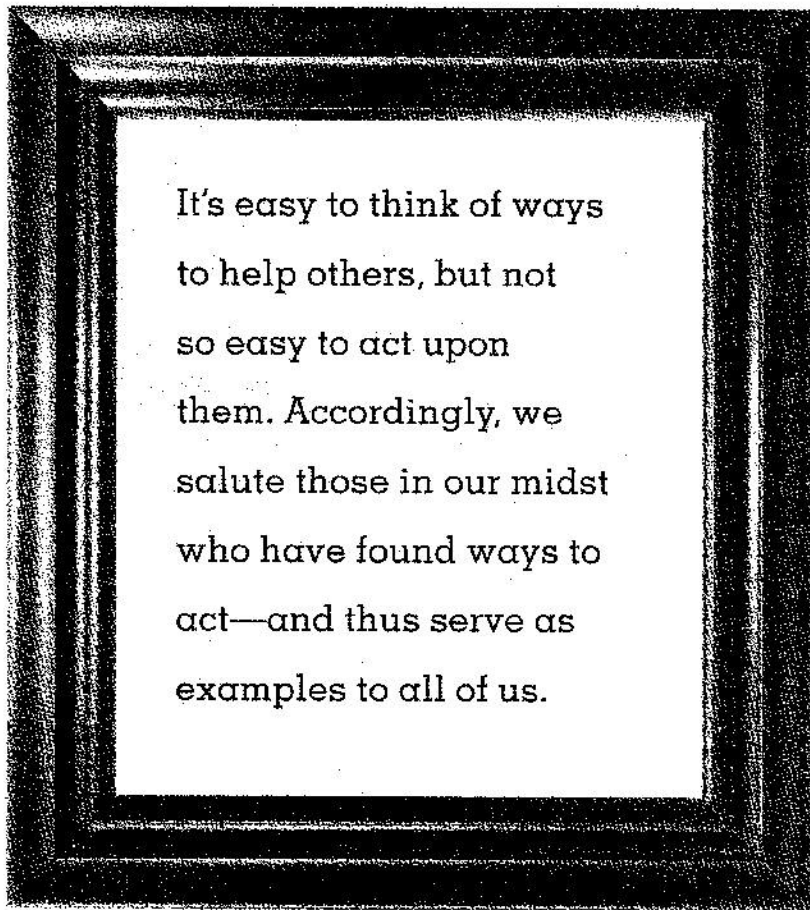


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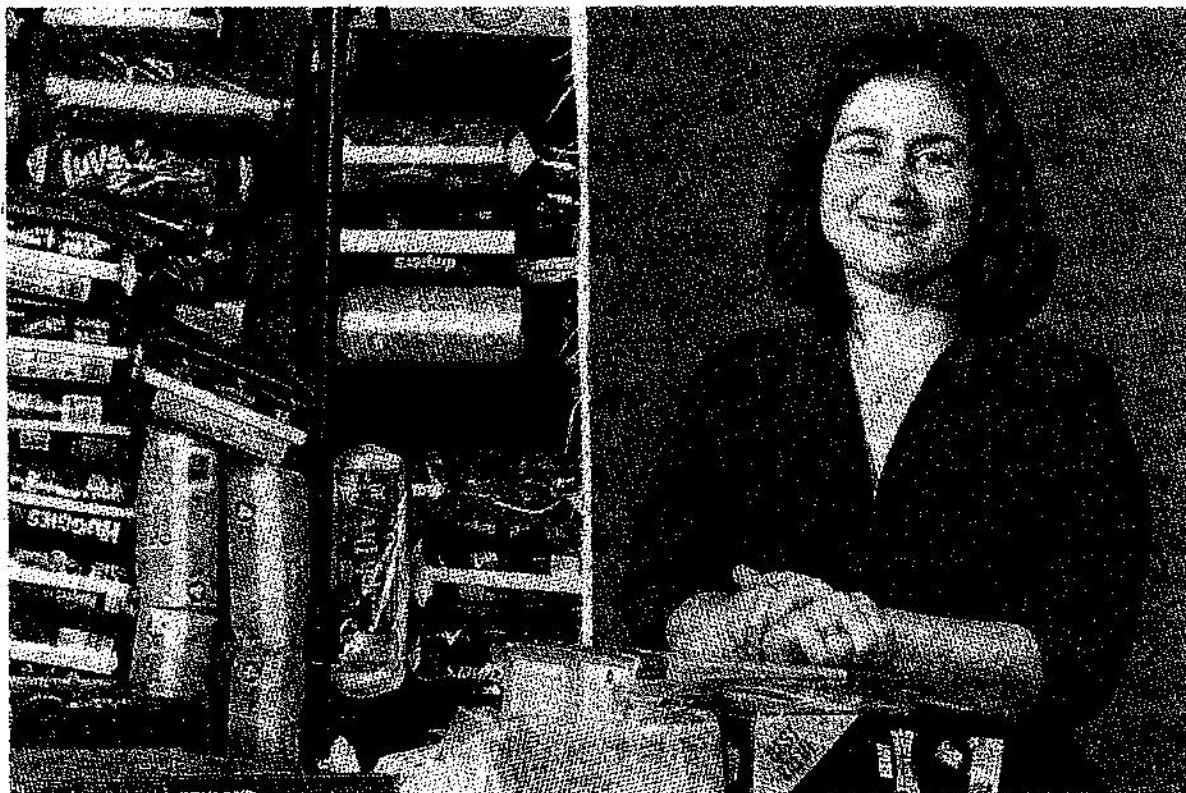
STANDING TAIL 2008

By Jennifer Huget

Photography by Tony Dube



It's easy to think of ways to help others, but not so easy to act upon them. Accordingly, we salute those in our midst who have found ways to act—and thus serve as examples to all of us.



Joanne Goldblum believes diapers are a vehicle for change.

DIAPER DANDIES

Most of us don't give diapers much thought once our own children have outgrown them. But Joanne Goldblum, whose three children range in age from 11 to 16, spends a lot of time thinking about diapers—in particular, how to provide them to families who can't afford to buy these staples of infancy and toddlerhood.

In the late 1990s, Goldblum, a social worker, found that many families she visited through her work had babies wearing the same soiled diapers for hours on end. In most cases, inattention wasn't to blame; these families simply didn't have money to buy enough diapers to accommodate the frequent changes a baby requires. When she learned that food stamps and other federal aid programs don't cover diapers, which can cost over \$1,500 a year, she decided something had to be done.

Today Goldblum's Diaper Bank provides more than 200,000 diapers a month to families throughout Greater New Haven, Bridgeport and Hartford. Following the food-bank model, the nonprofit organization (which Goldblum founded in 2004) sends diapers to social-service and community agencies in those cities; those agencies then distribute them to individual families.

It's sad enough to think of a baby having to endure a dirty diaper. But the repercussions of the dearth of diapers extend far beyond a child's discomfort, says Goldblum, a 44-year-old New Haven resident. First of all, she notes, "Research shows that bad diaper rash causes crying, and lots of crying causes abuse."

Moreover, Goldblum explains, "If a family has no diaper supply, then they can have no child care [because most day-care providers require that their charges come with their own stash of diapers], and if there's no child care, then parents can't work. Little things affect big things."

The Diaper Bank has received "a very little bit of funding" from the state Department of Child and Family Services, Goldblum says, but that grant's due to expire in October

2009. In addition to raising awareness of her organization's mission, Goldblum is always on the lookout for help.

"People can do a lot of things," she says. "We're always looking for people—schools, Girl Scout troops, churches and synagogues—to do diaper drives. We're happy to come out and get the diapers."

The Diaper Bank deals only in disposable diapers, although Goldblum is aware of the environmental issues related to their disposal. But cloth diapers are an untenable solution, she says, because too few poor families have adequate facilities to thoroughly clean soiled diapers before putting them back on their babies. Other criteria for donations: For now, only baby diapers are accepted, not those for older kids and adults. As for quality, brand doesn't matter. But "if we wouldn't use them on our own kid, we won't give them out," Goldblum says.

Beyond drives and donations, the Diaper Bank welcomes financial donors, too: Having cash on hand allows the Diaper Bank to buy baby diapers in bulk "at a very reduced rate," Goldblum says.

Goldblum's hoping to someday get state and national legislators to pay attention to the issue. "Basic needs are something we should take care of," she says. "We need to make it so every child has a chance to have a great life and the ability to thrive."

Want to help? Contact the Diaper Bank at P.O. Box 110, New Haven, CT 06515, call (203) 934-7009 or go to the dia-