



Angel Blessings to you  
for making it possible  
for us to continue assisting  
Our littlest angels with AIDS  
You clearly are the wind beneath our wings!

January 6, 2005

*Dear Ray of Hope Foundation,*

It is with great joy that I send you this letter. First I would like to give a special thanks to you for being a true blessing to all of the children and families we serve at the Angel Connection. For the past twelve years we have made a difference in their lives. Your generosity is the magic that makes it possible for us to continue!

As you may have heard the Angel Connection is in a severe financial crisis. At this time of the year we provide warm clothing and coats, school supplies, and have just completed providing holiday gifts to almost 4000 children. Also the support needs and advocacy requests are much higher during the winter season. You can see that your donation of funding clearly helps us continue meeting our children's needs. Sorry this thank you is late...All of our energy has been spent meeting the needs of our little ones for the Holidays.

Blessings and thanks,  
Chaplain Carol Bamesberger, Director

Donor: Ray of Hope Foundation  
Check # 243

Date 11/29/2004  
Amt \$200.00

We are a registered New Jersey Charitable Organization  
Tax ID EO-FID# 521-790-849/000 Corporate gift matching appreciated!

*The Angel Connection*  
*Chaplain Carol Bamesberger, Director*  
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JOHN BELL / DAILY RECORD

Volunteer director of buildings services at Angel Connection, Joe Springer, left, and Carol Barnesberger, the nonprofit group's founder, look at plans for a children's playground with eight playhouses.

## Kids' charity pressed for funding

Parsippany group needs \$25,000 for holiday gift drive

BY LAURA BRUNO

DAILY RECORD

PARSIPPANY — The Angel Connection defies logic. Surviving on an annual budget of roughly \$100,000, the nonprofit has supported families living with AIDS for 12 years.

Founder Carol Barnesberger has managed to transform a dilapidated home on the Greystone

Carol Barnesberger founded Angel Connection to help support families living with AIDS.



Park Psychiatric Hospital campus into a safe haven for parents and children. She has distributed 4,000 holiday gifts for children each December, offered coun-

selling for parents and children losing a loved one and found everything from cribs to sweaters to coats for those in need.

Hundreds of human angels have helped realize her visions, she said.

"We have a long history of making the impossible happen, one angel at a time," Barnesberger said.

This time, facing a

bank account that has dwindled to less than \$10,000, Barnesberger is no less optimistic that her organization will persevere.

The group needs to raise \$25,000 to run its annual Holiday Hugs drive, which provides a gift to every child in a family living with AIDS, whether it is a parent or child who is diagnosed with the disease. The

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full-time employee of the nonprofit, she doesn't have the time to run the operations, raise money and write grant proposals, Gallo said.

### Donations dwindling

With corporations moving out of Morris County and many companies cutting back on donations in recent years, Gallo said the Angel Connection has survived on a small reserve until now.

Barnesberger said the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and the subsequent outpouring of financial support for its victims resulted in an initial drain on resources for her mission. Coupled with the economic insecurities that have slowed charitable giving nationwide, the Angel Connection has not rebounded and simply is running out of money.

In addition, Barnesberger believes that, as AIDS patients live longer, the public is not as aware of the difficulties they face.

"The perception is that the AIDS epidemic is over," Barnesberger said. "It's a strong belief among everyone — except the families living with AIDS."

Through June 30, 32,401 people were reported living with

HIV or AIDS in New Jersey, an increase of 1,081 in the previous six months, according to statistics compiled by the state Department of Health and Senior Services.

A total of 631 people with HIV or AIDS were reported living in Morris County. At least 21 of those cases are children born to an HIV-positive mother. Since the state first began collecting the data in 1981, there have been 1,161 reported cases of HIV and AIDS in Morris County.

Mary Sterling knows the faces behind the statistics. She and her husband, Robert, adopted five children who were HIV-positive. Two have died. Former Long Valley residents who now live in Freehold, the Sterlings have known Barnesberger since 1987, when they took in a foster child exposed to the HIV virus.

Sterling said the contacts she and her children made through the Angel Connection have helped support them all. It has helped her children, Gabriel, 12, Cassie, 10, and Ashley, 9, know there are other children out there like them. They know they are different from other children who don't take medication twice a day and have blood drawn every three months.

"The things Carol does, I

often wonder why she does it," Sterling said. "There's nothing in it for her ... she continues no matter what the obstacles."

Sterling said she has seen Barnesberger pull off the improbable before, so she believes it can happen again.

### Tapping unmet needs

Barnesberger has worked with AIDS patients for 20 years, beginning when she was a hospice worker and Roman Catholic chaplain. She created the Angel Connection in 1992 to fill service gaps. She tapped into needs not met by any other organization.

At the AIDS Resource Center in Newark, education program manager San-ya Cross said the families they serve have greatly benefited from the Holiday Hugs program. Also a nonprofit, the Resource Center helps families in Newark, East Orange, Orange and Irvington. For at least a half-dozen years, parents who are HIV-positive and living in poverty have been able to give their children holiday gifts thanks to Barnesberger's efforts, Cross said.

In addition to the Holiday Hugs program, Barnesberger also provides clothing, food, medical equipment, household

items and mentoring as needed throughout the year. She helps mothers who are dying of AIDS make permanent plans for their surviving children.

The organization has eked out an existence largely due to the generosity of individuals and some corporations. The nonprofit has always lived close to the bone, Barnesberger said.

That hasn't stopped her from being ambitious.

On top of everything else, Barnesberger also is trying to complete two building projects at the Angel Connection's office in Greystone Park. One is a two-story addition that would serve as a gathering space for workshops and a warehouse to store donated clothing, food, furniture and toys. The second is a children's playground with eight playhouses. The concrete foundations were poured for both projects, but progress is stalled due to lack of funding and supplies.

"If we just had lumber, we could start framing the playhouses," Barnesberger said.

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## Angel Connection seeking donors

The Angel Connection needs donors to fill 2,500 children holiday gift requests by Dec. 1 and volunteers to help sort, wrap and deliver gifts.

The nonprofit also needs the following items donated to get through the holiday season:

- Heavy-duty trash bags
- Stamps
- Paper cutters
- Grocery store certificates for clients and house supply
- Printing services
- Trucking services
- External CD burner
- Printer cartridges (HP 14 black and color)
- Fax cartridges (Brother PC 301)
- Repair and drum replacement for Canon copier
- Store certificates for office supply stores

## Need more details?

For more information about The Angel Connection, call (973) 898-0048, visit the Web site [www.theangelconnection.org](http://www.theangelconnection.org) or write to 3 Executive Drive, P.O. Box 9123, Greystone Park, N.J. 07950.