



The Staten Island Giving Circle

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HAPPY GROUND HOG'S DAY; VALENTINE'S DAY; HAPPY ALMOST SPRING!!!

Our February meeting provided a ton of information and new ideas and the room was once again energized. It's still early in the New Year, but contacts, ideas, project execution are flowing. Grab a cup of coffee/tea and take a look at what your organization is up to.

It is, of course, our desire and intention to grow our Staten Island Giving Circle Not-for-Profit organization bigger, better and stronger – not for our own benefit, but to benefit those in our community who are struggling. Because our modus operandi is to provide time and necessities to these populations, it is also necessary to be constantly looking for innovative ideas on how to raise the resources to meet these needs. You will see that we have lots of creative minds working to raise these monies below.

February's monthly Gift Basket was constructed and donated by Charlotte Sciarrino and the basket raised \$160.00. Charlotte had earmarked these proceeds to go to Lustgarten Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer. Many of us hadn't heard of this organization so we were glad to learn of another entity supporting this horrible disease. For more information, check out: www.lustgarten.org. Mary Alfano won the basket and donated its contents to a local food pantry.

To explain our monthly Gift Basket, let me tell again that this idea was added last year because we came to the realization that some meeting participants put into the charity raffle every month, sometimes for years, and hadn't won the right to choose the charity. Therefore, we now have people sign up for a month to bring their own constructed gift basket which is raffled (3 tickets for \$5). The basket is raffled and the proceeds are earmarked for the gift basket contributor's favorite charity.

Deacon Paul and Eilean Kosinski will be toting along March's Gift Basket (did Paul mention a cruise or European trip?!?!.....only kidding guys).

Ever since our very first meeting in January 2008, we have offered \$10/each raffle tickets at the end of our monthly meetings. It is our policy to split the "pot" if the collection meets or exceeds \$500.00; if the collection adds up to less, we award one winner. Last Wednesday, \$340.00 was collected and the winner was Nancy Cohen. Nancy announced that she wanted her winnings to be turned over to JCC's Camp Sunrise, a summer camp open to seriously ill children and their families. Kevin Brosnick, an administrator of this innovative program, spoke to us last Spring and his presentation took root with so many of us. You can learn more about Camp Sunrise by clicking on: www.sunriseassociation.org.

Keeping the \$\$\$ information thread going, I can tell you that St. Patrick's second grade moms participated in a Paint and Sip night, designing wine glasses, and raised \$280.00 for the Giving Circle which will send three kids to a one-week camp program at the Greenbelt this coming summer. How's that?!?!?

We are also scheduling an art experience for ARCH Care's Day Program (possibly watercolor painting or canvas). We'll let you know when those plans are solidified. ARCH Care supports senior citizens and their needs.

Michele distributed \$5 Dunkin Donuts gift cards to brand new attendees. These cards are meant to be passed forward to someone needing a little boost as your first random act of kindness for the SIGC.

Another new project on the horizon is for us to collaborate with other organizations in our community to help clean up Joe Holzka Community Garden. Michele will keep us informed, but those of you who don't mind getting your hands dirty, and who love to see things grow, consider piling on this endeavor.

TWO TREMENDOUS SPEAKERS

One of the great features of many of our monthly meetings is our guest speaker roster. Wednesday, we had two wonderful speakers. We learn so much – there are so many absolutely great community outreach organizations and missions out there on Staten Island. We learned of two more on Wednesday. First, we met Tammi D'Antonio of Gianna Nicole's Heart of Hope (www.giannanicolesheartofhope.org). This mission originated to help the family of a seriously ill child and it mushroomed into a full-fledged

tri-community, gang buster organization assisting families of pediatric cancer patients. They have an annual fundraiser which attracted nearly 700 last year! Tammi was an eloquent speaker and her passion for the cause was very evident. Tammi will be returning to our next meeting with an armful of written information. One of the unique ideas the organization uses for fundraising and public awareness is the Pink Chair idea. There is one pink chair placed in a restaurant and whoever sits in that seat, has a portion of their bill donated by the restaurant to Gianna's organization. Isn't that clever? Can you think of something similar – using a prop or direction to stimulate interest and awareness of our Circle? Let us know.

Our second speaker was Rosanne McAllister who is coordinating the Friendly Visiting Program at Community Agency for Senior Citizens, Inc. (CASC). This program is funded by NYC Department for the Aging. Rosanne was looking for volunteers to donate an hour a week of their precious time to be a companion to an older adult homebound client. The volunteer and client, by seeing each other every week, would build a friendship rapport so important to the senior citizen (and to the volunteer as well). This is a nice concept. If you want to learn more about this program, call Rosanne at (718) 981-6226, Ext. 141.

CIRCLING BACK AND THEN MOVING FORWARD

February 4's Murder Mystery Dinner Theater "Till Death Do us Part," was an absolute total success. Canlon's Restaurant provided a beautiful buffet of food, the performance was cute, funny and very entertaining, everyone enjoyed a little wine and beer and comradery came easy. This was a collaborative fundraising effort with the Giving Circle being coupled with the Oakwood Heights Community Church. Carol Crocitto and Fran Sisto orchestrated the bulk of the event with aplomb. The proceeds were divided according to attendee numbers so the Giving Circle realized \$1,330.00 from the evening. We were thrilled with the entire outcome.

The \$1,000 donated to us by South Shore Rotary was divided in two and checks have been hand-carried by Michele to St. Paul's Methodist Church pantry and the College of Staten Island's food pantry. Michele reported to me that both places were just thrilled with these generous checks. Food scarcity remains a huge focal point of concern for our community so if you can scare up an Adopt-a-Pantry donor or if you and a small circle of friends want to take a shot at raising \$500 to present to a pantry, please be sure to alert us.

Mary Traina, Michele Baialardo and Adrienne LaGressa have teamed up to host "A Night at the Races". The date has been set for **Friday, May 19....SAVE THE DATE.** The evening's venue is the BPO Elks Club on Richmond Avenue. The Elks have very generously offered us the space for free. There will be an open bar and beautiful buffet dinner.....AND you can participate in the fun of chance by betting on these videoed races. This is a fun and potentially very profitable fundraiser for our organization. Keep your eyes on the prize(s)...we want to help as many kids, seniors, homeless, struggling members of our community as possible....

Last month, I wrote that one new initiative that has taken wings is the Sandwich Program for the Project Hospitality Drop-In Center. The Giving Circle has committed to providing 50 sandwiches two days a month to start. We are very gratified that several of you have come forward to volunteer on this project. Also, Patrice and Vito Cannavo contributed \$500.00 to our coffers to finance this endeavor; Corrie and Bob Verde jump started this initiative with \$200.00 in December. We will give the volunteer team \$50 for each day the sandwiches are made (again, there will be two days a month so the individual/team for those two days will get \$50 each toward their sandwich making). We feel sure that a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, small container of water, small bag of chips and piece of fruit or fruit cup can be assembled for this amount. The volunteers can donate pieces of the bags or bags themselves, if they desire, but it is not necessary to worry that there will be a cost to you personally. The Giving Circle will take care of the expenses; we'll see how it goes along.....

Well, I can now report on how this project is going along because it was launched last week – Patrice Cannavo “went first.” Then Charlotte and her cousins took a day; then Friday Patrick the Music Man took a turn. Roberta Amoroso is climbing onboard. These days can be self-funded or the expenses paid (for two days a month) by the Giving Circle. This is really taking off and it's a project that is simple, easy and so appreciated by the unfortunate clients needing to sit at the Drop-In Center every day.

BRAND NEW NEWS

On Wednesday, February 15 (the same day as our meeting), P.S. 44's whole student body benefited from the Giving Circle's offer and execution of sending the S.T.E.A.M. Wagon to their school. This is a great educational – stay in place type field trip. The S.T.E.A.M. Wagon goes to the school and provides innovative educational workshops on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Music (thus, the acronym). This full-blown educational day for all students at P.S. 44 used \$600 of our savings but benefitted the whole student body, instead of our sometimes one or two-class field trip outings. This was a terrific find. We have signed on New World Prep (Juan Carlos Payero) to benefit from one of these S.T.E.A.M. Wagon days. This project makes learning fun and very accessible to kids who need exposure to these educational sessions.

Michele has been in contact with Meagan Wood of the Greenbelt and they have been brainstorming lots of great ideas and activities in which the Giving Circle can collaborate this coming Spring/Summer. For one, we will be sponsors of the High Rock Challenge, having our logo imprinted on the participants' t-shirts. We will also be present at an informational desk to distribute our brochures, business cards and to answer any inquiries for the public. They have also talked about a camp night, trail of the month, carousal gathering, and blue jean ball.....stay tuned.

MARCH MADNESS FOOD COLLECTION IDEA

We have decided to call on all of you to participate in another easy food collection. We are using the March Madness Basketball campaign to bring attention to the food scarcity issue again. Here's what we want to do. The Staten Island Giving Circle will place large collection bins (maybe mesh, maybe plastic, maybe just cardboard to start) in places of business who have agreed to participate and collect breakfast-type food stuff. We want to limit the donations to CEREAL and CEREAL BARS. Cereal can be eaten for any meal by any one in need (kids and adults alike).

We have our first two spaces spoken for – ISLAND AUTO GROUP (1580 Hylan Blvd.), will house a bin or two and MASEFIELD & CAVALLARO, Physical Therapy (69 Guyon Avenue) will put one in their facility. The young ladies at Masefield & Cavallaro have very kindly offered to keep the bin going month after month, filling it with different "asks" each month. We're thinking socks one month, maybe play balls one month, etc. But for MARCH it's CEREAL and CEREAL BARS. Please contact us if you can commandeer a place of business to join our collection campaign.

OUR EXQUISITE NEW TRI-FOLD INFORMATIONAL BROCHURES were unveiled at our meeting. The handout turned out beautifully and provides interested volunteers, donors and friends a succinct summary of our 'good works' so they can make what we think is the obvious decision to join our group to help our community neighbors in need. The brochures are available from Michele and Evelyn; we will have them at the meetings, but if you want them in between to peruse and distribute, please contact us (see our contact info at beginning of this newsletter).

FRAN IANNONE joined the fray on Wednesday and brought with her three huge cartons of kiddies' backpacks (ages to about six). We offered them to those at the meeting to take and fill with necessities for little kids being displaced (many times being ushered into foster care). I had no idea that ALL the backpacks would be taken! WOW. And Kathy Barzel has asked for 100 more. You guys are absolutely phenomenal. The filled backpacks (hygiene products, soft blankets, socks, pjs, small book, small Beanie Babies) can be returned to Michele or Evelyn or take them to the next monthly meeting.

TEAM FOR ANNUAL RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE EVENING

On Monday, April 17, we have a very adept, kind-hearted team assembled (Patrice Cannavo, Camille Stern, Steve ____ and Lynn Sherman and Steve's daughter and son-in-law) to travel to Long Island to plan the evening menu, purchase the food and prepare it in the kitchens at Ronald McDonald House for the families assembled there that particular evening. You can imagine the anxiety, fatigue and fright that these families are living through with a critically-ill child being treated through the auspices of the Ronald McDonald House. The assistance of organizations and individuals coming in to handle daily food preparation takes a small bit of the burden from their shoulders. This is probably the 4th or 5th year we have done this. If we find that we have an overflow of volunteers, we can possibly take on another evening and provide two help nights for the facility. The young women who work at Masefield & Cavallaro have expressed a potential interest in assembling a team for this inspirational project.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS (at a glance)

- MARCH 15** - Monthly meeting at the Old Bermuda Inn at 7 p.m.
- APRIL 2** - Ruby Red Awards Honoring Carol Crocitto, Fran Iannone and other strong community ladies
- APRIL 17** - Our annual trek to the Ronald McDonald House in Long Island

Our new, streamlined Constant Contact communication program is in place and I'm learning how to navigate it (Michele is much more adept) but it's proving to be a huge improvement to our older e-mail communication mode.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS; HOPE YOU LOVE THE GIVING CIRCLE'S MISSION.

PLEASE CHOOSE TO SIGN ON TO ANOTHER ACTIVITY THAT ENTICES YOU. PROVIDE IDEAS!

ALWAYS LOOKING FOR USED CELL PHONES AND EYE GLASSES

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: "You don't have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great."