

Front Page of Danbury News Times Wednesday,  
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fill hearts with gratitude for giving

By Brian Saxton THE NEWS-TIMES

DANBURY — One 16-pound Butterball turkey, one family-size bag of stuffing, cans of assorted vegetables, one pumpkin pie and one homestyle apple pie.

Those were some of the many holiday ingredients Edwin Marsach found in the Thanksgiving gift basket he received Tuesday from an anonymous well-wisher.

"It's incredible how generous people can be," said Marsach. "I want to thank them from the bottom of my heart."

Marsach wasn't alone.

The 52-year-old New Milford resident was among 59 local families and individuals from area towns who picked up Thanksgiving food packages donated this year to the Interfaith AIDS Ministry of Greater Danbury.

The last eight gift baskets were distributed to the agency's clients on Tuesday at the organization's pantry on Rose Street.

Thirteen other baskets were distributed this Thanksgiving by the AIDS Project of Greater Danbury."

Marsach, who was diagnosed as HIV positive in 1994, plans to join his wife, Maricel, in sharing his basket on Thanksgiving Day with another local family.

"We know how much everything costs," said Marsach. "If we tried to buy all this ourselves we'd run short of money for the household. That's why we're going to invite a poor family to join us."

Marsach, who volunteers for the ministry as well as his local church, has been receiving holiday baskets for the last seven years.

"If the donors only knew just how much love they're putting into people's hearts and bringing families together," said Marsach.

The ministry, which also supplies a December holiday meal and gifts to clients, receives support from individuals as well as churches and businesses.

While some donors are able to contribute a complete holiday meal, others can afford only some of the ingredients.

Under the rules of the program, donors and recipients do not know one another's identities.

"We had a good response to the Thanksgiving program this year," said services coordinator Karina Wojcik. "Now we're getting ready for Christmas."

Wojcik said 250 toys have already been donated for the ministry's children's Christmas drive by the Girl Scouts of Danbury.

"Some people are able to adopt a family for both meals and gifts," said Wojcik. "Some adopt more than one family. It's also an excellent opportunity for groups and organizations to jointly sponsor one or more families."

One longtime donor, Jo Gabriele, 53, of Danbury said she was motivated to join the holiday basket program because of her own good fortune.

I was raised in a low-income family but I've been very fortunate in life," said Gabriele. "I had a long and successful career with IBM and many people helped me along the way. I believe that at some point in your life you have to give back."

For that reason, said Gabriele, she left IBM and joined the Danbury-based agency TBICO, The Bridge to Independence and Career Opportunities.

TBICO is a city-based agency that helps train low-income individuals to become self-sufficient and find quality jobs.

"The ministry's holiday gift basket program is an important one," said Gabriele. "Everyone needs to know that there's someone behind their back ready to catch them."



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Edwin Marsach of New Milford picks up his Thanksgiving basket Tuesday from the Interfaith AIDS Ministry of Greater Danbury.