

# WISH BOOK



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2007

## Readers make holidays wishes come true

By Elinor J. Brecher

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Wish Book is The Miami Herald's annual holiday season campaign to raise money for South Floridians in need, a 26-year tradition sponsored by Miami Herald Charities.

Social service agencies and individuals nominate prospective recipients. Donations fund the needs of those who are profiled in The Miami Herald, and once those wishes are fulfilled, other nominees also benefit.

### RECORD DONATIONS

The 2006 Wish Book campaign raised a record \$405,000 in cash donations — a 33 percent increase from the \$306,000 raised in 2005 — as well as gifts worth \$125,000.

"Last year, through the Wish Book, we were able to help more than 1,000 people whose needs represent the toughest issues we face as a community," said Miami Herald Publisher David Landsberg. "Our stories shed light on real issues and compel concerned citizens to take action. Sad stories turn into happy endings and give us a great deal of hope for our future as a community."

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The 2006 Wish Book's most visible project was Kathy and Mary Jane Bergerson's "home makeover." The Hialeah mother and daughter, 89 and 55, couldn't afford to fix their hurricane-damaged home, where pigeons roosted in the roof.

They had neither a stove nor a clothes dryer.

Harry Hollub of Hollub Homes and dozens of his vendors and subcontractors volunteered their services. Hands on Miami provided muscle, and the Bergersons got a top-to-bottom renovation, furniture and appliances.

"It's such a pleasure to go into the kitchen and cook and not have to do it in a broken-down microwave and toaster oven," said Kathy, a church preschool director.

Their fresh start was as much emotional as structural. "I just feel better about myself," said Kathy, who has multiple health problems and no insurance. "I used to get so depressed.

"Y'all came in and fought my battles for me."