

MEMORANDUM

MENDING Poverty

JANUARY 2009 MEMO: Christmas Program Meeting Challenges

These trying economic times have provided additional challenges for MEND and the families it serves. MEND continues to meet these challenges through its many programs, including its Annual Christmas Program, which this year provided 1200 pre-screened families with holiday gifts. A special element of the Christmas Program is the "adoption" of the most needy families by community groups and other families. Adopted families receive new clothing, a household item, toys and food, all personally delivered by their adopters.



- **Meeting the Challenge:** This year, almost 5,700 low-income persons were assisted by the Annual Christmas Program, including 2,250 children and 219 "adopted" families.

- **Benefits to Both Needy Families and Volunteers:** On a cold December morning, CSUN graduate students Paula Fleischer and Karmen Agazaryon brought gifts, food, and cheer to a needy family in Sylmar. They, along with other students, professors, and staff, had worked tirelessly to raise funds to purchase items for their adopted family. The family received a much-needed microwave and a full set of pots and pans, and the youngest of the family received toys. Paula noted, "It was so meaningful to meet the Sotelo family and to see the tiny converted garage where they live."

The Sotelo family replied to the generosity of the sponsors with a gracious handwritten acknowledgement note: "Our family thanks you with all our heart for taking the time to help us out. To all the people who adopted us, thank you for your good hearts. May God bless you and repay you for each and every one of the things that you have given. My family receives these gifts gratefully; you have made our Christmas a very happy one. In the same manner, we wish you all a very Merry Christmas with health and much love. These are the wishes from our family to yours."

- **Continuing Services to Most Needy Families:** MEND CEO Marianne Haver Hill explains, "Adopted families will be re-visited in early 2009 by trained MEND Home Visiting Volunteers who will provide follow-up assistance, including referrals to MEND programs and other community services that could benefit the families, appointments with MEND's medical and dental clinics, counseling regarding MEND's job training and other empowerment programs and, if needed, providing extra food and clothing. Our commitment to our most needy families does not end with the holidays."

- **Volunteer Opportunity:** If you would like information on becoming a Home Visitor, please contact MEND's Client Intake Manager, Maria Salmeron, at 818-686-7325 or "maria@mendpovery.org."