

The METROWEST DAILY NEWS



MetroWest Harvest Director Jeen Kniveton.
Daily News Staff Photo/Art Illman

Framingham: MetroWest Harvest seeks donations

By Danielle Ameden, Daily News Staff
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FRAMINGHAM - Jeen Kniveton is happy to drive across town to save a baked potato, her former boss once said. As director of MetroWest Harvest, she has worked for 20 years to solve the dilemma that needy people in the region are going hungry while good food goes to waste. She goes out with volunteers to "rescue" what area restaurants, grocers and other donors might otherwise throw in the trash.

But Kniveton is now in a pickle, struggling to meet a greater need, she says, while dealing with a budget shortfall and drop-off in donations. Kniveton said she's grateful for those who generously give now, including Framingham Baking Co., Wellesley College Club and The Verve, to name a few. The leftovers go directly to 14 homeless shelters in the region, she said.

"But there are so many restaurants in MetroWest and I've been unable to get them on board," Kniveton said. Kniveton said she is focused on signing up additional eateries, hotels, grocery stores and caterers who have anything to give.

"We're looking for financial contributions as well," said Heidi Eagles, director of resource development for the South Middlesex Opportunity Council. Eagles said the program just lost a large donor and is trying to make up \$5,000 in the current fiscal year's budget.

MetroWest Harvest now operates under SMOC, but it got its start 25 years ago as a volunteer project of Leadership MetroWest, Eagles said. Today it feeds perishable leftovers to 1,300 people a year in 14 area homeless shelters. It runs largely off of grant money from The 200 Foundation and funding from Project Bread and individual donors.

Kniveton said she has about a dozen volunteers, but with food donations down, "I don't have routes for all of them." With budgets tight, the donated food supplements what the shelters can afford to put on the table, Eagles said.

KFC, for one, gives every week, Kniveton said. "It's well over 100 pounds. They've been doing it for years," she said. "Some of these donors have been with us since the beginning."

But the program has lost others, she said. Sealtest used to donate ice cream from its now-closed Framingham manufacturing plant.

Food donors are protected against liability under the Good Samaritan Act, and they may be eligible for tax benefits, Kniveton said. And on the human side, Kniveton said the men, women and children at the shelters are so grateful when leftovers come in. "I'm going to go to heaven, I've had so many 'god blesses,'" she said. "It's a very rewarding job."

To donate money to MetroWest Harvest, visit www.smoc.org or mail checks to MetroWest Harvest, 300 Howard St., Framingham, MA 01702.

- See more at:

<http://www.metrowestdailynews.com/article/20140127/NEWS/140127000/1994/NEWS#sthash.mhLN9BkX.dpuf>