

Join Us in Warming A Heart

We may be in the midst of late summer/early fall, but I'm already thinking about how to continue helping families in need this holiday season, and I hope you'll join me in this effort.



Nearly 14 years ago, I responded to a call to assist Rhode Island families in need during the cold winter months. A dear friend had reached out after starting a job at Lifespan and spending time at its hospitals and surrounding communities in the state. He quickly became educated about gaps that needed to be filled in the community. He observed cancer patients struggling to pay bills and underprivileged families lacking coats, mittens, blankets, and other essential items to provide warmth. Together, we quickly concluded that **we** – along with my restaurants, Ellie's and Gracie's – could join forces and make a difference. Shortly after that, the **Warm-A-Heart Gingerbread Program** was born.

The program works like this: Ellie's bakers spend hours mixing, shaping, and baking thousands of 8" tall gingerbread during the holiday season. Meanwhile, other team members join me in selecting and purchasing icing piping bags, candies, holiday ribbons, boxes, labels, and more, which are soon combined with the delicious freshly baked gingerbread to create **Warm-A-Heart Gingerbread Program** kits. Our newest partner, Re-focus generously provides space for the assembly of the kits, and our partners at City Year Providence assist us with recruiting volunteers to assemble the kits. Once the kits are completed, they're sold for \$10 each at Ellie's and Gracie's as well as The Miriam Hospital and several Dave's Markets across the state. Then, 100 percent of the profits are donated to select nonprofit organizations to purchase warm winter clothing items, blankets, pillows, and gift cards for Rhode Island families in need.

This brings me to why I'm reaching out. I now need assistance from others to sustain this critical program and would greatly appreciate your support as a volunteer. In 2009, the year the program was launched, we created and sold 700 kits raising much needed revenue to assist Rhode Island families. Since then the program has evolved tremendously whereby last year, we created and sold 6,000 kits! And proudly, we are on track to do the same this holiday season. The challenge remains keeping up with the demand for volunteers. Whether you are a school looking to give back throughout the holiday season or a business seeking to fulfill community volunteering hours or credits to wrap up 2023, or someone with time and a big heart - this is an excellent opportunity!

Please let us know if you would be interested in volunteering as soon as possible.

Here are the dates and times we'll be gathering at ReFocus for production. Thank you in advance for considering any of your valuable time for our program.

ReFocus Address: 45 Greeley St, Providence, RI 02904

Hours: 10-2 pm

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

10/24, 10/26, 10/27	11/7, 11/9, 11/10	12/5, 12/7, 12/8
10/31, 11/2, 11/4	11/14, 11/16, 11/17	12/12, 12/14, 12/15
	11/28, 11/30, 12/1	

Thank you for considering this request. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Ellen Gracyalny

Proprietor, Gracie's Ventures

ellen@graciesprov.com

