bigsunday.org or call 323-549-9944.)

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Thanks yet again for all your help. Happy Holidays, best wishes for the new year, and hope to see you on May 2nd and 3rd for Big Sunday '09!