

Human Services 2009

The Human Services Department provides financial assistance to Salem residents as defined by State Statute RSA 165. Eligibility is based on need and determined each time a formal request for assistance is made through the application process, based on guidelines adopted by the Salem Board of Selectmen. Assistance is provided through vouchers or directly to vendors for basic emergency needs such as food, fuel for heat, utilities, shelter costs, prescriptions (for life threatening conditions) and other necessities. Referrals to other resources, such as State and Federal Programs, food pantries, etc., are made before local tax dollars are utilized whenever possible.

Due to budget constraints the Human Service Department has slightly downsized from two full time employees to 2 part time employees who are keeping the hours of the Human Service Office from 8:30-3:30 Monday – Friday at the Mary Foss School on 287 Lawrence Road, Salem. Phone: 890-2130. The new director Kathleen Walton-DeAmato has numerous degrees in Paralegal studies, Psychology, Mediation as well as a Master's Degree in Human Service Administration from Springfield College and was hired in May 2008.

In 2009, the Town provided direct assistance to 70 families and 158 individuals who had insufficient income due to a job loss, an injury or disability. These Salem residents were assisted with vouchers for basic necessities such as: food, fuel, medical assistance (for the uninsured) and rent. This rental category consists of regular rent, emergency shelter costs, and eviction prevention money and in 2009 this number doubled from \$10,320 (2008) to \$20,422 (2009). Based on a total 2009 budget for Direct Assistance of \$100,426, it is estimated that \$40,104 has been spent to date. Also in 2009, the Human Services Department collected \$28,914 in reimbursements from past assistance provided to residents in need.

2009 has been a very busy year in the Human Services office with many positive things happening despite the downturn in the economy. Through a food donation from the Salem Kiwanis we were able to assist over 50 families with a complete Thanksgiving dinner. We also received a very generous donation of Market Basket gift cards from the Salem Contractors Association to assist additional families through the holiday season with food. In addition dozens of school children were supplied with back packs, notebooks and supplies for Back to School as well as privately donated gift cards for new school clothing. This Christmas over 162 families or 616 individuals were assisted through the Salem Christmas Fund with Christmas gifts and very generous food baskets which were distributed with a large cadre of community volunteers.

AARP in conjunction with the Human Service office conducts free Tax Preparation at the Kelly Library and last year our office signed up over 160 individuals who were able to have their taxes done for free.

There are too many volunteers who assist us in our service to the low income to mention by name but I would like to acknowledge and thank specifically the Rockingham Christian Church volunteers who came in on a weekend and refinished the 100+ year old floors in the hallway of the "Old Foss School". We also have many anonymous donors who call us and want to assist families in Salem so we are able to create those links....again a Win-Win for the Town of Salem.

A special thanks to all of those unsung benefactors who so generously donate to their Salem neighbors in need.

Kathleen R. Walton, Director of Human Services
Barbara Riley, Human Services Assistant