

## Weber makes everyday Christmas with charitable foundation

By David Mancuso / MELROSE@CNC.COM Tuesday, December 24, 2002

It's about this time each year that millions of Americans -- surrounded by throngs of fellow shoppers, inundated by invitations to one celebration after the next, challenged to find the perfect gift for every soul we know - often pause, if only for the briefest of moments, in an attempt to resurrect the true spirit of the season. Yes, that little bell ringing in one's head this time of year is more than the Salvation Army's Santa, it's the conscience reminding all to take stock of their good fortune.

The holidays are a seasonal, social reminder that it is better to give than to receive and to remember that, no matter what our individual circumstances, it's likely that others are less fortunate.

This is particularly important this year, with the downturn in the economy. According to Leo P. Arnault, chair of the AAFRC Trust for Philanthropy, a nation-wide organization that surveys charitable giving in the U.S., "Research shows that giving is closely tied to the economy...In six of the eight recession years since 1971, charitable giving dropped by 1 to 5 percent."

Elizabeth Weber is one Melrosian who needs no seasonal reminder to give all she can to all who need. Weber, a 23-year Melrose resident, is the Founder and President of the Weber Foundation of Helping Hands, a Melrose-based, non-profit public charity dedicated to helping individuals and families in dire need due to life-threatening illness or other catastrophic situations.

Weber lives in Melrose with her husband, Bruce, and two children Bruce Adam, 19, now at college and Ashley, 16, a Melrose High School student.

Like many charities the season of giving for the Weber Foundation of Helping Hands, goes on 365 days a year.

What makes The Weber Foundation unique is to *whom* they give.

Unlike many of the charities currently appealing to the holiday spirit, The Weber Foundation specifically targets "those who have fallen through the cracks," in the words of Weber. "We focus on giving grants to people who have nowhere else to go," she said.

To date, the two-year-old foundation has given out more than 41 grants worth in excess of \$210,000 to people whose needs have ranged from organ transplants to support after losing everything in a fire. Weber points out that it is important to remember that even the largest charities do not always cover all the costs related to life-altering tragedy. According to Weber, "People seldom think about the other costs that can be related to and illness."

Occasionally the Weber Foundation will team up with larger charities such as the Dana Farber Cancer Institute to help people cover expenses not addressed by the limitations of the other charity's mandate or regulations.

Unlike St. Nick, The Weber Foundation does not make a "Good" and "Bad" list. "So far we have been able to fulfill every single request that we have received, that falls within our guidelines," said Weber, as confident as St. Nick about to start his journey to deliver toys to every child at all points on the globe.

To Weber, who started the foundation, as a way to give thanks for her own prosperity the idea of giving is personal. "This is my passion, I will do this the rest of my life," she said. "It is incredible to know that we have the ability to change lives."

Regardless of stretched credit-card limits or full calendars, Weber is quick to point out giving can take many forms at this, or anytime, of the year. "Everyone has something to give - time, talent - even those who may not feel they have everything they need," she added as a gentle reminder for everyone to ask the question, "How much is enough?"

As Weber suggests, foundations and charities like Weber's can always use volunteers as well as donations of cash or services. As the line from the holiday classic *It's a Wonderful Life* says, "One man's life touches so many others, when he's not there it leaves an awfully big hole."

Although based in Melrose, and despite having held a significant fundraiser at Mount Hood Golf Course, less than one-fifth of the Weber Foundation's volunteers come from within the city and Weber would like to see that change. "We would love to have more participation come from within the community," Weber said. And, there are many ways to do so. "We are beginning to plan our Spring Ball Event, and could use all the help we can get."

For more information on the Weber Foundation of Helping Hands, how to donate, volunteer or to learn more about the requirements to qualify for a grant, check out the Foundation's Web site at: [www.theweberfoundation.com](http://www.theweberfoundation.com) or call the organization directly at 781-662-1314.

**To donate** Make checks payable to: The Weber Foundation of Helping Hands, P.O. Box 863 Melrose, MA 02176

**Note: The foundation thanks the Melrose Free Press for their coverage of our activities. However, please note that the article incorrectly states the total grants given to date as \$210,000.00. The correct amount is \$125,820 and the total grants given to date is 40.**