

The Maureen A. Abbott LOVE THY NEIGHBOR FUND, INC.

A private, non-profit, interfaith organization dedicated to providing food, training, counseling and a future to the homeless among us.
Established 1991



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Nonprofit group in danger of closing

By Jennifer
Shapiro-Sacks
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

His organization feeds about 1,400 homeless people each week, but come August, it could be in danger of closing.

Love Thy Neighbor Fund, a Fort Lauderdale-based nonprofit dedicated to providing food, training, counseling and a future to the homeless, was started 20 years ago by Arnold Abbott in memory of his wife.

"Emergency food and shelter programs are the only funds we receive, and this year, we were not funded," Abbott said. "We got some money in because we had a fundraiser, so we have funds through August, and then we would have to close down."

In addition, the organization has graduated more than 400 from its Culinary Training Skills Program, a nine-week course offered in conjunction with McFatter Technical Center in Davie.

"I'm very, very pleased. There are lots of success stories — people working in hotels and restaurants in the area," Abbott said.

Love Thy Neighbor also provides a Christmas party for 500 homeless children and provides all of them with gifts.

There are about 50 volunteers helping Love Thy Neighbor, including Dr. James Lang, an ophthalmologist at Holy Cross Hospital who helps with the weekly feedings and helps fit the homeless with donated eyeglasses.

Lang, who's been Abbott's



Dr. James Lang has been active with the Love Thy Neighbor Fund and recently performed a surgery, free of charge, which restored a man's eyesight.

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doctor for 10 years, said he's "inspired" by Abbott. About six months ago, he started bringing his two high school-aged children with him to feed the homeless and distribute glasses.

"I've been so blessed and have so many privileges, and just to be able to give those back to the community is very rewarding," Lang said.

Lang recently performed surgery for a homeless man, "Tony" Wayne Petrucelli, who had been legally blind for nine years due to cataracts. Holy Cross donated its services and facilities, and Lang performed the entire procedure, which restored Petrucelli's sight, free of charge.

If the organization closed, Lang said it would be a "great loss for the community, especially because not

only does he provide well-balanced, nutritious meals twice a week, but he helps move people from being isolated on the street to finding a job. There are people who Arnold has trained who come back and volunteer; that would be the biggest loss."

Abbott is looking for donations to help keep the organization going.

"The need is great. We're feeding some people who were middle management, people who worked for large corporations," he said. "It's very sad. ... Our job is to keep them strong and healthy until we can return them as productive citizens. We want everybody to become a taxpayer."

For more information, call 954-682-2303 or visit www.lovetheynneighbor.org.

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