

# Local law firm shares holiday spirit

Scanlon and Gearinger sponsor Christmas party for homeless families

By Leah M. Solomon

Picture families singing Christmas tunes while children eagerly open colorful packages from Santa. Looks like a normal Christmas celebration, right? Not quite — this Christmas party was for Akron's homeless.

Scanlon and Gearinger, a law firm in Akron, sponsored the Christmas party for H. M. Life Opportunities (HMLO), an organization that provides housing for homeless, single-parent families. The party was held on Dec. 17 at Annunciation Catholic Church.

Staff from Scanlon and Gearinger provided and wrapped gifts for the children. Each child made up a wish list which Scanlon and Gearinger used to buy the gifts.

Volunteer lawyers dressed in bright green elf costumes and



Left to right: Cathy Hilkert, Attorney Mark Hilkert holding Trenton Boster (age 6), Angie Boster holding son Michael (age 4), Sister Lorella and Monica Yori in front (H.M. Life Community Resources Coordinator).

sang Christmas carols for musical entertainment.

Santa and his elves shared the limelight with Nilso the magician, who surprised and entertained the children with his magic. The

children's eyes widened when he pulled a live dove out of a small empty bag.

The staff of Scanlon and Gearinger painted faces and made

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crafts such as decorative frames for family photographs with Santa Claus. The law firm also provided rigatoni, punch, cookies and other refreshments.

Heidi, a young mother with two daughters and a member of the HMLO program said, "This is a family-kind of closeness. They've really helped me out. They bought dresses for the girls for Christmas and diapers for my eight-month-old daughter. Someone stole my Christmas money this year, so this is helping a lot."

Angie, a teary-eyed mother added, "This is overwhelming."

Mark Hilkert, a volunteer from Scanlon and Gearinger smiled when he described how the Christmas party came together. "This has been in the works for at least a month. I was called and I said we'd be glad to

do it. The rest is history."

Cathy Hilkert, also a volunteer, added, "It really warms your heart to do something. Everybody just volunteered, and it turned out really well."

According to Alicia Tabet-McLaughlin, development director of HMLO, the needs of the homeless in Akron are large. "Last year we had 500 requests from homeless mothers in Akron, but we only have 22 apartments available. We have a waiting list."

It is not too late to make donations for the annual HMLO "Winter Appeal" which begins in January and ends in March. Some of the largest needs are for children's clothing, women's career clothing and volunteers for day care. For more information about donations call HMLO at 869-5600.