

## Walker Wishes Holiday Program Most Successful Yet *Thousands of toys donated for children in Walker's programs*



*Member of the Dover Brownies wrap holiday presents for the children and youth served by Walker's academic and therapy programs*

Needham, MA -- Walker, a non-profit leader in special education, behavioral health, and residential treatment for children and families, announced the success of the 2015 Walker Wishes Holiday Program, supporting the children and youth who spend their holidays and celebrations at Walker.

“Too often children arrive at Walker in their darkest days, not having a family or not knowing what family they will have to grow up with,” said Susan M. Getman, MSW, President and CEO of Walker. “More than a third of the children in Walker’s residential treatment programs don’t have families that they can return to following their stay. As we reflect and gather with friends and family for the holidays, it is important to remember that many have no ties to a permanent family at all.”

The *Walker Wishes* Holiday Program helps to spread cheer and bring comforts of home to the children and youth in need of support throughout Walker's therapeutic and academic programs. The Holiday Program consists of a toy drive, holiday card sales, and volunteer opportunities throughout the season. The toy drive provides toys for children and youth spending their seasonal holidays at Walker, as well replenishing toys and educational games for the residences and schools where children live and learn.

"For more than 25 years, the *Walker Wishes* Holiday Program has been helping to bring joy and hope to the children and youth at Walker," said Daniel Gorton, MSW, Walker alumnus and member of Walker's Board of Directors. "Supporters of the Holiday Program and Walker staff contribute to fostering essential childhood moments of play, learning, and building strengths. During what can oftentimes be a challenging time of the year, Walker works throughout the holidays to ensure that children can delight in the expected experiences of the holiday season."



*Volunteers from the Needham Women's Club wrap holiday presents for the children and youth served by Walker's academic and therapy programs*

With the generous support of corporate partners, community groups, individuals, and families, the 2015 *Walker Wishes* Holiday Program was the most successful in the event's 25-year history. More than 600 individuals donated over 2,400 toys, purchased holiday cards, and volunteered at toy-sorting and gift-wrapping events to help bring cheer and the magic of the holidays to Walker's Needham campus, where some children and youth in the Residential Program spend their holidays and celebrations.

"We are overwhelmed by the continued support of individuals and organizations who dedicated their time, energy and holiday cheer for the children and youth served by Walkers programs," said Sarah Whalen, Donor Relations and Volunteer Manager at Walker. "More than 60 volunteers donated nearly 160 hours to organize, sort, and wrap unique gifts from puzzles, stuffed-animals, and sports equipment to science kits, building blocks and more. Thanks to those committed individuals, the children and youth who spend their holidays at Walker feel the magic of the season."

Walker is proud to have the continued support of many local Needham, Boston and MetroWest companies that have shown their support for Walker by participating in the toy drive, by hosting pick-up locations and/or donating toys. These companies include: Bank of America, Beaver Brook Step Inc., Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital–Needham, Bowdoin Construction, Brookline Bank, Carter Center for Children, Club Ex Fitness & Nutrition, Devaney Energy, Dover Cub Scouts, Dover Brownie Troop, The Exchange Club of Needham, Expressions After School, Inc., Fitness Together, Intex Solutions, Newton Centre, Ginsburg Leshin Gibbs & Jones, LLP, The Home Depot, Intuit QuickBase, Koko FitClub Needham, Limelight Networks, Louise Condon Realty, Nobles, North American Management, Operation Elf, PanAgora Asset Management, Parent Talk, Partners Community Healthcare, Inc., Philadelphia Insurance Companies, St. Paul's Parish Church, ServiceNow, Stepping Stones Acupuncture & Wellness, Temple Aliyah, Volante Farms, Inc., Walgreens, and Wellesley Dental Group.





*Volunteers from Blue Hills Bank wrap holiday presents for the children and youth served by Walker's academic and therapy programs*

The toy drive is driven by volunteers who dedicate their time to sort, wrap and label presents so the children and youth know that the toys were delivered specially for them. Volunteering at the events were friends from Babson College, Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital–Needham, Blue Hills Bank, City Wide Maintenance, Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly, Liberty Mutual Insurance, Middlesex Savings Bank, Morgan, Brown & Joy, LLP, Needham Business Association, Needham Women's Club, New England Sports News (NESN), Sigma Chi Fraternity Alpha Theta Chapter of MIT, TripAdvisor and United Benefit Services. For the wrapping party event, community partner Bertucci's Needham location donated pizza for volunteers to enjoy.

**There are many ways to get involved with Walker.** From the Science Fair and Career Day to the *Lives in Bloom* Gala and other signature fundraising events, Walker offers a variety of individual and group volunteer opportunities. Please visit <http://walkercares.org/ways-to-give/volunteer.asp> to learn about ways to make a difference.

#### **About Walker**

Founded in 1961, Walker serves exceptionally vulnerable yet resilient children and youth facing complex social, emotional, behavioral and learning challenges. Walker's effective evidence-based and innovative therapeutic and academic programs positively impact nearly 20,000 children and youth each year throughout Greater Boston, the North and South Shores, as well as in Central Massachusetts. Through campuses in Needham and Watertown, community-based clinical and youth development services, professional seminars, consultations and out-posted Walker staff in public schools, Walker's professionals partner with these children and youth, their families and communities to nurture hope, develop lifelong skills, and build their capacity to be successful in their community. To learn more, please visit us at [WalkerCares.org](http://WalkerCares.org) or [Facebook.com/WalkerCares](https://Facebook.com/WalkerCares).

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