

When it comes time to give back, most people are comfortable with the traditional approach to philanthropy — pick a charity, make a contribution and let that charity put its resources in the hands of those in need — but Bob and Robin Schwartz aren't most people.

In 2007, as Metropolitan Detroit's economic engine came to a screeching halt, the husband-and-wife team decided they needed to do more to give back — and doing more has become a full-time job.

"We were in a position to give back to our community," Bob says. "We saw so many people in need, and we spent a lot of time trying to figure out what to do and how we could accomplish these great visions of helping cure the world of all its ills," Bob says.

"We decided to concentrate on a specific area and realized the best way, as a private foundation, was to assist individuals directly. While most private foundations provide grant money to public charities to do their work, we wanted to help people trying to help themselves during economic emergencies, to provide a bridge to help keep them moving forward."

That was just the start of Bob and Robin's Here to Help Foundation, which has now doled out more than \$3 million in emergency assistance.

"Once we decided on our focus, we started meeting with charities across Wayne and Oakland counties, introducing ourselves and asking what we could do to help their clients," Robin says. "Their social workers or employees go on our website, www.heretohelpfoundation.org, and apply on behalf of their clients for assistance, whether they need help with car repairs, furniture or paying utility bills, rent or security deposits."

Those in need are qualified by the IRS as "temporarily impoverished and lacking the basic necessities of life."

Surprising to some may be how many referrals Bob and Robin receive from Jewish agencies.

"We've done a lot of work with Jewish Family Service," says Bob, who also highlights referrals from social workers at Temple Israel and Yad Ezra.

"These are people who can continue to move forward but hit a bump in the road, a hurdle that could otherwise put them into a desperate financial situa-



Bob and Robin Schwartz flank used car grantee Takecia Jackson at the Volunteers of America lot.

tion without our assistance. They may be behind on their rent due to illness or maybe their car broke down and they made that repair but now can't pay their rent," Bob says.

"It's a slippery slope," he adds. "Missing just one bill, you could end up evicted or losing your job; and when these folks save a little money it can disappear in a second with one car repair or one big winter utility bill."

More than two-thirds of the money Bob and Robin have given back has gone to their Working Cars for Working People program.

"In Wayne and Oakland counties, we are the only resource that outright purchases vehicles for people working more than 35 hours a week, and now that the word is out we have a lot of people we can help," says Robin, who explained she and Bob are for the first time asking for outside contributions to support their organization and, more specifically, this program.

"We decided to come out from under the radar so we could ask for donations. The story of James Robertson, Detroit's now famous 'walking man,' really opened our eyes to the interest in the public to help people who are helping themselves," she adds.

"We help people like Mr. Robertson every day; and with the money raised for him alone we could have purchased 120 cars for 120 people. We're very excited for him, but we want people to be aware that there are so many people in his exact situation who need help."

Bob says, "We need to recog-

nize all of the James Robertsons in Metropolitan Detroit. He pointed out that they assist more than 30-40 individuals monthly, totaling more than 500 per year.

The Schwartzes, who have three children and attend Temple Emanu-El in Oak Park, don't take a paycheck from the foundation and have no administrative expenses — ensuring that each and every dollar donated to Here to Help goes directly to those in need.

"We purchase used vehicles from Volunteers of America because they've been very good for our people," Bob says. "They sell quality used cars, and we make that purchase in the name of our client. Each car costs just \$2,000."

To learn more about Here to Help Foundation or to make a contribution to help a family in need, visit www.heretohelpfoundation.org. If you don't have a credit card or access to a computer, you can mail a contribution to P.O. Box 480, Royal Oak, Michigan 48068.

While Here to Help accepts contributions of any size, your tax-deductible gift of \$500 can help pay a family's utilities; \$750 will help furnish an apartment; \$800 will go to necessary car repairs; or \$2,500 can buy a used car for a qualified man or woman working at least 35 hours a week. □

For more information or to donate, email info@heretohelpfoundation.org.