? Though anonymous donors may have thought they were being helpful by dropping off contributions at the Scott County Clearinghouse when it was closed, their donations were, for the most part, not acceptable.

"During different times of the year, we seem to have this problem. People think that, because we are known for accepting donations of clothing and household goods as well as food, anything they'd like to get rid of is acceptable to us. That's not true," advised Nelson Spaulding, Director of the Clearinghouse.

The Community Clearinghouse is a non-profit agency located on Scottsburg's west side that is designed to help those who need aid. Its pantry has fed thousands over the past ten years, and the clothing and furniture donated by residents of the community have helped as many stretch their household budgets and provide some financial relief.

But there are hours in which such donations are accepted, pointed out Spaulding. Dropping off items after hours is not condoned because no one is there to take contributions inside. Weather can ruin such items and create quite a mess that takes up volunteers' time when they could be doing other tasks that would better help the Clearinghouse and its clients.

"Unfortunately, during a recent weekend, we 'received' some items. Most of it was, unfortunately, in such poor shape that we had to junk it. Of course, this ate up some valuable hours as we sorted through what was dropped at our door," related Spaulding.

What the Clearinghouse needs are items that are in good, clean condition. "I doubt if anyone seriously thought what they left for us was usable. I really don't know what they thought, to be truthful. If you don't think you'd want to use something in bad shape, why would you think someone else would?" Spaulding asked.

Items now in great demand are winter coats, men's jeans and small furniture items. "We're trying to get ready for these temperatures to turn downward. We've been lucky so far this fall, but we know the cold winds are coming," the director said. Anyone who would have good, used sweaters, hats and gloves and boots are welcome to call the Clearinghouse at 752-0123 or visit the facility on Community Way from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Wednesday or from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and 6 to 8 p.m. on Thursday.

The Clearinghouse is also open on the first Saturday of the month from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Hours on first Saturdays are only to accept donations.

Spaulding said he's also already making a list of individuals and groups who would like to ring the Salvation Army bells at Wal-Mart starting Thanksgiving weekend. That's because the September 14 windstorm that cut electrical power to many families for several days has really strained Clearinghouse finances.

"All the money we raise from Thanksgiving weekend through Christmas Eve comes back to Scott County to help our needy. Right now, we can't help many with utility bills and the like because we're running low. We gave out about 14 tons of food in September because of the windstorm and the losses of food people experienced. We're glad we had it to give, but it has really made us struggle with our budgeting," reported Spaulding.

Consequently, funds raised through the seasonal Salvation Army effort has become very important to the Clearinghouse. Those who would like to ring bells are encouraged to check their calendars, determine what times they can volunteer an hour or two on a Friday or Saturday during the holidays and then call Spaulding at 752-0123.

"I know there are many people in our community who are thankful that the Clearinghouse is available to them. We're glad we're here to help them," said Spaulding.