

### Holiday help requested

## Food bank looks to fill growing demand of needy

By Jennifer O'Clilka  
Senior Reporter

The Food Bank of Lincoln hopes to meet the growing demand of the city's needy with its Holiday Food Share drive this season.

Wende Baker, general manager of the food bank, said she hopes

“The needs in the community have gone up and up and we're hoping to keep pace with them.”

Baker  
food bank general manager

continue to meet the needs of the community.

Baker said the number of donations double during the Holiday Food Share drive because people are twice as charitable during the holiday season.

The drive will run from Nov. 28 to Dec. 22, with 28 retail grocery stores taking part.

People who want to donate can find donation bags in the Lincoln papers or pick them up at participating grocery stores, Baker said.

She said the food bank would like holiday food items for the drive and staple items for emergency assistance. Some staple items include beef stew, tuna, macaroni and cheese, pasta and rice and beans, Baker said.

Perishable items may be donated only at the food bank office at 4800 N. 57th St., from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Also as part of the drive, eight local food companies will donate 10 cents worth of food to the food bank for every item purchased, Baker said.

“Those items will have shelf tags in the store,” Baker said.

“The food share program will collect about 55,000 pounds of food, 5,000 more pounds than last year.”

“The needs in the community have gone up and up and we're hoping to keep pace with them,” Baker said.

The food share program began in the winter of 1985, she said. The response has been excellent, Baker said, but the food bank hopes to



Brian Shellito/Daily Nebraskan

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## Santa's magic alive in Lincoln through local groups' efforts

By Adeana Leftin  
Staff Reporter

*'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house, Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.*

*The stockings were hung by the chimney with care.*

*But on Christmas morning, those stockings were bare.*

Nothing. What had happened to Santa?

To keep the magic of Christmas alive, several groups in Lincoln are playing the part of Santa's little helpers to fulfill the sugarplum dreams of underprivileged children.

Santa Cop, a project of the Lincoln Police Union and the Lincoln Police Department, is now in its ninth year of providing toys to area children, according to Lincoln Police Lt. Joy Citta.

Citta said Santa Cop is financed by money earned year round by the union and the department. Toys also are donated to provide for the 2,600 to 3,000 children who participate in the project.

"All we're trying to do is be part of that magic," she said.

Citta said the primary focus of the project is on younger children, who don't understand that Santa is make-believe. They see their neighbors with new toys and they don't have any, she said.

"Santa doesn't do that," she said.

Citta said students or faculty could volunteer to shop for Santa Cop. She said the group will go on about three shopping sprees, and buy about 1,000 toys during each. The toys are stored in the department's training room.

"It literally looks like Santa's workshop down here," Citta said.

The Lincoln Action Program will provide gifts for between 1,500 and 2,500 children through Operation Santa, said Karla Palmer, a general outreach worker for the program.

Palmer said the Lincoln Action Program armory buys and wraps the gifts, which parents can pick up before Christmas to take home for their children.

She said the program has the hardest time getting presents for children under one year old and over 13 years.

"You get up to the teenagers who want jeans and make-up — that's a little more expensive," Palmer said.

Those wanting to volunteer to sort presents for Operation Santa should contact Barb Baier at the Lincoln Action Program, Palmer said.

Gwen Oldenettel, the resource distribution manager at the Peoples City Mission, said their Gift-Away Program has gotten so big that they can't fill the requests for gifts.

"We need presents," she said. "We're trying to stress practical presents like sweat shirts, underwear, socks, sweat pants and pajamas. We need lots and lots and lots of canned food."

Oldenettel said the mission is full of volunteers. "Basically what we need is the stuff to pass out when they get here," she said.

For 100 years, the Salvation Army has provided new and used toys for children, according to Capt. Joseph Wheeler, commanding officer of the Salvation Army in Lincoln.

"Young people and children are a very important part of our ministry," he said. "The Salvation Army is always interested in protecting our future."

Wheeler said the Salvation Army served 25 percent more people last year than in 1988.

"Many have said that without the help of the Army, they wouldn't have had a Christmas," Wheeler said. "We do count on the generosity of the Lincolnites during this time."

Volunteers are always wanted, and can help by ringing bells, sorting toys, taking applications to determine those families in need and delivering food baskets, he said.

Lea Ann Johnson, the interim project director of the Cedars Home for Children, said she thinks the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is already doing its part to help children over Christmas.

Support for Cedars is through UNL's Department of Human Development and the Family, Johnson said. Students in that department do their practicum at the home, and staff members also volunteer their time.

The home receives donations from a variety of community businesses, churches and families, she said. Clients can choose gifts for their children from these donations.

Although Johnson said she feels the Christmas gift project is important, she wishes the support around the holidays continued year round.

"They need food and clothing in June, just as much as they do in December," she said.