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Weston resident leads Hope and Comfort nonprofit

The simple act of teaching his children the power of giving back in lieu of birthday gifts was all it took for Jeff Feingold of Weston and his family to create the nonprofit Hope and Comfort Inc.

Since 2011, they have collected more than 70,000 personal hygiene products and toiletries for residents throughout greater Boston, who often must choose between purchasing food and medicine rather than toothpaste and shampoo.

A national organization, 5 to 10 percent of deliveries are distributed throughout the U.S., but the majority of their distributions go to Massachusetts programs. Feingold's vision is that one day everyone will have access to critical personal care products, improving health and self-esteem for all.

A connection through his synagogue, Temple Shir Tikva in Wayland, introduced Feingold to the Good People Fund, an organization rooted in the Jewish tradition of "tikkun olam" ("repairing the world"). The Good People Fund offers financial support and mentorship to small, effective initiatives in Israel and the U.S., dedicated to repairing the world.

Hope and Comfort received an opening grant of $7,500 to support their growing efforts. Feingold is joined by managing director Julie Williams, an MBA graduate of Babson, who is a major force in the day-to-day operation of the organization and working with all the programs.

Jeff Feingold of Weston, founder of Hope and Comfort, delivers soap to Jewish Family and Children's Service, accepted by program manager Bernice Behar. COURTESY PHOTO

In just four short years, the organization has moved from operating out of Feingold's garage to a storage facility in Newton. This growth has been made possible by Feingold's enthusiasm and expertise, as well has his skilled leadership.

Feingold has worked at Fidelity Investments since 1997, received a BA from Brown University, an MBA from Harvard Business School, and has participated in dozens of philanthropic and volunteer activities over the last 20 years. Hope and Comfort is the outgrowth of that impressive background.

"Jeff's understanding of needs outside of his own community and his willingness to help meet those needs are exactly what we look for in a potential grantee," says Naomi Eisenberger, executive Director of the Good People Fund. "Hope and Comfort recognizes that something as basic as a bar of soap can have a huge impact on how people feel about themselves. It is incumbent upon all of us to dispel the myth that having proper hygiene products is not significant. It can be lifesaving to some."

Hope and Comfort offers several programs throughout the Boston area that help low-income and homeless children and adults.

The Stock the Shelves program partners with seven food pantries, including Jewish Family and Children's Service's Family Table, Newton Food Pantry and Centre Street Food Pantry, to increase access to basic personal care products by placing these products on food pantry shelves.

Recognizing that a child needs to feel healthy and clean so they are not embarrassed to go to school or engage in social activity, Feingold initiated the Soap for Hope program to bring personal care products to youth in Boston and nearby towns through a distribution partnership with the Boys & Girls Club of Boston. Each month, Hope and Comfort works with children's organizations and schools to provide toiletry kits filled with soap, toothpaste, deodorant and other items. Young people are then taught the importance of good hygiene and appropriate product use, thus inspiring long-term health and confidence.

"Our partners include food pantries and children's organizations that help distribute essential items including soap, toothpaste and deodorant to children and adults in the greater Boston area," said Feingold. "We are excited to now be part of the Good People Fund's circle of grantees. Their support will enable us to manage our work even more effectively as well as provide more resources to the community."

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