

GREEN HOUSE EFFECT

Donors bestow 700 gifts on Lynn charity



ITEM PHOTO / THOR JOURGENSEN

Jackie McNeil and son Jaxson got a helping hand at Christmas.

By Thor Jourgenesen
ITEM STAFF

Christmas donors showered 500 gifts and 200 pieces of clothing on a Lynn family shelter's four dozen residents, including Jackie McNeil, a 24-year-old Boston native raising twin babies after a prolonged illness forced

her to move into the Green Street building in June.

"I was pregnant and extremely sick — I ended up losing my job and my apartment," she said.

McNeil packed up 2-month-old Jaxson and Joleigh last Tuesday for a family visit when Green House Program Director Danielle Rossewey asked her to wait a minute before she left for Boston.

"Danielle brought in this big bag of stuff," she said.

The bag contained soap, lotions, baby rattles, infants' clothes, diapers and other items McNeil needs to care for her children — all of it donated, Rossewey said, by people from Lynn and other communities interested in lending a

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helping hand at Christmas.

"I didn't expect all of this," McNeil said.

Rossewey credited General Electric employees, St. Mary's Church, St. George Greek Orthodox Church and local Girl Scouts — among many individual and organization donors — for helping Green House.

"It comes from so many

different locations. I pass a list out to anyone who will take it," Rossewey said.

Opened in April and operated by the Lynn Shelter Association, Green House is a temporary home for families referred for assistance by state Housing and Community Development workers. Rossewey said many residents formerly lived in hotels with their rooms paid for with state tax dollars.

Residents live for free in Green House and work

with a case manager and employees at other human service agencies to get jobs and take additional steps necessary to live on their own. Lynn Shelter receives state tax dollars to pay for Green House and other programs.

Most Green House residents are women with young children, but a grandmother caring for her grandchildren and a single father with children have lived in the house. McNeil lives in a small

room crowded with two beds and all the items necessary to care for two infants.

She worked in a call center signing people up for federal health insurance coverage before she got sick and lost her job. She is looking for work and has day care lined up if she can land one.

"At this point, it doesn't really matter, I need to make money," she said.

Rossewey thinks many Green House donors share her familiarity with hard times.

"They remember Christmas wondering if Santa would come with something for their kids," she said.

Thor Jourgensen may be reached at tjourgensen@itemlive.com.

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