

So many are helped. Thanks, moms!

Tina DiNino provides extra spark as Chelmsford Mothers' Club delivers

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CHELMSFORD -- When Tina DiNino had her daughter, Audrey, she didn't know anyone nearby that had children her age.

A former makeup artist who's now a stay-at-home mom, the transition to being home all day with Audrey, now 3, was tough at first for DiNino.

At the time, most of her friends were either nowhere near ready to have kids, or their children were much older, said DiNino, 34, of Lowell.

It wasn't until she took Audrey to storytime at the library that she found other local moms who told her about the Chelmsford Mothers' Club.



Community service coordinator Tina DiNino of Lowell, second from left in sunglasses, joins fellow Chelmsford Mothers Club members during a work visit Thursday to the Chelmsford community garden at Sunny Meadow Farm. From left, are Wendell Koveos, 3 of Lowell (seated); Brie Baker of Chelmsford holding her son Wes, 1, with daughter Avery, 4; DiNino with her daughter Audrey, 3; Sarah Mackie of Chelmsford holding her son Jude, 3, and daughter Amelia, 5; and Nina Koveos of Lowell with her daughter Gianna, 1. SUN / JULIA MALAKIE

coordinator, picking a different charity each month for the CMC to support and organizing volunteers for these smaller projects.

CMC President Nina Koveos said community service has been a longstanding tenant of the club, but DiNino is taking it to "a whole new level."



Tina DiNino of Lowell and her daughter Audrey, 3, during a visit to the Chelmsford community garden at Sunny Meadow Farm Thursday with other members of the Chelmsford Mothers Club. SUN / JULIA MALAKIE

The

group began in Chelmsford, but now includes more than 200 moms and families from around Greater Lowell.

DiNino said she was thankful to find the club, to be able to draw upon its members for advice and to have someone other than her husband, Joe, to talk to about her frustrations.

"It definitely makes being a mom easier knowing you have this community to rely on," she said.

Now, DiNino is the club's community service coordinator, picking a different charity each month for the CMC to support and organizing volunteers for these smaller projects.

"Tina hasn't even been in the position a full year yet, but she is knocking it out of the park," Koveos said. "She inspires all of our members to give more of ourselves to support local causes, as well as include our children and help them learn about what is truly most important."

DiNino has a special place in her heart for The Wish Project in Lowell, which helps to meet many needs of struggling and homeless families. In August, she and CMC members filled backpacks with school supplies for kids in need. Last month, they collected items for Mother's Day gift baskets for homeless moms. At least once a month they help to sort incoming donations and put out items for clients to shop from.

In October, they collected Halloween costumes for From the Pumpkin Patch, which helps low-income kids celebrate the holiday.

In February, DiNino spearheaded a handmade blanket drive for Project Linus, which provides comfort items for children facing trauma. CMC members were inspired to make and donate 40 knit, crocheted and fleece tie blankets along with 191 rolls of yarn and \$100 in gift cards.

In March, CMC collected needed items for Alternative House, a Lowell organization that serves victims of domestic violence and their children. CMC also held its first "Mom Prom" at the Chelmsford Center for the Arts. DiNino said they partnered with Salon Pure, which closed to the general public to do hair and makeup for those attending the event. The salon donated the proceeds, and several local businesses donated prizes that were raffled off, she said. Overall, they raised about \$2,000 for Alternative House, DiNino said.

Other organizations they've supported include the Lowell Humane Society, the Open Pantry of Greater Lowell, and Lazarus House in Lawrence.

Their next project is to grow vegetables and herbs at the community garden at Sunny Meadow Farm this summer and donate the produce to local food pantries. They're grateful to Hutchins Farm in Concord, which has agreed to donate the plants, DiNino said.

DiNino doesn't like to take credit for the work she does. She said she really only plays a small role, providing avenues for the large number of local moms who want to help people in need but might not have time to figure it out on their own.

"The fact they want to give back and continue to give back every single month when I come up with a new organization I want to help out, it restores my faith in humanity and it makes me feel really good," DiNino said.

For more information or to get involved, visit chelmsfordmothersclub.org or email info@chelmsfordmothersclub.org.