



NEWS RELEASE From Mayor Dean DePiero

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PARMA CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS IN JULY

The dog days of summer, 2008 will signal the first-ever Christmas in July celebration by the city of Parma.

Mayor Dean DePiero is initiating a major food drive to benefit the Parma Hunger Center, officially ending with a special Christmas “sleigh” collection in Parma’s July 4th parade. Residents are being encouraged to bring non-perishable canned and boxed food items to the parade that can be handed to one of Santa’s helpers.

“We’re reminding folks all around northeast Ohio that hunger never takes a vacation,” says Mayor DePiero. “It’s a credit to all of us who help the Parma Hunger Center during the Christmas holidays. But the sad reality is that thousands of people are desperate and need our help year-round.”

Beginning in mid-June, food collection boxes donated by Allied Waste Services will be placed at Parmatown Mall, Parma/Parma Heights County Library Buildings, Parma fire stations, Parma City Hall, the Parma Justice Center, the Parma Senior Center, Parma Community General Hospital, the Parma YMCA on Ridge Road and the western campus of Cuyahoga Community College. A portion of food collected at Tri-C and the Parma Heights Library will be donated to the Parma Heights Food Pantry.

Residents can also drop-off non-perishable boxed or canned food items at the Parma Hunger Center, 5280 Broadview Road. It is operated by an all-volunteer staff at Parma Lutheran Church, serving residents in Parma, Parma Heights, Brooklyn Heights and Seven Hills.

Food distributed by the Parma Hunger Center is obtained through cash and food donations and the Cleveland Foodbank. Foodbank Executive Director Anne Goodman says the demand at more than 450 regional hunger centers outweighs the supply in its six county coverage area.

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“Last year, the Foodbank distributed more than 20 million pounds of food,” says Goodman. “Thanks to Parma residents and countless northeast Ohio donors, we had enough food to serve more than 15 million meals to hungry individuals in our community. That is great, but the need is even greater.”

Christmas in July will assist area residents who many times have nowhere else to turn for help. The Parma Hunger Center distributes food on Tuesday afternoon and Friday morning. Organizers say additional helpers are always welcome, especially bi-lingual volunteers.

“This food drive by the city is a fantastic idea and couldn’t have come at a better time,” says co-director Arch Stevenson. “Our donations always drop during the summer months, but our need has never been greater. It seems like residents everywhere have to make hard choices when deciding between eating or paying their mortgage or utility bills.”

Organizers say The Parma Hunger Center’s total distribution has been increasing by about ten percent every year. Last year, 2,500 families were served, representing more than 8,000 people.

“Our effort won’t solve this national crisis,” says Mayor DePiero. “What we’re doing is pulling together as a community to lend a hand. It’s the least we can do for our neighbors in need.”

The Parma Hunger Center has been serving the area for nearly forty years. For more information on assistance criteria, call the Parma Hunger Center at 216-351-6376.

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