

# Visitation House gives new beginnings

By Tanya Connor

Gift-giving isn't limited to people you know. At Christmastime, many people give gifts to agencies to present to people who need them.

But the Knights of Columbus at St. Joseph Parish in Auburn – Msgr. Thomas F. Neary Council #13637 –

couldn't wait for Christmas. This fall they got St. Joseph's parishioners to help with their Tree for Life Project.

In the church they displayed posters of a tree with the words: "Please help someone choose life by helping build this tree for life," said Michael Renner. He and his wife, Patricia, are the council's pro-life chaircouple. Others



Joseph Butler, from the Knights of Columbus brings a changing table into Visitation House.

especially involved in the project were Grand Knight Al Narris, and council members Brad Wass, Len Angers and Claude Carrier, he said.

Surrounding the trees were paper leaves requesting specific items or gift certificates, which parishioners bought and returned to the church, Mr. Renner said. He and Mr. Angers and Dick Burton and Joseph Butler then took the gifts to Visitation House in Worcester, a home of hospitality for women facing crisis pregnancies.

J.J. and Jessica Mammi, executive director and house mother, respectively, said they gave the Knights of Columbus a list of items they needed. On Nov. 15 the Knights brought a pick-up truck full of donations and \$1,000 in gift cards, they said. The items will be given to the women and babies they house, now or in the future, and the gift cards will help them to buy food and maintain the house, they said.

"Baby nail clippers – that's one thing Amy's so excited to get," Mrs. Mammi said, referring to the sentiments of Amy Shack, one of the mothers, who learned that something she needed was among the donations. The baby monitors will also be extremely helpful, she said.

But the house's greatest needs are cash donations and awareness-raising, the Mammis said. So it is most helpful when supporters hold fund-raisers and



*"Do you suppose those presents are for us?"*

PHOTOS BY TANYA CONNOR  
Peter Julian Mammi, left, is held by his mother Jessica Mammi, house mother at Visitation House. Anthony Xavier McNiff, right, is held by his mother, Amy Shack.

donate the proceeds. When that is not an option, they ask would-be donors to call them to learn their needs before collecting items.

Fund raising was slow last summer and they still need funding to get through the end of the year, the Mammis said. They said they are trying put as

much as they can in the bank. They hope to hire a new executive director to do publicity, fund raising and administrative work, so Mr. Mammi can work full time in the house. They would also like to find a second resident assistant, a position which offers room and board but no salary, they said.