

# Neighbors in Need drive starts Thanksgiving, online options added

By Andre Stepankowsky / The Daily News | Posted: Sunday, November 13, 2011 7:30 pm

Neighbors In Need is about to join the digital age.

The Daily News' annual effort to feed and help the needy during the holidays this year will accept donations online and through text messaging. In the past, donations only could be made by cutting out coupons in the newspaper and mailing donations in. That option will continue to be available.

The drive starts Thanksgiving Day and will continue through New Year's.

Other changes are afoot, too. All money collected this year will be distributed equally among three social service organizations: The Salvation Army, Vincent DePaul and Lower Columbia CAP. In the past, the Salvation Army was the only recipient, using the money to purchase holiday food vouchers for the needy.

"At a time when the community is in deep need, we're trying to broaden the appeal to drive more help to the people who need it ... and we're trying to make it easier to donate," said Daily News Publisher Rick Parrish.

First launched in 1987, Neighbors in Need has raised a total of \$932,000. This year's goal will be to push that to \$1 million, which would require about \$68,000 in donations. That would be the most ever collected in one year.

The record for donations was set last year, when a last-minute, \$2,500 matching offer by Mark and Theresa McCrady helped push donations to nearly \$57,000. The drive has averaged about \$38,900 in annual donations since its inception, but donations have been at least \$40,000 every year since 2001.

For administrative reasons, donors for now will not be able to target donations to any one of the three social service agencies Neighbors and Need will contribute to. However, that option may be available in future years, Parrish said.

The goal is to raise as much as possible for the needy, he said, noting that PUD energy rates have gone up, social service agencies are strapped and "some people won't be able to heat their homes this winter."

As in the past, every penny raised will be turned over to the charitable organizations.

Details about how to contribute electronically will be published on Thanksgiving Day when this year's drive gets under way.