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Helping hand

Opinion By Staff Source: Fairfax County Times WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3 2008

'Tis the season for many things in Fairfax County, perhaps none more important than recognizing the efforts of nonprofit organizations that brighten the holidays for our region's neediest families.

With foreclosures and unemployment at record levels, it's no surprise that the county's homeless population (2,500 and counting) is in uncharted territory. The number of individuals and families teetering on the brink of homelessness also has grown exponentially.

Fortunately, Fairfax County residents have a well-earned reputation for spreading hope, cheer and more than a few dollars to assist neighbors in need. Sure, we're harried, busy people with to-do lists a mile long, but something about the holiday season brings out the best in all of us.

A big part of this county's success formula can be traced to the many charity and faith-based organizations that work tirelessly to keep others from slipping through the cracks.

FACETS (Fairfax Area Christian Emergency and Transitional Services), which provides transitional support services, evening meals and other resources to the homeless, is a wonderful example of the difference one committed group can make.

Same goes for Our Daily Bread, a Fairfax-based interfaith organization with two dozen participating congregations. While the group's primary focus is assisting impoverished families with a food outreach program, Our Daily Bread also helps in the areas of family assistance, housing advocacy and community education.

Fairfax- and Herndon-Reston FISH (Friendly Instant Sympathetic Help) also provides outreach services and family assistance.

Reston Interfaith, Northern Virginia Family Services, LINK, Springfield-based ECHO and McLean-based SHARE are making a difference as well.

In just about every case, these groups need our support, whether in the form of a \$25 check, canned goods or clothing. Mentors, volunteers and others who can lend professional services are also in high demand.

One small deed can do a lot of good.

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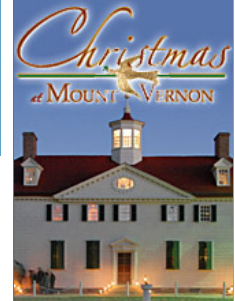
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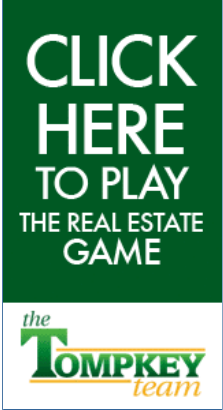
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