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Hearts open to help poor

But donations still lag after reports of great need

By MEG KISSINGER
of The Journal staff

Shirley Goril says she can't stand the thought of a child without a toy at Christmas. But a child without food during the holidays is truly unthinkable, she says.

So when Goril read on Sunday about several Milwaukee charities running low on toys, she set about shopping. On Tuesday, she dropped off a bundle of toys and food at the Pentecostal Church of God, 1224 W. Greenfield Ave., where the Rev. Jose Lopez was there to greet her with open arms.

"I just couldn't have a nice Christmas knowing there are children in need," said Goril, 64, who lives on the South Side.

Goril and dozens of others have responded to reports that some local charities have run out of clothing, toys and food to distribute to poor families here.

Contributions have picked up since the Journal story Sunday, but donations to many groups remain behind last year's totals and will not meet the increased demand, organization spokesmen say.

Col. Donald Arnold, of the Wisconsin chapter of the Salvation Army, reports that his organization is behind last year's total and just over halfway to meeting its goal of \$1 million by Jan. 1.

As of Tuesday morning, the Salvation Army had collected \$557,000, which is 55.7% of its goal. By Dec. 20 last year, the Salvation Army had collected \$561,664, which was 75% of its 1987 goal of \$750,000. Arnold said the charity raised its goal this year to meet the 25% increase in demand from 1987 to 1988. Demand rose 30% from 1986 to 1987, Arnold said.

The Salvation Army provides clothing, food, shelter and counseling to those families who are not served by welfare. Throughout the year, it serves an average of 1,200 to 1,400 families a month, Arnold said.

The Salvation Army also distributes toys to needy families, but the deadline for receiving toys has passed, Arnold said. However, the Salvation Army will still handle emergency cases, he said.

The Salvation Army's shelter for the homeless, at 1730 N. 7th St., has a capacity of 90 and has been averaging an occupancy rate of 97.8% this year, Arnold said. One-third of those staying at the shelter are children, Arnold said.

Those wishing to donate toys, food or clothing can drop them off at 4757 N. 76th St., Arnold said. However, the Salvation Army prefers donations of money, which may be mailed to that address, Arnold said. The ZIP code is 53218.

Corrine Miller, administrator at Gold Rule Church of God in Christ, 2430 W. Hopkins St., said donations of toys and clothing had increased since Sunday when hers and other charities were featured. By this time last year, the church had given Christmas gifts to 300 poor families. This year, the church has been able to serve about 200, Miller said.

Donations to Miller's church may be made at 2428 or 2432 W. Hopkins. For information, call 442-0490 or 442-0671. After 5 p.m., call 449-8758.

Miller said she was most touched by a woman who arrived at her church Monday with a big bag of toys and food.

"She told me that she was poor this year and couldn't afford a lot, but she wanted to give us something," Miller said. "That's the life of it. That's Christmas. I thank the Lord for people like that."

Adriane Hooker, administrative coordinator at the Northcott Neighborhood House, said the response to reports about the shortage of toys had been overwhelming.

The group now has plenty of clothing, but still can use toys, Hooker said. Contributions can be made at 2460 N. 6th St. The telephone number is 372-3770.