

Dollars for Diapers needed for our community

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Jun. 13, 2014 |

postcrescent.com



How to contribute

You can donate to the Dollars for Diapers campaign at cfoxvalley.org.

In 2010, I participated in a conference call that shared alarming statistics. The Every Little Bottom Study had just been released by Huggies® and it showed that one in every three families in the United States struggles to provide diapers for their families. Our local food pantries told us that they couldn't keep up with the requests for diapers from their clients and, in fact, couldn't envision a day when they would ever have enough diapers. To start an actual diaper bank was not in United Way's plan. But after seeing the statistics and learning about the need, it was decided that a community response was necessary. Now, almost four years later, we're providing more than 400,000 diapers to partners in the community for distribution annually. As we got the initiative up and rolling, I spoke to many service clubs and organizations to get the word out about the diaper bank. The most common question was, "Why not just use cloth diapers? They were good enough for my kids."

Well, they were good enough for my kids, too, and I was always proud of using cloth. But there are many families who have their children in child care and disposable diapers are required for those child cares to be licensed. Another barrier for low-income families to use cloth diapers is not having their own washer and dryer, and many commercial laundromats don't allow diapers.

It has been very exciting to see so many people come together to make the Fox Cities Diaper Bank a reality. Valley Packaging said yes to our request to store and inventory the diapers at its location. The St. Joseph Food Program and the Salvation Army Fox Cities were our first two partners for distribution, and they were on board from the get-go in establishing the framework. We now have 10 local organizations that distribute diapers for the Diaper Bank. This has been an efficient way to get them to the people who need them the most. The response has been wonderful from local companies, organizations and non-profits that offered to run diaper drives. More than 900 volunteers have helped us repackage diapers into bags that make distribution equitable for all and helped with our inventory tracking. It has become somewhat trite to talk about what a generous community this is, but after being involved in the start-up of this initiative and seeing how so many entities have come together to help babies and families, I'm a believer in the mantra that this is a very special place to live.

Lori Hewitt, who works with the Outagamie County Department of Health and Human Services, shared these examples of how providing diapers makes a difference:

"The Fox Cities Diaper Bank has been instrumental with meeting the needs of clients of Outagamie County DHHS-Child Protection Unit. There are children with special needs who aren't able to be potty-trained who benefit from the diapers. Social workers make home visits to low-income families who are struggling to pay the rent. Thanks to the diaper bank, they're able to keep their children in dry diapers instead of wearing soaked diapers, which cause diaper rash. The at-risk infants and toddlers are healthier and happier because they have a

basic need met. If the Fox Cities Diaper Bank didn't exist, there would be more infants and toddlers left in soiled diapers much longer than they should because the parents have nowhere else to turn."

Juli Meulemans of Community 2000 said, "Our diaper bank recipients' financial situations are quite varied —loss of household income when the primary breadwinner had mental health issues resurface, sudden custody placement of grandchildren in the home, loss of job due to layoff or serious health issues, or even unexpected home repairs. In every situation, the Fox Cities Diaper Bank has made a tremendous change to our families' lives. It has given them solace in understanding that someone is there to offer them a helping hand during their times of struggle and conflict. It has provided relief to them, knowing they can adequately change their little ones' diapers and still be able to pay their other necessities on time." All of this is possible because we've had Dollars for Diapers Do It campaigns. Other communities look at us and envy the fact that we truly have a bank of diapers that can be distributed on a regular basis, and in the sizes that families need.

Thank you to all of the donors and supporters who have a special spot in their hearts when it comes to the babies who need our help.