

## Jewish and Muslim groups plan day of interfaith service projects on Dec. 25

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On Christmas Day, the Jewish Community Relations Council of St. Louis (JCRC), the Islamic Foundation of Greater St. Louis and the National Council of Jewish Women-St. Louis Section (NCJW) are sponsoring the first ever St. Louis area-wide "Jewish and Muslim Day of Service."

Twenty-one agencies have been identified in the St. Louis area as sites that will host volunteers on Christmas.

"This project represents a unique partnership of the broad Jewish and Muslim communities coming together to reach out and offer service to the Christian community on its Christmas holiday," says Phyllis Markus, chair of JCRC's Bohm Social Justice Initiative and a co-chair of this event. "Through this joint effort we will build stronger ties with each other, develop greater understanding and forge long lasting relationships."

Although the event is being organized by the Jewish and Muslim communities, volunteers of all backgrounds and faiths are encouraged to participate.

Jewish and Muslim volunteers will be working side-by-side throughout the day at the various agencies. The event will kick off at 9 a.m. at the Jewish Community Center in Creve Coeur (Staenberg Complex) with a volunteer welcome breakfast including a social action blessing and celebration of the purpose and meaning of the event. Participants will leave from there to blanket the community at the various sites.

"We are very happy to partner with the Jewish community on this project," said Zubaida Ibrahim, co-chair of the Day of Service on behalf of co-sponsor the Islamic Foundation of Greater St. Louis. "Both of our faiths' traditions emphasize the importance of charity and this is a great way for us to engage in charitable acts together."

Volunteer sites and activities include:

- Harvey Kornblum Jewish Food Pantry- packing up goods to be donated to those in need.
- 5 Star Senior Center- delivering hot meals to homebound seniors throughout the region.
- St. Louis Crisis Nursery (both St. Louis City and St. Charles locations) - doing activities with the children and sharing a meal with them.
- Gateway 180: Homelessness Reversed (a homeless shelter for families and women) - doing a makeover project at the shelter.

Additionally for others who wish to participate, the program includes a toiletry donation drive with six drop off points: Congregation B'nai Amoona, Central Reform Congregation, Congregation Shaare Emeth, Daar Ul Islam Mosque, JCC Early Childhood Center-Creve Coeur and Temple Emanuel. Donations will be dispersed at Mercy Hospital, Bi-Lingual International Assistance Services and the Harvey Kornblum Jewish Food Pantry.

For a complete list of supporting organizations or to sign up online, visit [www.stljewishmuslimdayofservice.org](http://www.stljewishmuslimdayofservice.org) or contact Gail Wechsler, Director of Domestic Issues/Social Justice for the Jewish Community Relations Council, at 314-442-3894.