

'Dollars for Diapers' Do It! campaign to cover increased demand

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Babies are known for having accidents, but it's no accident Post-Crescent Media's "Dollars for Diapers" Do It! Community Challenge launches today, on Mother's Day, and runs through Father's Day on June 15.

"With families that are struggling with balancing their budget, diapers is just that added burden that they have, and allowing them not to have that added burden of diaper costs might be able to help with other critical costs like food or things related to their basic needs of housing, transportation or all those fundamental needs every family has," said Rhonda Hannemann, community development program officer at United Way Fox Cities. "It's just another option to help support a family's income."

United Way Fox Cities established the Fox Cities Diaper Bank in 2011 with the mission of raising the community's awareness of the need for diapers and to assist low-income families in meeting their diaper needs. This year's campaign fundraising goal of \$30,000 supports the Fox Cities Diaper Bank.

The J. J. Keller Foundation, United Way Fox Cities and, for the first time, Thrivent Financial have stepped up to each match total donations up to \$5,000. Donating early triples every dollar given.

"Our continued support of the United Way Diaper Bank will allow us to have an important impact on the lives of many in the Fox Cities," said Jenni Eickelberg, senior community relations specialist with Thrivent Financial.

A healthy change of diapers costs about \$100 or more a month, but for low-income households, safety-net programs like Food Share, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and Medicare do not cover diapers.

Mother of five Tammy Robinson of Appleton has received diapers for her last two children through the Salvation Army-Fox Cities, one of several agencies that distributes them for the diaper bank.

With one daughter still in diapers, Robinson said she was buying diapers weekly at Walmart for \$8 a package. The Salvation Army-Fox Cities "helped out quite a bit," she said.

Monica Clare, executive director of St. Joseph Food Program, said many clients use the food program for the first time after hearing about the diapers.

"Typically in a month, we're giving out anywhere between 11,000 and 20,000 diapers packaged in packages of either 25 or 50 based on the size," Clare said. "A lot of people are using the diapers. I think we have in the range of 300 families on a monthly basis that are getting diapers from us. ... There is a really big need for those diapers."

Cloth diapers are not an option since most people living in poverty do not have access to washing facilities in the home, and most coin-operated laundromats don't allow customers to wash cloth diapers for health and sanitary reasons. Wearing a disposable diaper too long can cause increased health problems like skin disease.

In 2011 and 2012, Post-Crescent Media raised a combined total of \$96,691 to keep baby's bottoms healthy and ease the financial burden for families. The success of these drives and those of other service organizations helped establish and sustain a true "bank" of diapers.

Funds raised this year will cover increased demand.

"We have more agencies involved therefore more people," Hannemann said. "And part of that increase is people coming in regularly. Obviously when you have little ones it's not like in one year they're going to be out of diapers."

The rallying financial support of the community has been gratifying, said Nanci Micke, United Way Fox Cities vice president of marketing and communications.

"The whole reason it works is we have so many partners that came right to the table and were there with us the whole time," Micke said. "It's been one of those truly collaborative experiences."

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At a Glance:

- The Fox Cities Diaper Bank distributes about 300,000 diapers to families in need.
- On average, 600 children receive diapers on a monthly basis.
- More than 900 community volunteers have been involved in repackaging diapers for distribution to families. Diapers are stored at Valley Packaging Industries in Appleton.
- The diaper bank collects, stores and helps distribute diapers to low-income families through local agencies including Community 2000 Program through Valley Packaging Industries; Harbor House Domestic Abuse Programs; Hortonville Community Food Pantry; Outagamie County Department of Health and Human Services' Children, Youth and Family Division; Outagamie County Early Intervention Program through Valley Packaging Industries; Parent Connection through Family Services of Northeast Wisconsin; St. Joseph Food Program; the Salvation Army-Fox Cities and the Salvation Army, Outagamie County Service Extension.
- For more information, call the United Way at 920-954-7210 or go to www.foxcitiesdiaperbank.org.

How to help

People can contribute to Post-Crescent Media's "Dollars for Diapers" Do It! Community Challenge online at cfoxvalley.org or by completing the donation form found on **Page F2**. Mail the form and a check to the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, P.O. Box 563, Appleton, WI 54912. Checks should be made payable to The Post-Crescent Community Foundation.