

Levine-Sklut foundation aids hungry with challenge grant

By Mark Price

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For the second winter in a row, the Levine-Sklut Family Foundation is offering to match up to \$25,000 donated to Loaves & Fishes, Mecklenburg County's chief source of food for needy families.

The offer comes at a time when the chain of pantries has seen a 29 percent increase in the amount of money spent to buy food, said Beverly Howard, director of Loaves & Fishes.

A similar challenge grant issued last year by the Levine-Sklut foundation hit its \$50,000 goal. If successful this year, the \$50,000 would provide 128,205 meals for the hungry in Mecklenburg County. That's enough to feed 6,105 people for a week, officials said.

Winter months are often the most demanding for the county's hungry, Howard said, noting low-income families sometimes face hard decisions between whether to pay for heat or food.

The agency expects to end the year by helping 80,000 people.

A recent sample survey of 893 clients helped by the agency showed 67 percent were hungry at some point in the past year but didn't eat because there wasn't enough food in the house.

One-third of those surveyed had been looking for work and just over a quarter were disabled. The average monthly income for households served in the program is \$983.77 for three people, the agency said.

The Levine-Sklut foundation is operated by Lori Levine Sklut, daughter of Family Dollar Stores founder Leon Levine, and Eric Sklut, owner of the automotive parts business Perfection Automotive.

The foundation offers up to 30 grants a year around the world to causes, including Jewish institutions and arts organizations. The offer to match local donations to Loaves & Fishes runs through Feb. 28.

To donate: Send a check to Loaves & Fishes, 648B Griffith Road, Charlotte, NC 28217. Details: 704-523-4333 or visit www.loavesandfishes.org and click on "donate."

Price: 704-358-5245

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