



Why Give to Circle of Hope?

Circle of Hope is blessed with hundreds of supporters like you who donate clothing, linens, and toiletries that are delivered to the infants, children, women, and men who need it most. The amount of people that make *financial* donations to Circle of Hope is about 15% of our supporters. Recognizing that most people give what they can, others are unsure of why an organization that basically delivers gently worn clothing to homeless families and individuals, needs money. Here are a few reasons why.

The average age of a homeless person in the Boston area is 8. 2,000 of Boston's estimated 7,500 homeless are children. That's newborns to seniors in high school all who are growing. The teenager who needs jeans for school, the toddlers who need pajamas, the boys and girls who need socks, underwear, a coat. Many of these items are donated but we don't get nearly enough to accommodate the enormous and sadly, growing need.

Socks and Underwear. These are gently used garments we (understandably) don't accept. There are an estimated 7,500 homeless in Boston who have little or no means to obtain these items. Common infections such as athlete's foot thrive when damp socks are worn for days at a time. And with cold weather comes frostbite which could result in toe amputations.

Professional Services. You know the saying, "You have to spend money to make money." As a licensed non-profit organization, we must comply with a myriad of legal and financial rules, which requires professional assistance. And as we grow and pursue large grants, we must have all our t's crossed and i's dotted. Financial, legal, technological, marketing....Even though many of these are at least in part donated by generous professionals, we still cannot operate fully and consistently without soliciting certain services when we need them.

Shoes. Out of the 15 organizations that Circle of Hope supports, only a few of them will accept gently worn shoes. The others like Boston Healthcare for the Homeless can only accept new shoes. Sneakers are ideal in many cases. So we at Circle of Hope would like to buy shoes for those who need them.

Sustainability. Circle of Hope owes its success to the army of wonderful volunteers who fill our building every day, sorting donated clothing and preparing it for delivery to the shelters and programs we serve in Boston. To coordinate this effort and sustain it over the long run, however, we must maintain a small and dedicated paid staff.

Special requests. The way many of our weekly deliveries happen is a case worker will communicate with us the types of individuals who are now in that particular organization's care. A mother who has experienced domestic abuse with an infant and 3-year old. A refugee family from Haiti. A young woman who has no idea what her size is because she has never shopped for herself. From there, we thoughtfully collect items specifically for each person from the neatly sorted clothing supporters like you have donated to us. There are times that we just don't have what is required. So in that case we purchase heavily discounted items to complete the request.

Our building. We are grateful to Christ Episcopal Church for the generous use of the house on Rosemary Street where we collect clothing donations and sort them for delivery, but we all operate on tight budgets. We must pay the utility and insurance costs associated with running an operation out of 65 Rosemary.

Welcome Baby Bags. When a homeless baby is born at Boston Medical Center, Circle of Hope lets that mother know that someone cares by delivering a Welcome Baby Bag. The contents - a baby blanket, baby bottles, diaper cream, onesies, wipes, baby wash - are items that largely must be purchased.

What we can't get enough of. Approximately 80% of the donations received are for women size small, medium, and large. What we never have enough of is clothing for men, infants/toddlers, children, and plus sized women. So when we receive an urgent request for the items we don't have, off we go to the heavy discounters to purchase them.

The fastest growing population of homeless people is children under 5 years old. Boston's poverty rate on children under the age of 5 is rising, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. And Massachusetts ranks last in the nation on overall well-being for low-income children. Family and childhood poverty is known to affect children's health and educational outcomes. It also is evidenced in the growing rates of family homelessness and hunger issues.

Many homeless can't help themselves. If you are reading this, then you are probably NOT one of those people who thinks it wrong to support the homeless....the people who say, "Why don't they just get a job?" Says New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof, "It's true that some people in poverty do suffer in part because of irresponsible behavior, from abuse of narcotics to criminality to laziness at school or jobs. But remember also that many of today's poor are small children who have done nothing wrong." Did you know that 45% of food stamp recipients are actually children? In the same article Kristof quoted

philosopher John Rawls who noted, “we don’t know whether we’ll be born to an investment banker or a teenage mom, in a leafy suburb or a gang-ridden inner city, healthy or disabled, smart or struggling, privileged or disadvantaged.” We are blessed to be able to share with those who don’t have what they need.