

Loveland family knows it can count on House of Neighborly Service

*By Pamela Dickman
Loveland Reporter-Herald*

Amee Mjelde is a full-time certified nursing assistant.

She spends her days caring for patients at Northern Colorado Rehab Hospital.

The single mother also cares for four children, juggles household tasks, makes sure her family has home-cooked meals, and spends time with family and friends.

She does it all — and does it with a smile.

But every once in a while, the Loveland woman needs help.

When she does, Mjelde turns to the House of Neighborly Service in Loveland.

“I try not to use them too much, but when I do, they’ve always been there,” she said.

“They’re a great resource. ... It just gets me by.”

Most months, Mjelde covers all her own bills, but once in a while, unexpected expenses come up and she can’t make the money stretch far enough.

During those times, the House of Neighborly Service has helped her with utility bills, prescriptions, food, clothing and Christmas.

Recently, a gap in insurance coverage left her paying \$270 per month in medical bills on top of insurance premiums.

Her 7-year-old daughter outgrew her school clothes just months after Mjelde bought them.

And the transmission went out in her car, leaving her to rely on friends and family until she can come up with the \$500 for repairs.

Mjelde turned to the House of Neighborly Service, and when the truly kind and compassionate staff couldn’t help out themselves, they found someone else that could, Mjelde said. They referred her to a county program that may be able to help with her transmission.

The House of Neighborly Service offers an array of services to residents in all different situations and has seen more and more clients since the recession hit.

Overall, the agency has helped 38 percent more people in the first nine months of 2009 over the previous year. Of that, the number of single parents receiving help increased 11 percent, children 8 percent, seniors 4 percent and homeless people 96 percent.

“More families are being evicted,” said Glorie Magrum, executive director of the nonprofit.

In fact, the number of emergency motel vouchers is up 269 percent this year.

With more people needing help in different ways due to the economy, extra donations from a holiday fundraising drive through the Empty Stocking Fund truly helps, Magrum said.

“Without it, there would probably be many people we’d have to deny services,” Magrum said. “We’d have to turn people away.”

The workers and volunteers try not to do that and, in addition to helping any way they can, refer clients to other community services.

“I don’t think people realize how much they can help,” said Mjelde. “People think it’s just for the homeless. It is there for them, but it’s made for everybody.

“It’s made for me, who once in a while has to go down there because I live paycheck to paycheck.”



Reporter-Herald/Steve Stoner

Ameer Mjelde and her daughter, Siera Cowher, 7, make garlic bread together while preparing dinner Tuesday at their home in southwest Loveland.

Empty Stocking Fund

What: The Northern Colorado Empty Stocking Fund is a holiday fundraising campaign that seeks donations to help area nonprofits assist residents in need. For every \$3 donated, the Colorado Springs-based El Pomar Foundation will match \$1.

Who: The agencies that will receive the money are the House of Neighborly Service, Catholic Charities Northern, Food Bank for Larimer County, Weld Food Bank, Crossroads Ministry of Estes Park, Connections for Independent Living and Greeley Transitional House.

How: Donations can be made by mail, phone or Internet. Donations will be accepted until Dec. 31.

Mail: Northern Colorado Empty Stocking Fund, P.O. Box 466, Fort Collins, CO 80522, or P.O. Box 534, Greeley, CO 80632.

Phone: 211 or 407-7066.

Online: www.nocoemptystocking.org.