

MELROSE FREE PRESS

‘Helping Our Neighbors’

By Daniel DeMaina

MELROSE - Melrose resident and singer/songwriter Howie Newman co-hosts a monthly open mic evening at the Church of the Nazarene on Short Street in Melrose. Recently, Church Pastor Darin Parry learned of an opportunity to have Newman help out in doing something more.

On Saturday, Sept. 15, the church will host the “Helping Our Neighbors” concert to benefit Bread of Life, a Malden-based volunteer organization that provides food and more for the needy in the area, including Melrose.

Gabriella Snyder, special projects coordinator for Bread of Life, said the organization is the largest free food program for low-income families in the north Metro area. The food pantry distributed the equivalent of 208,000 meals last year and the meal program serves 34,000 meals annually.

Snyder said Melrose is the third largest group of residents Bread of Life serves, behind Everett and Malden. Over 200 families from Melrose go to the food pantry and the organization delivers groceries to seniors living in the Steele House on Mason Drive.

The non-profit also collaborates with local agencies to help low-income residents obtain counseling, furniture, housing, and financial assistance; it also provides a “Caring and Sharing” support group.

Newman said the “Music in Melrose” open mic evenings started in December of last year, and after a few months, Parry approached him with the idea of doing a show to benefit Bread of Life.

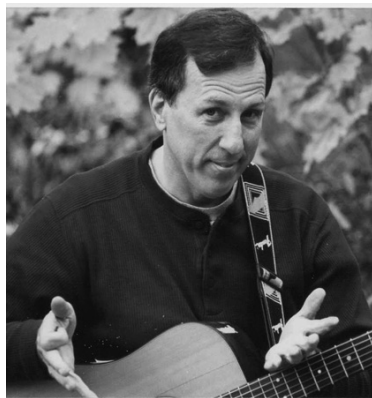
Parry, who has been pastor at Church of the Nazarene for four years, said he first heard about Bread of Life a few years ago and thought the church should help the Melrose community get more involved with the organization.

“They really reach a section of our community and society that’s often forgotten,” he said. “The segment of our community that it reaches, so often we don’t even realize that [they are there] because we live with enough privilege that we don’t have to rely on other people for help.”

Newman said Bread of Life provides services for “quite a few” families in Melrose.

“They’re based in Malden, but they do serve all the surrounding communities,” he said. “I thought it would be nice to have Melrose musicians and businesses supporting a non-profit organization that provides for people in Melrose.”

Snyder said events like the “Helping Our Neighbors” are important because Bread of Life’s funding relies on individual, church and business donations, as well as private grants from various foundations. The organization holds fundraisers itself



Howie Newman organized the first Helping Our Neighbors concert.

throughout the year, the biggest being the 15th annual “Walk For Bread” scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 7 at Pine Banks Park.

“Eighty percent of the money we have to raise,” she said. “When a group that comes in like Pastor Parry and Howie and says,

“We want to do this for you, and we’re going to do everything,” that’s fantastic ... it’s a wonderful thing for another group of people to put all this work in and say, ‘We want you to get all the funds from it.’”

A family friendly show

Parry said the church also held a rock concert last fall to benefit Bread of Life, featuring local artists and some from the South Shore, but “the music was maybe just a little bit too loud for us,” he said with a laugh.

“This year we’re trying to make it more family friendly,” he said, specifically mentioning the children’s show that will precede the main concert. “We’re excited about that, to make families aware of Bread of Life.

“They can volunteer, do some work there, or the money they’re giving goes there, and we’re making our children aware of these things.”

Parry added he is “so impressed with Howie and all the work and effort” he has put into organizing the concert, recruiting artists who have performed at the open mic in the past to take part in the concert.

Newman acknowledged that he’s coordinating the event, but insisted, “it’s not a one-man operation. Everyone’s pitching in.” One of the performers is bringing the public-address system, another is bringing extra microphones, and several Melrose businesses are supporting the event through sponsorships and food donations.

“It’s a real community effort,” he said. Harry Hussey, one of the artists who will perform at the concert, said the night features a diverse group of performers.

“It’s definitely a wide range,” said Hussey, himself a folk-rock, singer-

songwriter and Melrose transplant from Somerville.

“Everybody has their own style.”

Maria McNeil, another performer, said she plays mostly jazz and R&B. She ended up meeting Newman at one of the open mic nights, where he recruited her for the concert. How she ended up at an open mic in Melrose is a story unto itself.

“I grew up in Chicago, and I moved out here to go to school at Berklee [College of Music] and fell in love with the East Coast,” she said. “I was looking for a place in Boston for a while and decided to move to Melrose, and then I started looking for open mics around that area.”

Newman said he and fellow performer Janet Feld will be re-launching the popular “Music in Melrose” open mics this year, with the first on Thursday, Sept. 20 at the Church of Nazarene, and then every second Thursday of the month thereafter.

Before that, though, will be the “Helping Our Neighbors” concert this weekend “We’re looking forward to having a nice crowd and raising money for Bread of Life,” Newman said.

For more information on the “Helping Our Neighbors” concert, contact Howie Newman at 781-662-2616 or by e-mail at hjnewman@verizon.net.

Businesses sponsoring the event include: Scott W. Baker, electrical contractor; Jeff Carbone Insurance; Eastern Bank; F.P. Lozzi, Floor Coverings; Globe Travel; Ikon Office Solutions; Medical Interpreters of the North Shore; Melrose Church of the Nazarene; Melrose Cooperative Bank; Montvale Tire; Petrone’s Pizza; Robinson Funeral Home; Sexton & Donohue Century 21; Shaw’s Supermarket of Melrose; Starbucks, Melrose; and Williams & Alley Insurance Agency.

Concert details

The “Helping Our Neighbors” concert to benefit Bread of Life will take place Saturday, Sept. 15 from 7-10 p.m. at the Church of the Nazarene, 2 Short St., Melrose. There is also a special children’s show at 6:30 p.m.

The concert features six area acoustic performers, four of whom are from Melrose. In order of appearance, performing are Jeannie Mack (children’s show), Steve and Carol Gyurina, Harry Hussey, Howie Newman, Maria McNeil, James Cintolo and Janet Feld.

Tickets are \$6, or \$5 with the donation of a canned food item. Admission to the children’s show at 6:30 p.m. is \$6 per family. Those attending the children’s show are welcome to stay for the remainder of the evening.