



Gifts of Love



ANNUAL REPORT

20
24

*“No other program has treated me this nicely.
I don’t feel looked down upon when I’m here.”*

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Mission Statement

*The mission of **Gifts of Love** is to help meet the basic needs of individuals and families in the Greater Hartford area experiencing a short-term financial crisis so they can return to self-sufficiency.*



About Gifts of Love

Founded in 1989, Gifts of Love is devoted to the needs of the community and responds to the needs of individuals and families who have been impacted by a financial crisis through the distribution of food, clothing and household necessities, empowering them towards a path to self-sufficiency.

The organization primarily serves people facing a financial crisis due to reduced work hours, illness, divorce, death of a spouse/mate, exiting an abusive relationship, or a significant unexpected increase in expenses.

By helping clients meet their most basic needs through food, clothing, housewares and energy assistance through Operation Fuel, clients are able to divert their income to other necessities such as rent/mortgage, debt reduction, and medications/medical bills and regain their financial independence.

Your donations directly impact people in need in the community in which YOU live.

***“Thank you so much for ALL your generosity.
During these hard times not too many people give
their time to others, but people like you make the world go round.
Thank you is not enough for what you do.” - S.M.***





Our President, Mr. A. Robert Wong

Dear friends and supporters,

As Gifts of Love marks its 35th anniversary, I am truly amazed by the profound impact this organization has made since its inception in 1989. In 2024, Gifts of Love reached 5,486 clients and a testament to the incredible growth and reach of our mission.

In recent years, we've honed our focus on essential programs, allowing us to serve more clients in the greater Hartford area. At the same time, we've seen an increasing demand as families grapple with inflation, rising energy costs, and a host of other challenges. We anticipate a significant rise in the need for our services in 2025.

Looking ahead to the next 35 years, we are grateful to be part of a community that is always willing to lend a hand to those in need. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the many individuals, businesses, and organizations whose ongoing support makes Gifts of Love possible year after year.

This incredible work wouldn't be possible without the unwavering dedication of our partners, volunteers, donors, and staff. We are excited to share this report with you, a reflection of their invaluable contributions.

Warm regards,
Robert Wong





New Executive Director for 2025 *Laura V. Marchese*

Dear fellow supporters,

I am excited to begin my next chapter as the new Executive Director of Gifts of Love. During these challenging times, my top priority is ensuring we remain true to our mission: supporting neighbors in financial crisis so they can lead healthy, productive lives.

The compassion and dedication shown by our volunteers, board members, and staff are truly inspiring. Their commitment strengthens our community and brings real hope to those in need.

I invite you to take a few moments to read our Annual Report. A heartfelt thank you goes out to our generous donors—your support makes our work possible. Together, we truly can make a lasting difference in our community.

Warm regards,
Laura V. Marchese

“I didn’t have to sacrifice earning my nursing degree to make ends meet. As a newly single mother, gifts of love’s support enabled me to continue to build a future for my family.”



“Being able to make choices about what we need on my visits - it’s like being at a store. I don’t have money to shop for these things. Having choices makes me feel more human...”



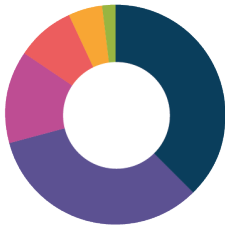
Who are our Clients?

- A mixture of single and two-parent households, senior citizens, college students, and individuals who come to us directly or through referrals from other agencies.
- Often, our clients are part of an overlooked population who are above the federal poverty level and, therefore, not eligible for many supplemental programs.

2024 Demographics

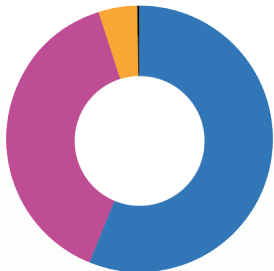
TOTAL HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

● Children aged 0-11	1,107 – 33%
● Youth aged 12-17	461 – 14%
● Young Adults aged 18-24	289 – 9%
● Adults aged 25-64	1,264 – 38%
● Adults aged 65+	166 – 5%
● Unknown	59 – 1%



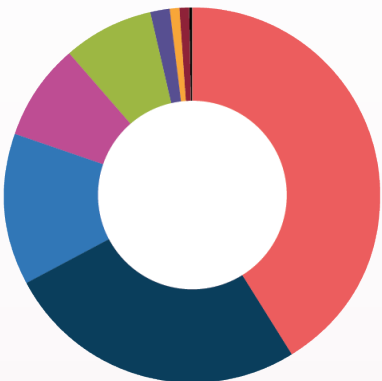
HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS BY GENDER

● Female	1,879 – 56%
● Male	1,305 – 39%
● Nonbinary	8 – <1%
● Unknown	154 – 5%



HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS BY ETHNICITY

● Latino/Hispanic	1382 – 41%
● African American/West Indian	869 – 26%
● Caucasian	444 – 13%
● Multi-racial	275 – 8%
● Unknown	256 – 8%
● Asian/Pacific Islander	58 – 2%
● Other	34 – 1%
● Middle Eastern	19 – <1%
● Native American	9 – <1%



HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS BY EDUCATION LEVEL (OVER 18)

● College or college degree	195
● High school diploma or GED	452
● Some high school	127
● Unknown	102
● Other	184



Our Programs

THE CLOTHING PANTRY offers gently used clothing donated by members of our surrounding communities. From winter coats to bathing suits, we change our Clothing Pantry to reflect the seasons. During their monthly visits, our clients may select items for all members of their households. For the “newest” members of our client families, we supply diapers, receiving blankets, crib bedding and baby bottles, as well as baby equipment such as strollers, high chairs and car seats.

THE HOME GOODS PANTRY is stocked with new and used household items. Pots and pans, bedding and bath towels, small appliances and wall décor are among the items our clients can choose from. Selections from our Home Goods pantry help our clients make their houses and apartments feel like home.

FOOD PANTRY

“Choice” is what makes our Food Pantry unique from other food pantries. Our clients shop as they would in a grocery store and choose the items they prefer. We offer staples such as canned goods and boxed cereals as well as fresh produce, meats, dairy products, and toiletries. Connecticut Foodshare, the “retail rescue” program, and generous donations from various churches, schools and families all contribute to the success of our Food Pantry, keeping the shelves stocked and our refrigerators and freezers full.

*“I was so grateful for the support I received.
It’s more than just food or clothing—it’s knowing that someone
sees you and is there to help in your time of need.”*



RETAIL RESCUE

Food Banks work with local retailers to connect them with member agencies, such as Gifts of Love, and turn food that would otherwise be considered “food waste” into food donations. “Food Waste” is unsold but good food, still safe for consumption, that is thrown away by the food industry. A few examples of Food Waste are products past their “best-by date”, oddly shaped or bruised fruits and vegetables, dented canned goods, or simply an excess of items received in an order.

STUDENT WEEKEND BACKPACKS

Did you know that many school-aged children go hungry on the weekends? Thanks to a small contingency of volunteers and our generous donors, approximately 350 backpacks are filled with food items every week and distributed to 32 local schools for children to bring home to their families for the weekends. These backpacks bridge the gap between school and home and eating or not eating.

BACK-TO-SCHOOL BACKPACKS

Every August, we offer our client families backpacks filled with school supplies, tailored to the various age groups from kindergarten through high school. This program helps give the children of our client families a fresh start to the school year.

About
350
students receive our
backpacks filled with
food each week.

“There are several students whose eyes light up when they see the bags or they ask me daily how many days until Friday.” - School Nurse

MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTION

This non-qualified food distribution is hosted by Foodshare every other Tuesday at Farmington Valley American Muslim center on Harris Road in Avon. Foodshare brings their truck, and GOL distributes what's available. We serve between 85 and 100 people at each event. Each person leaves with about 200 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables, bread, frozen meat, and dairy.

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

Generally every Friday, Gifts of Love distributes overage from the Avon office that won't make it through the weekend to local subsidized housing facilities in the area. Places include Maple Glen, Whispering Pines, 21 Dowd, Peachtree, Soromundi Commons (YWCA), Virginia Connolly Residence, Salvation Army, and a Torrington soup kitchen. In 2024, we "shared" over 6,000 lbs. of food that would otherwise have gone to waste.

OPERATION FUEL

Operation Fuel provides emergency assistance to Connecticut residents struggling to pay energy and utility bills, and advocates for energy affordability. Gifts of Love administers the CT Operation Fuel program for Farmington Valley residents. Each year, we receive an "allowance" from the State that can be distributed to our clients between December and May. In 2024, we received an allowance of \$29,500, and we were able to assist 59 families during the cold weather months, a 23% increase over 2023.

"I can't express how much it meant to receive food and clothes from Gifts of Love. It was such a relief to know my family had what we needed to get through the month."

COMMODITY SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM (CSFP)

CSFP is a monthly food program for our senior population, aged 62 and older. Foodshare delivers 38 boxes of food to the GOL Avon office. Each box consists of canned fruits, vegetables, proteins, cereal, pasta, sauces, juices, and shelf-stable milk (approximately 36 pounds). Clients pick up their boxes at the Avon office, and we deliver some to the Virginia Connolly Residence in Simsbury.



“Gifts of Love helped us with more than just food; they gave us a sense of security and hope. I’m so thankful for their support in our time of need.”

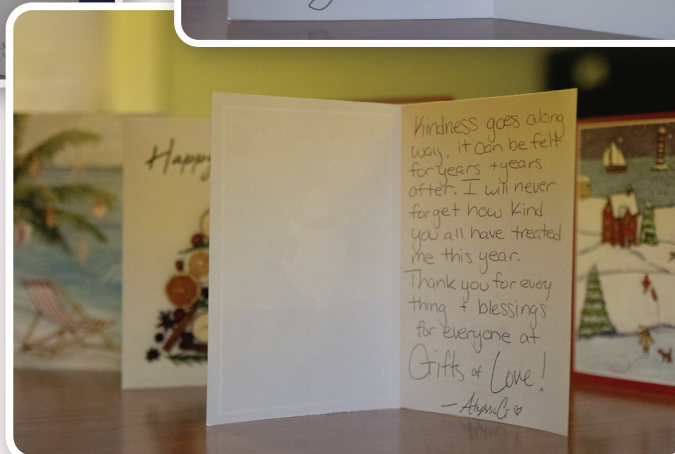
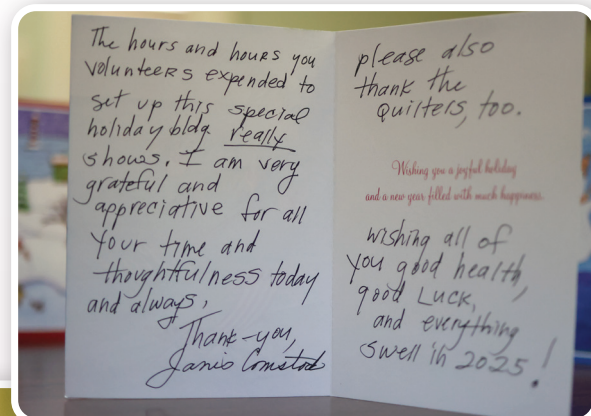
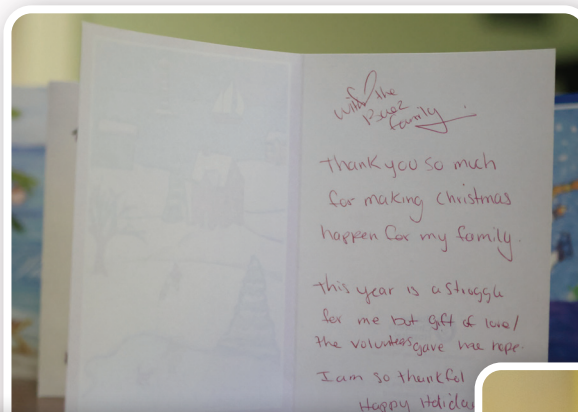
Holidays

HOLIDAY PROGRAMS

The holidays can be an exciting and fun time of year, but, for many, the holiday only adds further financial stress at a time when it is already difficult to make ends meet. Gifts of Love tries to ease this burden with the help of our holiday programs.

Every November, our client families receive a turkey and all the food necessary to make a traditional Thanksgiving dinner.

In December, we open our “holiday shop”, decorated and filled with brand new merchandise that is generously donated by local families, schools, places of worship, local businesses and corporations. Our holiday shop offers a chance for our clients to do a little holiday shopping for their family members free of charge.



Gifts of Love

Fall Fundraiser

October 25, 2024

On October 25, Gifts of Love celebrated its 35th anniversary at “Club 35” our fall fundraiser. The event drew over 100 supporters who arrived at our “speakeasy” in their best Prohibition-era attire. Proceeds from our events support our mission of “neighbors helping neighbors.”

Through our food pantries, backpack program, energy assistance program, and clothing and housewares pantries, the support of our community events gives local individuals and families a compassionate “hand up” to help them get back on their feet.



Photo credit: Connecticut Headshots

Gifts of Love

Charity Golf Tournament

May 20, 2024

The 2024 Gifts of Love Charity Golf Tournament was a huge success, once again, raising vital funds for our basic needs programs!

On May 20, it was a picture-perfect day for friendly competition, exciting auctions, and prizes, and the kind hospitality of the Golf Club of Avon. Plan to join us for our 6th annual tournament on May 19, 2025!





2024 Financial Report

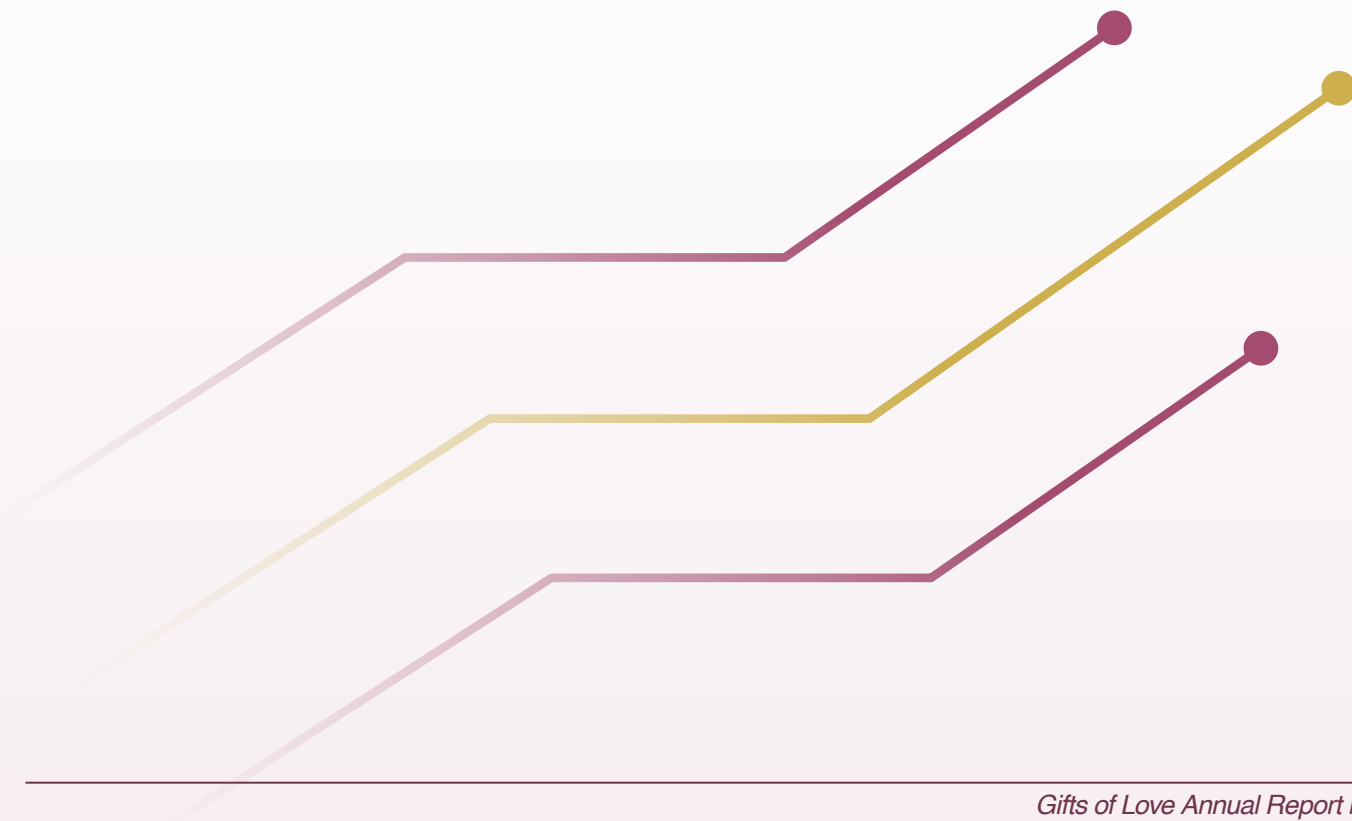
*Gifts of Live is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
Our tax identification number is 06-1309318.*

Making your dollars work for struggling neighbors.

Our donors' generous financial contributions make it possible for us to provide food, clothing, housewares, toiletries and other basic needs to local individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet.

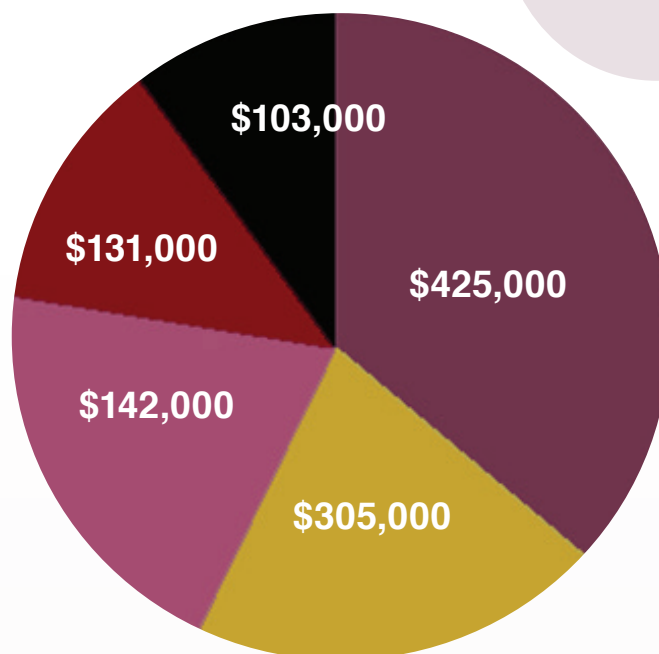
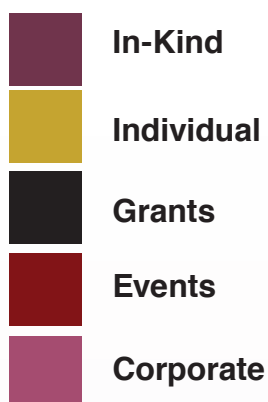
The following charts show our donation revenue and expenditures for fiscal year 2024.

We simply could not accomplish our strategic mission without the generous support of businesses, organizations, foundations and individuals who recognize the importance of basic needs assistance for greater Hartford's most vulnerable citizens.



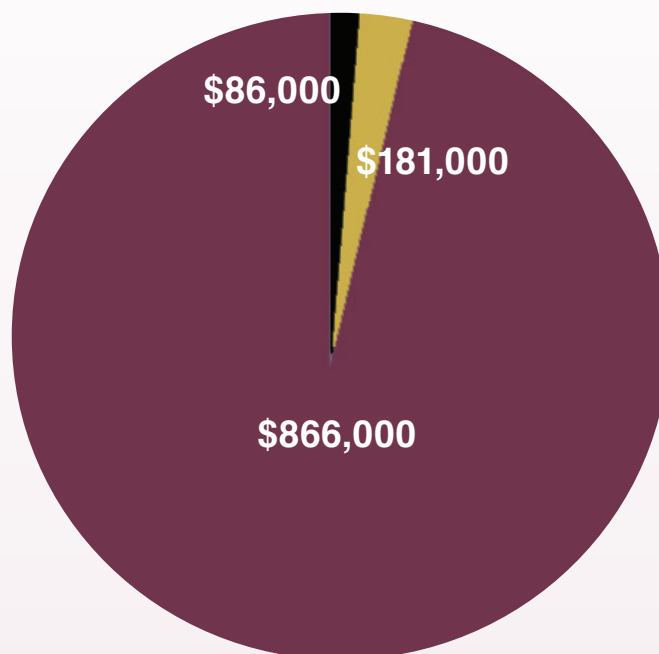
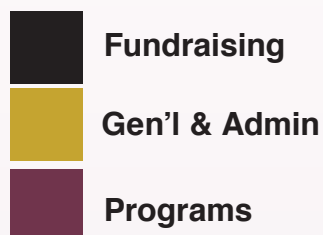
2024 TOTAL REVENUE

\$1,106,000



2024 TOTAL EXPENSES

\$1,133,000



Gifts of Love Staff

Meet the team that makes the Magic happen.

Gifts of love delivers life-changing services to the individuals and families we serve because of our incredible staff. Their tremendous efforts and contributions behind the scenes aren't often recognized or celebrated, but we couldn't do the work we do without them.



Laura V. Marchese
Executive Director



Nancy Carlson
Volunteer and
Outreach Manager



Michael Olivieri
Food Programs Manager



Kiyana Riddick
Hartford Office Manager



Biana Clark
Donor Administrator



**Ingrid Kania,
MPH MAT**
Volunteer Manager

Gifts of Love 2024 Board Members

Thank you so much to our dedicated and
compassionate Board of Directors.



Robert Wong
President



Sean Riley
Treasurer



Lydia Tedone
Secretary



Jaime Hegarty
Board Member



Cheryl Chester
Board Member



Joan Kemler
Board Member



Nestor Leon
Board Member



Vaughn Robbins
Board Member



Our Volunteers

The more than 200 volunteers who give over 12,000 hours annually of their time in support of our mission perform a large range of jobs, including clerical work, client interaction, donation sorting, and food pantry tasks. The VolunTEEN program gives local teens the opportunity to get involved and complete service hours often required by their schools. They volunteer evenings and weekends as their schedules allow.

We are so grateful for our volunteers who gave of their time in 2024.

Sweta Agrawal	Diane Bruzik	Matthew James Cormier	Jack Fallon
Catherine Alessi	Mark Bruzik	James Crawford	Jenny Gaffney
Zoe Allen	Terri Buganski	Brian Cuddeback	Marco Antonio Galafassi
Jennifer Ames	Amy Buonocore	Jennifer Cuddeback	Megan Lewis Gallant
Cathy Arciero	Declan Byrne	Victoria D'Amato	Donna Gianini
Grace Asmar	Kerry Caffrey	Sharon Davies	Lisa Giarratana
Maryellen Bailey	Alice Cao	Seth Dayton	Ricky Glynn
Stephanie Banasiak	Kathleen Chambers	Paxton Deeley	Grace Grano
Cole Barnhart	Sally Chen	Lauren Denges	Justin Grant
Lana Bell	Cheryl Chester	Dorothy Dew	Sara Griffin
Linda Biggs	Theresa Cauller Chester	Colleen Donahue	Amy Grossberg
Robert Boiano	Julia Grace Christolini	Pierce Doran	Owen Grossman
Isabela Bolio	Kathryn Christolini	Allie Dowd	Ryan Grzyb
Amy Borg	Harper Clancy	Grayson Ellis	Catherine Gutterman
Diane Boyce	Jessica Clancy	Cheryl England	Heidi Hagan
MaryEllen Bradley	Sadie Clancy	Martins Lucas Enxuto	William Hamblen
Susan Bradley	Steve Clancy	Gabrielle Essex	Megan Haryasz
Nancy Rose Breznicky	Sullivan Clancy	Susan Falkner	Shaddad Hayajneh

Cassidy Hazel
Jaime Hegarty
Kathryn Hegarty
Olivia Marie Heslin
Martina Hicks
Quinn Higgins
Charlotte Hillyard
Kevin Hogan
Louisa Hogan
Jane Holahan
Megha Holani
Lisa Holden
Brooke Horozy
Alisha Hussein
Diane Ibanez
Rodolfo Ibanez
Roland Ivan
Ralph Jean Marie
Mary Joerg
Debra Johnson
Linda Johnston
Neal Kasala
Luisa Kash
Eknoor Kaur
Dylan Keon
Andrew Kessler
Julia Knorr
Olivia Knorr
Patrick Knorr
Patricia Kovalski
Elke Kulas
Katherine Lahti
Margery Lawrence
Joan Lazar-Kemler
Ivelisse Lebron
Ruth Lewis
Eric Li
Jenessa Licki
Bridget Welch Lincoln
Quennie Llera

Allie Loveless
Jolene Ann Madison
Kathleen Maglia
Janice Malyak
Maureen Mancini
Rose Mancini
Betty Ann Martin
Julia McCamish
Amina Meghrouh
Neda Meghrouh
Deborah Micheller
Greg Midwinter
Linda Midwinter
Simon Miller
Kristin Minnich
Telma Molina
Antonette Molson
Michael Monaco
Parker James Moody
Ashley Morello
Gregory Moreno
Max Mutarelli
Kavita Nigam
Sarah Northgraves
Paul Nyklicek
Gerald O'Dea
Jennifer O'Dea
Martha O'Leary
Allison Olivieri
Dianne Orenstein
Christine Oswick
Elizabeth Ouellette
Katherine Overbye
Rebecca Pardoe
Giana Park
Sasha Frances Pascal
Vraj Patel
Ayan Patney
Linda Patten
Anne Phelan

Flora Pretashi
Beth Prevo
Donna Pritchard
Jeanette Pulley
Norma Purcell
Alexa Querim
Carly Anya Rabinovitch
Rachel Ramenda
Carolyn Raymond
Olivia Taylor Reynolds
Lisa Rieman
Brenna Riordan
Adrian Rodriguez
Madeline Rudy
Inaki Ruiz
Joseph Russo
Paula Ryan
Abigail Sabadosa
Morgan Sabadosa
Jessica Sabbagh
Stephen Sainato
Gladys Santos
Achintya Saxena
Sarah Schlegel
Donna Schneider
Toni Schnur
Isabella Schwarz
Lexi Schweitzer
Sierra Scott
Kathleen Service
Julia Seymour
Connor Shaw
Nathan Shaw
Ava Shiman
Carol Sicilian
Colin Sidlosky
Jacob Sidlosky
Cynthia Simms
Caroline Kelly Sisk
Meghan Theresa Sisk

Ashlyn Sklenka
Betsy Smith
Cara Andea Smith
Mercer Smith
Charlotte Sohn
Trina Stehlik
Finola Stenson
Linda Stevenson
Lisa Stevenson
Yegu Subbiah
Diane Tatelman
Timothy Thomson
Jose Torres
Joann Uribe
Luz Valencia
Betsy Van Loon
Peter Van Loon
Marjorie VanDusen
Randi Ann VanSack
Eugenio Vazquez
Joanne Verde
Jessica Vicente
Laura Vickery
William Viggiano
David Allen Wadhams
Ashley Wasilonsky
Judith Weingarden
Katrina Welch
Carol Welk
Katelyn Westerberg
Erin White
Max Wolinetz
Ruth Woodford
Susan Wurz
Timothy Wynne
Debra York
Hong Xing Zheng
Ryan Zheng

***“Thank you for all you do to bring hope and
happiness to the families in this community!” - M.E.***



Ways to Donate

By making a donation, you will have the opportunity to see your generosity in action and may receive a federal income tax charitable deduction when you itemize.



Donate online:

GiftsofloveCT.org Click on “Donate Now”



Donate by Mail:

Mail a check to:
Gifts of Love
34 East Main Street, Avon CT, 06001



Donate by phone:

Give us a call: (860) 676-2323



Ask your employer to match your gift:

Many employers match dollar-for-dollar the charitable gifts their employees make - some will double, or even triple-match an employee's donation, which is a great way to maximize your ability to contribute to Gifts of Love.



Payroll deductions:

Many companies offer an employee giving program in their workplace.



Donor Advised Funds (DAF):

A donor-advised fund is a type of charitable savings account. When you fund the account, you receive an immediate tax deduction, and then recommend grants to an eligible charity, such as Gifts of Love.



Brokerage and Investment Accounts:

When you donate appreciated securities or mutual funds that you have held for more than one year to an eligible charity, you can reduce or even eliminate federal capital gains taxes on the transfer.



Retirement Accounts:

Once you reach age 70½, you can donate to Gifts of Love from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) any amount up to a maximum of \$100,000 per year.



Leave a Bequest:

By naming Gifts of Love in your will, you'll be able to perpetuate the values you've expressed during your lifetime and ensure that Gifts of Love is able to serve many generations to come.

Gifts of Love offers this information to provide general gift, estate and financial planning information. It is not intended as legal, accounting, tax or other advice. For assistance in planning charitable gifts, the services of appropriate advisors should be consulted to determine tax and legal implications. Always consult an attorney if your plans require the revision of a will or other legal document.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.



Notes

Lined area for notes.



Gifts of Love

34 East Main Street, Avon, CT 06001

860-676-2323

235 Scarborough Street, Hartford, CT 06105

860-206-0045

Please call for office hours.
We are also open for client services by appointment.
Donations of food, clothing, and basic need items
are accepted during regular business hours

Established 1989

giftsoflovet.org



www.facebook.com/giftsoflovet



www.instagram.com/giftsoflovet_ct