



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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Commissioner of Social Services

MEMO

TO: Carol A. Femia, *MSW, MBA*
Commissioner of Social Services

FROM: Alison Brush, Coordinator
Community Gifts Program

RE: 2004 Holiday Aid Program Final Report

DATE: February 25, 2005

Program Description: Using donated funds and other gifts, needy Greenwich families and individuals are helped with food, funds, clothing, and gifts at Thanksgiving and Christmas or Chanukah. For individuals or families to qualify for Holiday Aid, their income must not exceed 175% of federal poverty guidelines. Under these guidelines, a family of four with a monthly income of \$2,749 or less is eligible for services.

Smaller families receive certificates redeemable for groceries at Food Mart stores in Cos Cob and Old Greenwich and Stop & Shop in Greenwich. The values of each year's certificates are determined by family size and the amount of donations received. Food baskets are often awarded to larger families of four or more people.

At Christmas/Chanukah, new toys, hats, mittens, and scarves, and a variety of gifts such as jewelry, radios, and clothing, are also provided for children 17 and under. Again this year, one organization, Catherine's Hope, worked extensively with us to supplement our toy/gift collections.

Our Generous Donors: The Holiday Aid program would not be possible without the generosity of concerned citizens, churches, community organizations, and businesses. The Department of Social Services staff work hand-in-hand with volunteers to raise funds to provide holiday aid to Department clients and other residents on low or fixed incomes.

Community Expectations: The Greenwich residents who contribute to our Holiday Aid program represent the intense community interest in ensuring that all members of the community participate fully in the celebration of the holidays. They enthusiastically support holiday projects through their churches, the workplace, and various organizations, and make individual contributions of cash, food, or other gifts.

In return, they expect our Department to identify the needy residents, refer them by age and gender for proper clothing and gift selection, and coordinate the selection and delivery of donated food baskets and other tangible donations with specific families and their needs.

Residents making donations also expect us to minimize duplication of aid as much as possible, and to help raise the funds needed to provide the nearly \$19,000 in food vouchers issued at the holidays. To relieve the donors and volunteers, and to make their holiday efforts work smoothly and effectively, we are expected to coordinate many of the details of the many holiday projects.

Some donors recognize the need for more than the traditional items of toys and food (though important). They show their concern by meeting some special needs that will make a difference in clients' lives throughout the year and possibly for years to come. The Department appreciates the generosity of all community donors, and

Department Mission Statement: "To protect and promote the welfare of the most vulnerable individuals in the community, through support and services of the highest quality, that maximize competency, independence, and quality of life."

enjoys its effective public-private partnership with them that permits all Greenwich residents, regardless of circumstances, to enjoy the holidays as they are traditionally celebrated in our country.

Program Operation: Much of our work consists of coordinating community efforts to help disadvantaged residents at the holidays. This year was especially challenging, due to the continued high volume of eligible residents. The greatly increased number of applicants, and the addition of three special projects involving new donor efforts, also placed greater demands on Program staff.

The Community Gifts Coordinator receives referrals from Department professional staff on behalf of clients and others identified as having little or no means of celebrating the holidays in keeping with tradition in this country. Clients may receive assistance at Thanksgiving and/or Christmas or Chanukah, depending on need, and the amount of donations received. Some seek help for one holiday only.

The activities and accomplishments of the 2004 Holiday Aid program are summarized below.

Achievements This Year: A total of approximately \$16,280 was available in donations this year, about \$8,120 or 33% less than last year's \$24,400. Of this total, \$2,865 was raised through our letter-writing appeal. For the eighth year, Joe Porricelli Jr., worked with Community Gifts Program Coordinator Alison Brush to coordinate our "*Neighbors Helping Neighbors*" project, which takes place at Porricelli's Food Marts. Shoppers were encouraged to make donations at the registers as they checked out.

This year \$4,320 was raised, \$5,162 less than last year. This drastic reduction can be attributed to the fact that last year we had a very active volunteer who recruited many others to pass out flyers announcing the project as people entered the stores. This made a big difference in donations from the year before. Unfortunately, this volunteer moved and was not replaced. Next year, we will attempt to find someone willing to manage this effort, as it makes a substantial difference in contributions.

\$112 remained on account at Porricelli's from the previous year. We are extremely grateful to the Porricellis for their support of this program over the years. A list of donors appears in Appendix B. Funds management appears in Appendix C.

Thanksgiving Project: We served 418 unduplicated households, 32 or 8% more than last year's 386. The households consisted of 1,233 individuals, 91 or 8% more than the last year's 1,142. We issued 241 food vouchers, a decrease of 8 or 3% from last year, totaling \$8,155. This was \$75 or 8% less than last year's \$8,830. Certificate values were: \$25 for a single person, \$35 for a family of two, \$45 for a family of three, and \$50 for a family of four or more. 177 food baskets (137 last year) were delivered by various groups. Please see Appendix D for a list of Thanksgiving contributors.

Christmas and Chanukah Project: This year, 462 unduplicated households were served, compared to 418 last year, an 11% increase. The households were comprised of 1,348 individuals, 125 or 10% more than last year's 1,223. 77 clients received \$25 gift cards redeemable at Food Mart. These were donated to Neighbor to Neighbor, who turned them over to us. As a result of this generous donation, we were able to issue 269 food certificates, a decrease of 38 or 12% over last year's 307. Vouchers totaled \$10,010, \$1,350 or 12% less than last year's \$11,360. Many households served at Christmas/Chanukah are also served at Thanksgiving.

Donors distributed 116 food baskets, an increase of 5 or 5% from last year's 111. Many families of four or more received food baskets this year, usually reserved for families of 5 or more. In some cases, baskets were of greater value than certificates. In addition to food, some baskets contained books, gifts, and other items. See Appendix E for Christmas basket donors.

The Christmas vouchers' values were in the same amounts as those issued at Thanksgiving: \$25 for a single individual, \$35 for a family of two, \$45 for a family of three, and \$50 for a family of four or more.

The combined total for vouchers issued for both holidays was \$18,165, which is \$2,025 or 10% less than last year. The amount in vouchers issued exceeded the total funds available, including our prior year balance, by \$1,885. We felt this to be a prudent risk, given the great increase in households needing assistance, as we know from historical experience that a small fraction of vouchers are not redeemed, or are redeemed for less than the face amount.

We anticipate a zero fund balance available for next year, however, which is an unusual and serious matter. We always hope to have at least \$5,000 on hand, in case the following year's donations decline for some reason, as they did this year. Given our zero fund balance, requests for monetary donations will need to be greatly stepped up for Holiday Aid 2005 if all eligible applicants are to be helped, and food voucher amounts not reduced.

Specialized Christmas/Chanukah Giving: In addition to the types of assistance mentioned above, some groups and individuals continued specialized ways of giving. The Second Congregational Church, for example, again set up a "Giving Tree", using case scenarios we provided describing clients' needs. Members then made monetary contributions to "angels" selected from the tree. See Appendix A for a list of the Church's donations.

For the fifth year, Dave's Cycle Shop (owner, Glen Van Cura), and other concerned individuals donated new bicycles (24 this year) to children ages 4-10 referred by our Department. A few days before Christmas, several of the children and their parents gathered in front of Town Hall so Santa Claus could give each child his bike.

Mr. Van Cura arranged for an antique police car to escort the Cos Cob antique fire truck filled with the remaining bikes, and Santa, around town. The entourage went door-to-door, accompanied by the Dept.'s Community Gifts Program coordinator and Santa, who personally delivered a bike to each child. It was a generous and rewarding experience. Mr. Van Cura hopes to continue his tradition next year.

At Thanksgiving, Amy Leavitt, a local woman, decided that in lieu of receiving gifts at her 40th birthday party, she would ask people to bring specific food items for a holiday meal. She then put together and delivered (with her friends) 40 food baskets to clients in this program. She even included little gifts for the children in the families!

Another woman, Ellen Sweeney, got together with a group of friends and requested wish lists for 15 children. They went shopping together, purchasing clothing and toys, and brought the packages to Town Hall about a week before Christmas.

Neighbor to Neighbor referred a woman named Staci Fleming to the Department who wanted to do a holiday project for families who receive assistance from Neighbor to Neighbor. She asked for profiles of 40 families and wish lists, if possible. She hosted a holiday party for her friends where each one chose one of the family profiles. They all then boarded a bus and went to Target in Stamford to shop for requested items. The packages were delivered to clients before Christmas. In addition to helping the 40 families, each person that night was asked to purchase a gift for a senior or single adult. These items were brought to the Department and delivered by caseworkers.

Kiwanis/Jaycees Children's Shopping Sprees: This year the Kiwanis Club of Greenwich and the Greenwich Jaycees both sponsored separate Children's Shopping Sprees and Parties. Since this is traditionally a Jaycees' event, the Kiwanis offered to host a party for the "overflow" children: those who couldn't go to the first one due to lack of space. 25 children attended the Jaycees' event and 15 joined the Kiwanis. Odd Job Trading in Port Chester was this year's shopping site for both. Each child was given the opportunity to select

one gift for each family member, and also received a special gift from the Kiwanis and the Jaycees at a post-shopping holiday party next door at a pizza restaurant.

Toy Project: The annual Toy Distribution Project, co-sponsored by the Department and the Greenwich Housing Authority at Agnes Morley Heights, served 446 unduplicated children, 4 or 1% more than last year's 442. Children 17 and under received new toys, mittens, hats, or scarves, and other gifts. The number of toys each child received was determined by the number of toys donated, and the number of children per age group. Children 0-3: one toy each. Children aged 7-10 received two gifts each. Approximately 1,600 items were donated, about 100 more than last year. See Appendix F for Toy Distribution volunteers and Appendix G for toy donors.

Angel Tree Project: Last summer we were informed by Rand Insurance that after 11 years of sponsoring their wonderful Angel Tree project, they decided to discontinue it. Several reasons were cited, including: a four-fold increase in the number of children since the first year, requiring the temporary full-time attention of 6 employees; the number of "angels" left on the tree, which Rand employees felt an obligation to shop for, was over 250; and difficulties in finding volunteers to staff the tree at Food Mart.

While this news was a disappointing set-back for our clients, the Department is fortunate to have several other agencies who have sponsored Angel Trees in the past and wanted to continue to do so. We also had a few new ones this year: St. Roch's Church and First Church Pre-School. In addition, some Angel Tree sponsors accepted more requests this year, to compensate for the loss of Rand.

All the agencies coordinated their Angel Trees in about the same way. The Department submitted referrals including age, sex, size and needed clothing item (mostly jackets, sweaters, shoes and boots), for each child, age 0-17. The "angel" was then chosen, the gift shopped for, and the gift was returned to us wrapped. The distribution occurred at Town Hall about a week before Christmas.

We were extremely grateful to the following groups who participated in the project: St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church (315 Items), Greenwich Municipal Credit Union (50), Stanwich School (42), Edgewood Travel (25), St. Roch's Church (24) and First Church Pre-School (11).

Altogether, 467 gifts (696 last year), were donated to 425 unduplicated children through the Angel Tree project. Everyone involved was understandably very pleased. See Appendix H for Angel Tree volunteers.

Salvation Army Kettle Drive: The Army allocates funds from its local Christmas Kettle Drive to support some of our programs and other services in the community. The Kettle Drive raised approximately \$11,964 this year, \$6,407 or 35% less than last year's total of \$18,371. This decrease was in large part due to last year's kettle contributions memorializing the passing of Salvation Army Treasurer Bill Lehren. Per Salvation Army policy, 10% must be sent to Army headquarters in Hartford. This left \$10,778 in Greenwich.

The \$10,778 raised came from sites on Greenwich Avenue, as well as other sites in Greenwich such as the Food Emporium in Riverside and the Food Mart in Cos Cob. The sum raised on Greenwich Avenue, generated from local volunteers, was \$3,233, 10% less than last year's total of \$3,586.

The Community Gifts Coordinator again attempted to arrange to use Salvation Army Cadets on Greenwich Avenue, this year. We were told that they would be concentrating all of their efforts in New York City. We were invited to try again next year, however, as circumstances can change from year to year.

Since 1987, the Community Gifts Program Coordinator has assumed most of the recruiting responsibility for the Kettles located on Greenwich Avenue. Coordinator Alison Brush again coordinated the Kettle Drive for these

sites, using volunteers from student clubs, community service clubs, and a few individuals. The combined volunteer hours for all groups, on four weekends and some weekdays, totaled 284 hours, 11 less than last year. A total of 144 volunteers rang bells this year, 20 or 16% more than last year's 124.

Brunswick School students recruited by Board of Social Services' member, John Booth, took kettles on two weekends, totaling 88 hours. The Signette and Link Clubs from Greenwich High School took kettles on one weekend, totaling 76 hours. A group from Central Middle School took two kettles on one day, providing 24 hours of service.

Community Learning Program students staffed various kettles for a total of 16 hours. The Byram/Cos Cob Rotary Club took a kettle at the Cos Cob Food Mart for an additional 12 hours. Two families volunteered a total of 12 hours. The Kiwanis Club of Greenwich manned a kettle on three days, giving 32 hours of service. Also, students from the Arch School took kettles on various days for 24 hours.

Mrs. Brush visited all of the stores where kettles were to be placed to gather information on store hours, kettle storage, etc. She took responsibility for collecting money at the end of each day from all the Greenwich Avenue kettles. She recruited her spouse to collect money, and assist with this and other holiday projects. As always, Mrs. Brush gave far above and beyond the required effort to this project, and deserves special credit. The Department and Salvation Army Greenwich Service Unit express its sincere thanks to Roderick and Alison Brush.

Att: Appendices A-H

Copies:

Board of Social Services

Salvation Army Greenwich Service Unit

APPENDIX A

DONATIONS FROM SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

(4 donations)

- \$600 donation to a young woman, who is guardian to her sixteen years old twin brothers, for car repair.
- \$500 donation to a single mom for medical treatment for her 13 years old daughter.
- \$450 donation to a family of 8 to help with their fuel payments.
- \$600 donation to a senior citizen for medication.

APPENDIX B

2004 HOLIDAY AID PROGRAM DONATIONS

(26 donors)

Lions Club of Greenwich	Mrs. Elizabeth Hurst
Freunde Deutscher Sprache Inc.	Mr. & Mrs. Robert Ivanhoe
Mrs. Deborah Berner	Ms. Virginia Keeshan
Ms. Ann Blumensaadt	Mrs. Helen Kinzel
Mrs. Elizabet Bonsal	Ms. Janet Koerner
Ms. Monica Bruning	Mr. Anthony Mazza
Ms. Mary Corson	Mr. & Mrs. Peter McSpadden
Mr. & Mrs. Virgil H. Cumming	Mrs. Karen Murphy
Ms. Mary D. Falvella	Mr. Hans Plickert
Mr. George Friend	Ms. Alice Sears
Mr. & Mrs. William J. Griffin, III	Mr. & Mrs. William H. Stein, Jr.
Ms. Evelyn Heagney	Mr. Barry Sternlicht
Ms. Margaret Heap	Mr. & Mrs. Arthur V. Wallace

APPENDIX C**TOTAL 2004 FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND EXPENDITURES**

Prior Porricelli's Balance	\$112	Current Yr. Porricelli's Proceeds	\$4,300
Prior Vol. Center Balance	\$9,003	Current Yr. Letter Appeal	\$2,865
Total Prior Balances	\$9,115	Total Current Yr. Funds Raised	\$7,165
Prior Balances Total	\$9,115	Total Funds Available	\$16,280
Current Funds Total	\$7,165	2004 Voucher Value Issued	\$18,165
Total 2004 Funds Available	\$16,280	Estimated Balance for 2005	(\$1,885)

APPENDIX D**THANKSGIVING FOOD BASKETS**Community Donors (13) Baskets (177)

Name/Organization	Baskets	Name/Organization	Baskets
Church of the New Covenant	2	Greenwich Firefighters	12
Girl Scout Troop #760/Cos Cob School	18	Ladies Auxiliary Cos Cob	10
Edgewood Travel	2	St. Mary's Outreach	15
First Lutheran Church	2	St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church	25
First Presbyterian Church	8	Ann Macaluso	2
Greenwich Academy	40	Bertha Migliano	1
		Amy Leavitt	40

APPENDIX E

CHRISTMAS OR CHANUKAH FOOD BASKETSCommunity Donors (69) Baskets (116)

Name/Organization	Baskets	Name/Organization	Baskets
Ginny Gray's Bible Study Group	3	Patty Hopper	1
Edgewood Travel	2	Boo Huth	1
First Presbyterian Church	6	Mary Jeffery	1
Greenwich Academy Advisory Groups	21	Lauren Kelley	1
Greenwich Academy Lower School	11	Katherine Kenny	1
Girl Scout Troop # 226	1	Alison Leigh	1
MMC Capital	1	Jen Ludington	1
North Castle Partners	1	Lauren Lufkin & Jennifer Groves	1
Second Congregational Church	15	Margot Mabie	1
Talbots	1	Ali Mahon & Sawnie McGee	1
Crissy Robinson & Alisa Brockelman	1	Amy McCooe	1
Amy Andrews	1	Ronda McDonald	1
Stephanie Barrett	1	Neile Messer	1
Ginge Cabrera	1	Liz Oberbeck	1
Laurie Caputo	1	Kelly Pasciucco	1
Gail Casey	1	Stephanie Patrick	1
Jenny Clark	1	Betsy Perry	1
Elizabeth Darling	1	Maggie Pettinato	1
Kristy Dela Sierra	1	Frank Polley	1
Melissa Fiorita	1	Melissa Price	1
Rachel Franco	1	Kim Salomon	1
Icy Frantz	1	Tracy Schmidt	1
Melissa Frey	1	Helen Servick	1
Teri Galluccio	1	Katie Simon	1
Tracy Grossman	1	Jennifer Simonson	1
Traci Gwozdz	1	Beth Sisca	1
Polly Hansen & Lisi Vincent	1	Brooke Stahl	1
Jen Harford	1	Betsy Swindell	1
Kathy Harrington	1	Jacqueline Walsh	1
Nicole Heath	1	Alex Williams & Sarah Greenhill	1
Carol Henderson	1	Michele Wolfram	1
Peter Henkel	1	Amy Zolin	1

APPENDIX F

TOY DISTRIBUTION PROJECT

(11 volunteers)

Mrs. Consuelo DaSilva	Ms. Mary McNamee
Mrs. Maria Gasparino	Mrs. Jennifer Pembroke
Mrs. Ruth Gordon	Mrs. Gloria Russo
Ms. Catherine Hines	The Huth Family
Ms. Stacy Israel	The Simon Family
Mrs. Azucena Marin	

APPENDIX G

TOY DONATIONS

(26 donors)

Bridges Nursery School	Ms. Maura Carr
Catherine's Hope	Mrs. William Cordner
First Church of Round Hill	Mrs. Evelyn Heagney
Greenwich Country Day School	Mrs. Boo Huth
Greenwich Academy	Mrs. Virginia Keeshan
Ivey Barnum & O'Mara	Mrs. Elsie Maduri
Round Hill Community Church	Mrs. Josephine Podgursky
Signet Star-Berkeley Insurance Co.	Ms. Terry Podgursky
Silver Shield Association	Mrs. Laura Said
St. Mary's Social Concerns Committee	Mrs. Whitney Stropp
Toys for Tots	Ms. Lauren Roth
Ms. Joan Benvenuto	Mrs. Mary Jane Wallace
Ms. Ann Burke	Ms. Liz Wold

APPENDIX H

ANGEL TREE PROJECT

(3 volunteers)

Ms. Stacy Israel
Ms. Mary McNamee
Mr. Leo Rosenthal