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'TIS SEASON TO GIVE TO CHARITY

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IT'S THE SEASON to remember those in need.

But where to start? Kids, the homeless, people infected with HIV - there are thousands of needy people, and hundreds of organizations that help them in our city - seeking your help.

Many of the big local charities count on the charitable impulses of the holiday season to make their yearly budget. You'll see their names regularly this time of year, as you should.

But what about charities and other not-for-profit organizations without the same holiday-time profile?

What about the other groups scattered across Philadelphia that give homeless guys a warm place to sleep, make sure poor veterans get a nutritious meal or teach kids on the toughest streets skills that could change their lives?

Today, the Daily News profiles 10 charities that need your help this year.

They all need cash - of course. But many of them would be just as happy with your time, your expertise, even your old clothes, computers or gently used furniture.

We know how deeply generous Philadelphians are to those down on their luck. So we're asking our readers to check out this list of worthy causes and see if there's one here that they could help.

Hey, 'tis the season.

1 Centro Nueva Creacion is an after-school program serving Fairhill and West Kensington youth. Its mission focuses on teaching photography - an enjoyable way to show local kids that they can learn complicated skills.

The work behind taking photographs challenges youngsters "to work harder and do more things," explains Christine Rodriguez, resource developer with the center.

She helps run the after-school center's "Goodlands Art Program," a twist on words of an unpopular name given to parts of North Philadelphia.

The art of photography also "helps the kid gain skills that will help them later on for a job," Rodriguez said.

And it shows the kids the beauty of their neighborhood. Taking pictures around the neighborhood gives the mostly Latino tweens and teens "a lot of pride in themselves," said Rodriguez.

The after-school program also includes one-on-one homework help and yoga classes as well as counseling with behavioral issues. The center, a renovated residence on Tioga Street near Mascher,

also houses a computer lab for youngsters.

Centro Nueva Creacion, or the New Creation Center, offers two other programs in leadership and social activism.

WHAT THEY NEED: Educational computer software and volunteers with backgrounds in teaching yoga, photography or education. Rodriguez also seeks donated tickets to local museums or sports events.

HOW TO REACH THEM: Visit www.centronueva.org and www.goodlands.org or call 215-426-8762.

2 AchieveAbility is "really about breaking the cycle of poverty for single-parent, low-income, formerly homeless families," said Jack Ferber, its executive director.

And the way to do that, AchieveAbility believes, is a college education.

This not-for-profit works intensively with families - who are often leaving impoverished or dangerous situations, and almost all of whom are headed by single moms - to help them pull their lives together and earn either a bachelor's or associate's degree.

It's an intensive process that can take eight years or more.

The 25-year-old organization also encourages clients to buy their own homes. AchieveAbility buys "vacant and dilapidated properties in West Philadelphia" and renovates them for single-parent families who come from shelters and subsidized housing, said Ferber, who said the nonprofit has renovated 185 homes.

AchieveAbility is staffed with social workers, mental health workers, drug and alcohol counselors and a computer lab to provide support for the families in transition.

WHAT THEY NEED: Committed tutors willing to work with a child or parent, office supplies, new or gently used furniture and clothing. They are also seeking sponsors for holiday presents for kids in the program.

HOW TO REACH THEM: Visit www.achieve-ability.org or call 215-748-8803.

3 Ronda Goldfein, the executive director of the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania, recently was honored by Philadelphia FIGHT for her efforts in HIV/AIDS advocacy. But in addition to the clients she advocates for, Goldfein must now fight for the law project. It has experienced funding cuts, she said.

"As the pool of federal AIDS funding shrinks, we are feeling it deeply - although we are committed to still providing service to the same number of clients," she said.

The project provides free legal services for people with HIV and AIDS. The staff represents those who have been discriminated against in the workplace, argues for access to health care and helps with financial issues, including wills, disability payments and debt.

WHAT THEY NEED: Lawyers who can volunteer.

HOW TO REACH THEM: Visit www.aidslawpa.org and, if you wish to donate, call 215-587-9377. Donations also are accepted at 1211 Chestnut St., Philadelphia 19107.

4 The Northwest Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network shelters homeless families in congregation buildings all over Germantown and the Northwest. But, according to Executive Director Rachel Falkove, the program offers more than just shelter - families in the network have access to career, financial management and family-skills training while in the program. The program also tracks the progress of its alumni for five years after they leave.

WHAT THEY NEED: The network is always looking for mentors to teach their families in transition. They prefer retired professionals, but any individual with experience running a family is welcome.

The network also welcomes contributors who are interested in donating their used car for tax purposes, or in donations of lightly-used furniture.

HOW TO REACH THEM: www.philashelter.org or 215-247-HOME.

5 Taller Puertorriqueno, a nonprofit organization based in North Philadelphia's 5th Street corridor, aims at preserving and promoting Puerto Rican and Latin American artistic culture and history.

In addition to offering art education programs to area youth, Taller houses educational materials on Puerto Rican and Latin American art, history and culture at the Eugenio María de Hostos Archives.

WHAT THEY NEED: Volunteers to help with tutoring kids or staffing events. Also, Taller needs art supplies such as brushes, paint, clay and paper.

HOW TO REACH THEM: Donations (and memberships) are accepted by mail at 2721 N. 5th St., Philadelphia 19133.

For more information about Taller Puertorriqueno, visit the Web at www.tallerpr.org or call 215-426-3311.

6 An estimated 3,000 homeless veterans live on the streets and in the shelters of Philadelphia. For the last 26 years, the Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center has been helping veterans break the cycle of homelessness. According to Edward Lowry, CEO of Phila Vets, homeless veterans face all the problems that the civilian homeless face, but in many cases they are burdened by the physical and mental scars of military service.

WHAT THEY NEED: The center is always in search of warm clothing, preferably in large sizes; socks; new underwear; toiletries; and phone cards for vets who are displaced. They're currently in greater need of toiletries, to ensure that every vet who attends the annual holiday dinner can receive a gift bag of essential items.

HOW TO HELP: Drop off items at the center's headquarters on North 4th Street near 2nd, close to the Ben Franklin Bridge in Old City.

7 Ready, Willing and Able takes men from the city's Office of Supportive Housing's shelter system and, if they are ready, prepares them for work in the city. In Philly, that includes picking up trash and litter from streets - Ready, Willing and Able guys in their blue uniforms have made quite an impact on roadways such as Kelly Drive. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. Operated by the New York City-based Doe Fund, RWA actually offers its participants year-long training for labor-intensive careers.

WHAT THEY NEED: RWA takes its trainees from the city shelter system and many of them need basic clothing to keep warm, especially this time of year. What the trainees need most is men's winter clothing, especially in large sizes.

HOW TO DELIVER: Call RWA at 215-732-3781, or just drop by. RWA's headquarters is on Bainbridge Street near 12th; the door is open 24/7.

8 Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Associations Coalition, or Seamaac, primarily works with new immigrants and refugees from Southeast Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. Last year, the coalition, with a 32-person staff speaking 16 languages, served 3,500 people in accessing low-income assistance programs and by offering after-school programs, among its services.

WHAT THEY NEED: Volunteers with knowledge of information technology, immigration law and social

services. Seamaac also seeks volunteers who speak Asian languages as well as Spanish and French.

HOW TO DONATE: Send donations to Kao Kue, 4601 Market St.,

Philadelphia 19139 or call 215-476-9640. Visit them at

www.seamaac.org

9 The Police Athletic League gives police officers a chance to connect with the city they serve. PAL provides after-school programs to more than 23,000 children at 27 locations all over the city.

WHAT THEY NEED: PAL is always in need of general operating support. The holidays are a good time to donate, but programs operate year-round.

HOW TO DONATE: Checks can be made out to Police Athletic League of Philadelphia; PAL also accepts Visa, MasterCard and American Express. The mailing address is 2524 East Clearfield St., Philadelphia 19134.

10 St. Peter's Food Cupboard, located at the St. Peter's Church on Pine Street near 3rd, donates supplemental food to needy families from all over the city.

WHAT THEY NEED: The cupboard is full at St. Peter's right now. But that doesn't mean the program doesn't need help.

While three fall food drives have filled the cupboard coffers the program still needs volunteers to act in a variety of ways. Once spring rolls around, the cupboard will be empty once again - and regular donations will be accepted.

HOW TO HELP: If you're interested in volunteering, or your school/business is interested in staging a food drive, call the church office at St. Peter's at 215-925-5968.