

Loaves and Fishes finds a home

By DAVID PACINI

Food Banks

REGISTER-PAJARONIAN STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — This holiday season, Loaves and Fishes collected and distributed 700 boxes of holiday meals and thousands of toys to local needy families.

Now the charitable organization is hoping the community's generosity will help it fill its biggest need — moving into a home of its own by the end of February.

"The community was very generous this year and that's always nice to see," said the group's vice-chairwoman, Annette Baldwin. "Valley Churches United gave us a lot of toys, which we were very grateful for. It's nice when the community will support what you know there is a need for."

Baldwin said the group — which has operated out of a space at St. Patrick's Church for years — bought a house on Second Street because the church needs its space back.

"We found a house we could afford," Baldwin said, that turned out to be a fixer-upper. "We've run into a lot of problems we've been able to overcome so far, but then we found out the foundation had to be redone, which we hadn't anticipated. We're pouring the new foundation today."

Baldwin said the generosity of St. Patrick's and Dick Solaris has allowed the group to move along on the project, but that the \$23,000 cost of the new foundation means the group will need to start a major

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fundraising campaign to finish the project, estimated at about \$100,000.

When the house is fully remodeled, volunteers will serve meals and provide other services there.

Those services will include diabetes screening — Latinos suffer higher rates of the disease than other groups — and cooking classes.

"We'll be doing everything that we're currently doing now," Baldwin said. "We'll have classes on ways to cook healthier and other classes to help people learn to help themselves."

Donations of office equipment, especially a copy machine, are also welcome at the agency. The group's current copy machine is on its last legs, Baldwin said.

Anyone wishing to donate to Loaves and Fishes may call 722-4144.



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian
Santana Martinez (right) of Loaves and Fishes greets Nick Mara-Biggs in Pajaro during the Loaves and Fishes Christmas distribution.