

*Children in Poverty Initiative*  
American Baptist Churches USA

# Can You See Them?



By Thelma M. Lowthert

Look around your community... can you see the children in poverty?

I live in a rural college community in North Central Pennsylvania and my community and church have taken steps to recognize and help children in poverty. Your community may be completely different from mine, but think about how the following ideas might be adapted to work in your community as well.

**WOMEN'S SHELTER NEW SOCKS AND NEW UNDERWEAR DRIVE** – Every December, my church collects new socks and new underwear for women and children who fled domestic abuse situations. Women often leave abusive situations with only the clothes on their backs. In addition, diapers, formula and infant clothes are always in short supply also.

**TREEFEST** – Our local theater group sponsors an event every holiday season to benefit their organization, as well as local needy families. Local tree farmers donate evergreen trees. Local businesses sponsor a tree and groups decorate the trees. Beautifully decorated Christmas trees are on display for two weekends between Thanksgiving and Christmas with admissions and auction proceeds going to the theater company. All the decorated trees are given to local needy families on the first Sunday in December to take home and enjoy throughout the holiday season. Local shoe stores also catch the Christmas spirit by donating children's shoes, which are available to families when they come to pick up their trees!

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**LOCAL FOOD CUPBOARD** – A local community food cupboard in our area offers fresh, frozen and canned foods to community families. Local churches continually collect items, with many of our church family members also volunteering their time.

**COMMUNITY MEALS** – Every Saturday morning, between 60 and 75 people are served lunch at a local church. Community groups prepare the meal there or ahead of time. Volunteers sit and visit with those we serve, giving people an opportunity to share not only sustenance but fellowship and time with those in need.

**POTATO PATCH** – A local pastoral couple have a potato patch in their large backyard. Local groups of volunteers come every spring and plant potatoes, tend to the garden over the summer and harvest later on. The entire harvest is donated to our local food cupboard, allowing clients to enjoy fresh potatoes picked by loving hands.

**GLEANING** – Local farmers allow volunteers to come into their orchards and fields to glean whatever crops are left at the end of the growing season. Fruits and vegetables are then taken to the food cupboard for clients to enjoy!

**TAPESTRY OF HEALTH SUMMER FOOD PROGRAM** – Many children receive free and discounted lunches during the school year, but when summertime comes along, that noon-time meal may be missed. In my community, the local Kiwanis Club summer playgrounds and local YMCA summer camps have teamed up with a local elementary school to help provide lunches for our children and youth. Check out what can be done in your community to provide lunches over the summer.

Children in poverty... can you see them now?

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