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How far does \$25 really go?

Six Syracuse nonprofits share what a \$25 donation really means to their cause.

by Ami Olson

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Wondering how much of an impact a donation of just \$25 could make for your favorite local charity?

Six charitable groups in Syracuse shared how far they could stretch a \$25 donation -- less than the cost of a tank of gas -- to feed, clothe or house the needy, educate the community, or preserve the history of the county.

Donations to all of the following organizations are tax deductible and stay within Syracuse and Onondaga County. If a website is noted for donations, the organization offers a secure online donation system.

Salvation Army

The Salvation Army provides early education programs, child and juvenile welfare and justice services, housing, transitional and emergency assistance for adults and youth, adult day programs, a youth camp and emergency disaster services, all in the Central New York area.

During last week's turkey drive, \$25 donated was doubled by an anonymous matching grant, said Greg Meitus, public relations and marketing manager of Salvation Army of the Syracuse Area.

At \$15 per turkey, one donor's \$25 commitment could provide almost three complete turkey dinners for three local families, Meitus said.

At the annual Christmas Bureau Distribution, a \$25 donation could purchase four movie tickets, one of the Christmas Bureau gifts specifically for teens.

"The older, 13- to 16-year-old kids are hard to shop for, they don't want stuffed animals and matchbox cars," said Meitus. The movie tickets, provided in pairs, are available for the second year at the Christmas Bureau event, held Wednesday Dec. 22 at the OnCenter.

To donate to the Salvation Army of the Syracuse Area, visit salvationarmy.org, mail a check to The Salvation Army of the Syracuse Area, 677 S. Salina St., Syracuse, NY, 13202 or call 479-1337.

Or drop your donation in one of the iconic Red Kettle Drive bell ringer's kettles throughout the county.

Food Bank of CNY

As if proof was needed of an increasing need, the Food Bank of Central New York recently transitioned to a new, larger warehouse space in Baldwinsville.

"We now distribute more than 11 million meals annually," said Ania Stilwell, public relations and marketing coordinator.

Stilwell said every one dollar donated creates two and a half meals, which are provided to soup kitchens, emergency shelters and food pantries throughout the 11-county coverage area.

"Twenty-five dollars would go a long way," Stilwell said.

Donation to the Food Bank can be made online at foodbankcny.org, by phone at 437-1899 or by check to Food Bank of Central New York, Attn: Tom Slater, 7066 Interstate Island Road, Syracuse, NY, 13209.

Rescue Mission

Best known for providing hot meals to those in need, the Rescue Mission also offers emergency shelter and long-term housing, clothing for all ages and employment resources in the Syracuse area, among other programs.

"A \$25 donation to the Rescue Mission would provide about 12 meals in our dining facility or one night of emergency shelter," said Paul LaDolce, communications director of the Syracuse and CNY Rescue Mission.

When it comes to feeding the hungry, every penny truly counts: LaDolce said in November of this year, the Rescue Mission served 5,219 more meals than in November 2009, with a 17 percent increase in women and children taking advantage of the Rescue Mission's hot meals.

"Our services are increasing in a very difficult economy that is also impacting the people who support us," LaDolce added.

To donate to the Rescue Mission of Syracuse and Central New York, visit rmsyr.org, call 472-6251 or mail checks to Rescue Mission, Dept. IN99, P.O. Box 11122, Syracuse, NY, 13218.

Vera House

In it's mission to end domestic and sexual abuse, Vera House provides a variety of resources including emergency shelter at confidential locations for women and children as well as men, rape crisis and sexual assault services, advocacy programs, and youth and community counseling and education programs.

Though donations help support all Vera House programs, Director of Communications and Special Events Chris Benton said a \$25 donation, for example, would provide one hour of therapeutic counseling for an individual in crisis, at no cost to the client.

To donate to Vera House visit verahouse.org, or send a check to 6181 Thompson Road, Suite 100, Syracuse, NY, 13206.

Meals on Wheels of Syracuse

Meals on Wheels can stretch a \$25 donation over 17 meals, said Katherine Lowe, community relations director of Meals on Wheels of Syracuse.

Each meal costs \$10.25, said Lowe, and while most of that cost is covered by government and other funding sources, there is still a \$1.50 shortfall per meal.

"So for us, \$25 equals 17 meals," she said.

Lowe said the local Meals on Wheels branch serves around 728 clients, or about 200,000 meals each year.

To donate to Meals on Wheels, visit meals.org/donations, mail your gift to Meals on Wheels of Syracuse, 300 Burt St., Syracuse, NY, 13202 or call 478-5948 ext. 205.

Onondaga Historical Association

While it may not relay the same sense of urgency as providing food or shelter for the needy, the Onondaga Historical Association is responsible for preserving the history of Onondaga County -- no small

task, and not one an inexpensive one, either.

Lynn Fallon, OHA development director, said a flat-out donation of \$25, or any amount, would likely go to the group's year-end appeal.

By becoming a member, available at different levels from \$25 to \$1,000 annually, donors can receive a discount at the museum store, access to the OHA research center, newsletters, discounts and early notifications for events and programs in return for helping support the OHA.

Fallon said the OHA recently unveiled an additional way to donate: new artifact adoption program. Six of the OHA's most recognizable artifacts -- the Heaphy's Tin Man and HARP, among them -- are now available for "adoption." A donation made in this form earns donors a certificate and description of the artifact, and the money goes toward preserving the museum's collection.

To donate to the OHA or become a member, visit cnyhistory.org or call 428-1864 ext. 314.