

HEARD & SCENE

DONOR OF THE DAY | By Melanie Grayce West

A Baby Shower For Moms in Need

Janice Weinman is throwing Newark mothers one big baby shower.

Three-hundred mothers and mothers-to-be will receive essential baby items including bedding, diapers, bottles, clothes, car seats, cribs and strollers from the New York-based nonprofit Kids in Distressed Situations, or K.I.D.S. The shower, on April 9, is being organized with Newark Now, the charity founded by Newark mayor Cory A. Booker.

"We want them to have the tools at an early stage of a child's development," says Dr. Weinman, executive director of K.I.D.S. "This is so fundamental. People take that for granted. They assume people have underwear. They assume little kids have diapers. They don't."

Newark is one special area of focus for the organization. K.I.D.S. will distribute about \$500,000 in donated products to Newark residents this year, including items such as outerwear, underwear, shirts, socks, pants, dresses, skirts, sweaters, shoes, books, DVDs, toys and holiday gifts.

The items donated by K.I.D.S. are all brand new, arriving directly from manufacturers or major retailers. For the Newark baby shower, items are coming from about 40 different sources.

Nationally, the organization distributes more than \$100 million in products annually through about 1,000 nonprofit agencies across the U.S. and in other countries.

For example, if a shoe manufacturer has sneakers that didn't sell, K.I.D.S. sends a truck to get them. The organization will pick up items from stores, warehouses and distribution centers, taking whatever is available from two pallets to a semitruckload, and then directs the items to where they are needed. They ship boots to Alaska, baby



Janice Weinman

clothes to military bases and clothing to Haiti, Japan and to homeless shelters in Florida. The organization hires trucks to deliver the item where it is needed.

The value to the recipients is that the items are all brand new. "When a kid gets a pair of Nike sneakers that are new rather than somebody's hand-me-down, that to them is like they've reached nirvana. They feel valued," says Dr. Weinman. "They can strut into school and people will accept them."

The need for day-to-day essential, immediate and useful items has never been greater, says Dr. Weinman. The most requested item is underwear. "The poverty level in this country has skyrocketed," she says.

"If a family of four has to make a choice between food, housing and clothes, they're going to drop the third. They need a roof over their heads and something to eat. So what we do is we give them those material things that allow them to be functional," says Dr. Weinman.