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United Way to distribute record 7,000 Thanksgiving meals as some agencies report greater need, fewer donations

Posted by [Matt Rocheleau](#) November 16, 2012 12:41 PM

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By [Matt Rocheleau](#), Town Correspondent

Amid reports of fewer donations despite more people in need, the United Way of Massachusetts Bay & Merrimack Valley said it will distribute a record 7,000 Thanksgiving meal packages Saturday to families in need from 13 local communities.

"As families continue to struggle, Thanksgiving donations are important not only because they provide a celebratory meal, but because they allow these families to enjoy the holiday without sacrificing basic needs and other crucial areas of their budget," United Way president and CEO Michael Durkin said in a statement.

The organization's 15th annual Thanksgiving Project will distribute 2,000 more meals than they did during last year's meal distribution, which also set a record,

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officials said. And, the project has expanded essentially, despite the economic recession. About 1,000 meals were given out in 2009.

"The fact that the Thanksgiving Project has been able to grow year over year in the face of rapidly rising need is a testament to the incredible generosity and commitment of United Way's corporate and nonprofit partners," he added.

The record-setting effort comes as [more people in the Boston area are asking for help](#) to put food on the table this holiday season. But, many agencies report that they've received [fewer food and monetary donations](#).

The 150,000 pounds of food will be distributed at 13 different sites, the largest of which is at Catholic Charities Greater Boston at the Yawkey Center in Dorchester, where the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley plans to join United Way staff and volunteers Saturday to hand out nearly 3,000 bags of Thanksgiving groceries from 9 a.m. to noon, according to the United Way.

Hundreds of volunteers packaged the food over the past week at space in downtown Boston donated by Equity Office, the agency said. The crew handled 7,000 turkeys, cans of cranberry sauce, boxes of stuffing, jars of gravy, aluminum turkey pans; more than 20,000 cans of corn and mixed vegetables, cans of beans and pounds of rice; 14,000 pounds of onions and 25,000 pounds of potatoes.

The organization said that it costs \$40 to provide a Thanksgiving meal to a family of four.

The other meal distribution sites are: Catholic Charities locations in the South End, South Boston, Somerville, Lowell, and Haverhill; YMCAs in Roxbury and East Boston; Centerboard in Lynn; Lawrence CommunityWorks; Interfaith Social Services in Quincy; Randolph High School and Weymouth Food Pantry, officials said.

Supporters of the project include: Catholic Charities, Interfaith Social Services, YMCA, Centerboard, Randolph High School, Lawrence Community Works, Thrive in 5, and Weymouth Food Pantry, Stop & Shop, Goya Foods, UPS, Equity Office, Putnam Investments, and Dunkin' Donuts.

Donations to the project can be made at:



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