

## YEAR IN REVIEW: 2012

# Township's support of community at high level



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NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

Every year at holiday time, an anonymous individual walks into the Township Office and drops off an envelope with a large amount of cash to assist the Township in providing support for families in need. This person leaves no name or contact information so that a letter of acknowledgement cannot be delivered. No expression of gratitude is wanted. It is the simple act of sharing one's good fortune for the benefit of others in the community that is intended.

In another instance, a garden club learned at their recent holiday party that the Township was rallying to help an anonymous family who had fallen on hard times. The women of this garden club spontaneously decided to pass a hat, and they collected enough mon-

ey to purchase a Christmas tree for the family.

We at the Township are witness to so many rather incredible acts of kindness and generosity.

The Township is challenged to provide leadership, advocacy and resources to benefit the physical, mental and social well-being of Township residents. That is our mission, and we are fortunate that we do not have to do it alone. We do it with the tremendous support of many unsung heroes, like the donor previously mentioned who requires no accolades. We do it with the help of the Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, birthday boys and girls, churches, synagogues, local business, numerous charitable organizations and so many individuals and families who step up to the task alongside us.

At this time of year, we pause to reflect on the numbers of individuals and families served by the programs that we deliver. We are approaching our fourth consecutive year of increasing need as a result

of the economic downturn, and while many may be experiencing improved conditions, we at the Township continue to see need on a daily basis. As a result of job displacement, disability, disease, divorce and a variety of other challenges, people facing unexpected financial and personal struggles turn to the Township for support.

The Township Food Pantry is probably our service most familiar to residents. It is interesting to note that many people respond with surprise when they learn that New Trier Township has a pantry, as if our affluent community were immune from life's challenges. This year, 6,000 bags of groceries were provided to approximately 777 households for a total of 3,563 persons served over 1,438 visits from Jan. 1-Dec. 11. The number of families served represents an increase of 20 percent over last year.

The Angel Fund, which provides aid to residents in need of emergency assistance to meet critical financial obligations such

as rent, utilities and educational and medical needs, is another highly visible program among residents. From March 1-Nov. 30, the Angel Fund disbursed \$36,125 representing 15 cases assisting 27 residents. Together the Angel Fund and New Trier Township Fund provided 500 Township students with Target gift cards through the School Supplies program. During the same period, 28 emergency assistance cases assisting 88 residents were processed. The total amount of money distributed in support of those residents was \$43,828.

The Township has numerous Caring Neighbors programs, which are always met with enthusiasm and generosity by the community. Highlights of the Township's holiday giving programs were the Thanksgiving and Holiday Dinner events, the distribution of food gift bags to seniors and the Holiday Giving and Senior Snowflakes wish list programs. The Thanksgiving and Holiday Dinner programs are a collaboration with Jewel Food

Store on Green Bay Road in Wilmette, and the result is that meals are provided to residents in need so that they may enjoy traditional meals during the holiday season. In addition, thanks to Grand Foods, we are able to provide food gift bags to needy seniors during the holidays as well. Through the Holiday Sharing and Senior Snowflakes, 92 children and 27 seniors received holiday gifts.

The Township also serves residents through the funding we provide to local agencies that service the community. This year, the Township has simplified our forms that agencies use in applying for grants. We just completed the grant application process resulting in recommendations to the board that 36 agencies receive \$1,326,190 in support of 47 programs. These numbers are subject to board approval but represent a lot of hard work by committee members in reviewing the grants. Advisory Committees are key to the stewardship of assigning these grants, and the committees are made

up of volunteers from the community.

Another concern of our residents is their increasing property taxes. The Township provides services through the assessor's office in support of homeowners, and the most frequently asked question the Assessor received this year has been to explain why property taxes are rising while property values are declining. The answer is twofold: the cost of providing government services is not falling, hence tax rates are increasing and exemptions that were designed to protect homeowners from increases in assessed value now offer little or no relief as assessments fall.

Increasing need has been a constant theme the Township has faced throughout the year. Thankfully, we have been blessed with constant support and generosity by residents. We close out the year with grateful hearts for the kindness of our residents, and we remain hopeful for prosperity and health in the new year.