

**TOWN OF GREENWICH
SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

2002-2003 Service and Workload Levels

Caseload continued to rise in '02-03, reaching 2,294 unduplicated Department cases, an increase of 241 or 12% from '01-02's 2,053. The Adult and Family Division served 1,208 unduplicated cases; an increase of 283 (30%) from last year's 925. The Senior Services Division served 1,086 unduplicated cases, an increase of 145 (15%) from last year's 941 cases.

The poor economy, job losses, and State benefit and program cutbacks are responsible for the Adult and Family caseload increase. The aging of Greenwich's elderly population, and fuller Senior Division staffing, caused Senior cases to rise. A small number of cases served in both Divisions are assigned a 'home' Division and counted only once to accurately present the number of households in need reached each year.

Due to space limitations, only unusual developments and programs that experienced change this year are discussed below. The public is encouraged to review the Department's comprehensive '02-03 annual report of service statistics and programs, available at the Department, Town Libraries, and on the Town's Website.

2002-2003 Program Challenges, Changes, and Initiatives

The Department's **Recreation and Arts Program** for Byram children re-opened on schedule in 9/02, with minor modifications required by the CT Dept. of Public Health. Daily hours were reduced to two, and homework assistance was discontinued. We thank Greenwich's State legislators and all others whose help last year won a regulatory battle to be classified correctly as a community recreation program. Their efforts helped 68 Byram children enjoy another year of supervised recreation and arts after school.

Neither 2001 nor 2002 fundraising for the **Greenwich Youth Conservation Project** kept pace with the increased cost of serving more teens since expanding this summer program in 1998. Last year, private donations funded the over 70 teens' work stipends and transportation costs. This year, the Department funded the \$7,000 transportation cost in its '03-04 budget, through cutbacks and savings in the Homemaker Service.

The **Teen Outreach Program** for Western Middle School and High School students was suspended most of the year, due to inability to find staff. After-school shifts of three hours are very difficult to fill. Full staffing is expected by Fall '03, allowing the program to resume. Twenty-one children were served in Summer '02.

Our **Campership Program** of scholarships and camp transportation for children from low-income families sent 243 kids and Seniors to camp in 2003. We again received \$9,500 from the Griff Harris Sr. 2002 Charity Golf Tournament. Their donation sent 35 extra Greenwich children to camp. We deeply thank the Harris' and all Tournament sponsors and players.

Need for the Department's **Direct Financial Aid Program** increased this year due to the poor economy. 222 cases received \$112,316, compared with 143 cases/\$79,024 last year, 42% more funds and 55% more cases. 173 unduplicated Adult and Family Division cases received \$95,463: 65 or 60% more cases/41% more funds. The Senior Services Division expended \$16,853 for 49 unduplicated Seniors, 14 or 40% more cases/50% more funds than last year, on services like Lifeline, Meals on Wheels, rent, and other basic needs.

Unemployed and under-employed residents in our **Work, Education, and Beginnings Program** received a big boost this year when CTE, our region's anti-poverty agency, rescued our discontinued computer skills training classes by bringing laptops and teachers right to Town Hall. CTE ran three sets of classes, and offered second sessions at their headquarters in Stamford for those able to make the trip. Thirty-three residents completed the free elementary Word classes. Daytime ESL classes with free babysitting

continued. Our job developer placed 29 unduplicated residents in 31 jobs: 16 single adults; 13 families with 43 members; helping a total of 59 residents. Clients also found jobs on their own and through their caseworkers.

This year the Department lost its ability to participate in the very successful holiday **Help A Neighbor Campaign** for disadvantaged residents, resulting in loss of \$12,000 in aid to needy clients. The sponsor's parent company replaced the local Campaign with a foundation-based fund drive. Public agencies are ineligible under foundation rules. The Dept. launched a last-minute **Holiday Cheer** fund appeal on WGCH radio. Unfortunately, despite the helpfulness and cooperation of WGCH personnel, under \$200 was received. Repetitive newspaper presentation of case needs seems more effective in reaching potential holiday donors.

This year Neighbor To Neighbor was able to supply reports on our clients' utilization of their **Supplemental Food Program**. Department staff were thus able to reduce the monthly eligible list from over 200 to 182. This still exceeded NTN's monthly capacity of 170 households, so the Dept. expanded use of its **Dept. Food Pantry** to further lower the monthly NTN eligible list. This year the Department's Food Pantry served 83 unduplicated households with 187 residents. NTN served 214 unduplicated households with 579 people.

The Junior League of Greenwich's *Food Insecurity Solutions Team* ran a small pilot program of **Food Cash Cards** this year, using three Department clients with special dietary needs as its test group. Dept. staff shopped with clients to help them read and understand labels and cost-compare. The cash card receipts were reviewed by Dept. casework staff and furnished to the League committee.

Findings were that the families of these clients remained dependent on Neighbor To Neighbor for most of their food, and that a large time investment was required by Department staff for shopping and review of receipts to document healthful shopping with the donated funds. The pilot failed to meet the goal of alleviating demand on NTN, and had a high administrative cost. A food cash card program was therefore found ineffective in resolving problems created by the growing hunger in our community.

Considerable **Crisis Intervention** was required this year to tenants displaced from over five rental buildings condemned for building code violations, often after a fire. Most buildings were severely overcrowded, and occupied by working residents of low incomes, often immigrants. These dangerous situations reflect the increasingly dire shortage of subsidized and affordable housing in Greenwich.

The Department's 28-year history of providing **Home Health Care** to residents served in Greenwich Hospital's Home Care program ended on 6/30/03. Health Aide service was provided by agreement from 1975 to 2003. It ended because the Hospital resumed its own Health Aide service, and Medicare reimbursement changes and cutbacks precluded the Hospital from increasing its providers' fees. Health Aide service was added to our existing Homemaker-Only service in 1975 at the request of the Hospital and the United Way.

Five of six remaining Health Aide clients transferred to Hospital services. The family of the sixth Home Health Aide client asked to retain the Department's Home Health Aide. Both the Hospital and the Department agreed to prevent hardship within the family.

This year the Board of Social Services' Homemaker Service Advisory Committee recommended that the Department's Homemaker Service become a subcontractor of the **On The Mend Program**. OTM supplies emergency in-home emergency childcare to working parents with moderately-ill children who cannot attend school on a given day. With the phase-out of Home Health Aide service in 6/03, it became possible to consider meeting this need, first identified by a Board Strategic Planning Committee in 1998.

The cost of providing service on a trial basis to under 10 Greenwich families per year was negligible, but some subcontractor requirements were unacceptable to the Town Law Dept. On The Mend's sponsoring agency would not waive them. This made the issue moot, so the Board did not vote on the merits of participation.

The Board of Social Services' Homemaker Service Steering Committee also looked briefly at the amount of need for temporary daytime care for Seniors and disabled, who need care on an occasional basis when their regular caregivers are unavailable. It was decided that the Homemaker Service Evaluation Committee will revisit this need when they conclude their evaluation of the efficiency, effectiveness, and desirability of continuing to provide Homemaker-Only services.

We are pleased to report that in 2002 the Greenwich Commission on Aging agreed to assume Giovanni's Holiday Luncheon Coordination of reservations and transportation for all Greenwich agencies sending Senior Citizens to this wonderful, free, December luncheon in Stamford. Commission staff did a fine job in their inaugural year. With Town-wide coordination duties more centrally and properly situated, we were able to concentrate more attention on elderly protective services and Homemaker Service changes.

The Greenwich Housing Authority inspected over 150 Senior housing units this year. Some Department clients received Lease violation notices for deteriorated living conditions. Casework with these tenants included negotiating with the Housing Authority, assisting clients to respond to the notices, and helping them address the violations. In such situations, the Department often funds and implements heavy cleaning service to bring the unit into good condition, and allow a Homemaker referral for ongoing maintenance.

Norwalk's antipoverty agency (NEON), which provides Greenwich's Energy Program Administration by certifying residents' Energy applications and disbursing State and federal Energy funds, received a \$2,000 payment for its 2002 Energy services. It was Greenwich's first fiscal contribution to NEON, which has always advised it does not receive federal funds for certifying Greenwich applications and disbursing aid.

In 5/03, the Department received a surprise offer from CTE in Stamford, the community action agency for Greenwich, to provide Fall '03 Energy application service. CTE proposed to send CTE staff equipped with laptop computers to Greenwich several days per week. The infusion of additional help during a recession that swells caseloads is very attractive. The benefits and disadvantages of changing our Energy-certifying agency to CTE were under review as the year closed in 6/03.

The Department's contractual casework services to Parsonage Cottage ended in 11/02, when the Greenwich Housing Authority converted its part-time position to full-time. Parsonage hired the assigned Dept. worker. A new agreement was created for Department supervision for the balance of the year.

A Department Charter change recommended by the Dept. Study of 2001 was approved by the RTM in 3/03 for implementation 7/1/03. It permits The Nathaniel Witherell to hire its own social service personnel, rather than being required to use Department staff, which was inefficient for both departments.

Impact of State Personnel Cutbacks: After 12/02, State downstaffing from large numbers of State Social Services personnel accepting early retirement under the State's budget deficit-reduction plan impacted Department staff and services. Department staff and clients found it more difficult to reach State staff, and experienced more lost paperwork, application processing delays, and technical errors.

Impact of State Service Cutbacks: Cutbacks in the State's 'Care for Kids' program after 1/03 restricted eligibility to parents on State cash assistance, wait-listing working parents. With a lifetime limit on welfare benefits, the pressure to work on impoverished parents of small children is intense. State childcare benefits have been essential in allowing these parents to maintain jobs. As a result, a number of working parents began losing their jobs due to inability to afford childcare.