

The Staten Island Giving Circle

Newsletter March 2017

Michele Yacovello – (917) 733-7937; e-mail: myacovello@gmail.com

Evelyn Kormanik – (718) 980-4862; e-mail: sigivingcircle@aol.com



HAPPY SPRING; PASSOVER AND EASTER!!!

Our March meeting packed the room and provided a ton of information and new ideas. The highlight of the evening was the presentation by Olga Horbal, who founded the Junior Giving Circle at the American Academy of American Studies in Long Island City. I will expound on Olga's contributions later on in this newsletter. But let's start with our Old and New Business and Money Matters.

We were delighted to see about a half dozen new faces in our audience on Wednesday. Michele handed out our initial "Glad to see you" \$5 Gift Cards to Dunkin' Donuts to each new attendee. The cards are not for the new Giving Circle people; they are to be given as a small Random Act of Kindness to someone you see on the street or in a store who is in obvious need of a little pick-me-up. It is very good to give a homeless person the card instead of cash of any denomination.

I also asked for your full names and e-mail addresses so we can add you to our Constant Contact e-mail list. Apparently a couple of you are studying for your medical degrees (just kidding). But at least you have the handwriting of prospective doctors; please let me know that you have received this newsletter as your first e-mail blast from us so I know I deciphered your addresses correctly.

MONEY MATTERS

February's monthly Gift Basket was constructed and donated by Deacon Paul and Eilean Kosinski; the basket raised \$162.00. Deacon Paul announced that the proceeds will go to the Staten Island Council of Churches. Deacon Paul explained that this Council works tirelessly to provide assistance to anyone in need, no matter what church affiliation. It is the policy of the Giving Circle not to single out specific churches, denominations, religious organizations but Deacon Paul is our trusted leader at Project Hospitality and he knows the initiatives of this joint Council to be right up our alley.

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.

April's Gift Basket will be donated by Fran Iannone, the young lady who joined us several months ago and who provided the hundreds of children's backpacks for our recent initiative. Over 300 backpacks have been filled with hygiene products and small children's needs (donated by all of you....thank you so much) and will be distributed to Seamen's Society (for the foster care children) and RUMC's Pediatric Ward, as well as domestic abuse victims and Day Care programs. Rolling Thunder Chapter 2 New York (motorcycle group) delivered 100 bags for us! This project grew beyond our wildest dreams and we have Fran to thank for the jump start with the actual backpacks. We utilized social media and Facebook Live to collect the contents for the backpacks.

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, \$500.00 was collected! Our first winner was Lucille VanWormer, Evelyn's lifelong friend from Watertown. Lucille donates to our charity raffle every month and we were so happy to pull her ticket. Lucille's \$250.00 will be sent to the Fresh Air Fund. This is a wonderful program that sends underprivileged "City" kids to upstate "Country" homes for the summer. I personally looked forward with great anticipation each summer, the arrival of the buses carrying these children to their Watertown destination. For several years, a girl my age (when we were around 10, 11, 12) came to stay with neighbors across the street. Her name was Maryann Rizzo. She came from Brooklyn (I'd never heard of Brooklyn). I have such fond memories of our summer days together. Several years ago, I contacted the Fresh Air Fund to ask if they had records/information available thinking I would track down Maryann. Want to know the answer? Well, I think there was a kinder way to put this, but the answer was, "We don't have any records THAT FAR BACK." Hey, it seems like the other day to me. Why are days from 1958 so much clearer than two days ago now?!?!? When I called Lucille to tell her of her win, she was so tickled and also had a little story to add. Bear in mind that Lucille is 87 years young now. She said when she was a little girl, there was a family living near her family farm who hosted a Fresh Air child. It was a boy from the City and he was Black; it was the first Black person Lucille ever saw. That child continued to keep in touch with the farm family for years, Lucille said. Memories are so precious.

The second pull for the other \$250.00 was won by Mary Alfano. Mary, without hesitation, donated her winnings to the collection being made for EMT Yadira Arroya who was killed last week by a man driving a stolen ambulance. These monies were donated online through the Siller Foundation.

Keeping the \$\$\$ information thread going, I announced our thanks and gratitude to Northfield Bank Foundation for their \$500 award to us this past month. Carol Crocitto and I will be meeting with Diane Senerchia sometime this Spring to more comprehensively know and understand what projects we should name to garner another grant award.

To conclude this summary of our money information, let me say that Money Does Matter. In order for us to provide the services for which our mission exists, we need money. Remember that 100% of all monies taken in are dispensed to our “gives” to underprivileged children, seniors, homeless and veterans. Also, remember, we have no membership fees, so we count on fundraisers, individual and business support to carry out all our projects.

NEW BUSINESS/IDEAS/POINTS OF INTEREST

Please take special notice of Joel Cohen’s article which appeared in the *North Shore Local* weekly newspaper this past week. Michele will be sending you a copy via our new Constant Contact program on Friday. Joel wrote a very comprehensive, complementary article about our bi-monthly birthday parties hosted at Project Hospitality’s Hospitality House (children’s shelter). We actually have our next party coming up on April 4. We are also trying to interest NY1 in broadcasting a story on the birthday parties.

Didn’t you love the idea of providing a bench or two to schools in an effort to promote friendship and to thwart bullying. We told you about “Have a Seat, Friend” a simple idea of placing buddy benches in schools where kids feeling isolated or bothered can sit and other children can join the seated child to provide comfort. This is particularly good for a “new kid”. I remember moving a number of times through grammar school, and those first few days were torturous. If you want to contribute toward buying these benches and naming them (if you want), please let Michele or me know.

Please take the time to google [Final Salute](#) to read about another very worthwhile achievement by a former female military veteran, Major Jas Boothe. Major Boothe has established this organization to provide transitional housing and other services for homeless female veterans.

Also, remember our mention of I.S. 24’s need to gather remaining monies for their donorschoose.org effort. They need supplies for the Transitional Aspergers Program.

On June 2, the Giving Circle will be providing New World Prep with a day’s “school enrichment” by sending over the S.T.E.A.M. Wagon to the school. This innovative, mobile educational unit emphasizes, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math. The beauty of it is that a day’s participation by the Wagon provides the interaction of all grades, not just one or two as happens when we do field trips to a museum, etc.

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.

We will be partnering with Verrazano Kiwanis for a business attire collection. We will be sending you the flyer when it becomes available so you'll have all the details.

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, carousel gathering, and blue jean ball.....stay tuned.

REVIEW OF OLD BUSINESS

On Monday, April 17, we have a very adept, kind-hearted team assembled (Steve Hagis and Lynn Sherman and Steve's daughter Stacy Bruno, son-in-law and another friend) 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.

The **Brown Bag/Sandwich** (sandwich, snack, drink and piece of fruit) initiative for the Drop-in Center at Project Hospitality has been very well received by you, the contributors, and by the grateful recipients. We have at least a half dozen people/teams committing to making lunches for this project each month (some more than once a month). Our "go-to" guy for this is Deacon Paul Kosinski. You can contact Paul at: Paul.Kosinski@projecthospitality.org. (There is an underscore between Paul and Kosinski. If you have a free day and big heart, please think about signing on to this program. These people are in such unfortunate straits and they do need to eat every day. You can self fund your contribution or ask the Giving Circle for \$50 per month.

Our idea of placing **plastic bins** in high traffic places of business **to collect for food pantries** is also going full bore. We have bins at Masfield & Cavallaro Physical Therapy; Claire Properties; the Staten Island Tennis Club; Bozo's Army/Navy; Oakwood Community Church; Sorelle Hair Salon; and the Max Challenge of Woodrow Gym. Several of these businesses have agreed to change the collection item from month to month which is very generous of them. For March we continue to collect cereal and cereal bars. For April, let's change the collection notice to read **Instant Coffee, Evaporated or Powdered Milk, and Juice Boxes**. The Giving Circle will buy you a bin if you have a place to put it!

Dawn Casale and Laura Altieri are breaking all records this year with their annual **Easter Basket Project**. For years, these two members, along with their children and scores of others have spearheaded collection of traditional Easter basket fillings, built the baskets and delivered them to underprivileged children at Project Hospitality and St. Michael's Church. Would you believe that this year, they are putting together **175 baskets !?!?** Thank you all for donating all the goodies. Now watch the *North Shore Local* newspaper for an article which should appear this week or next on this wonderful annual project.

SUPER FUNDRAISER

Adrienne LaGressa, Michele Baialardo, and Mary Traina have been working diligently on our major fundraiser of the New Year. Our **"NIGHT AT THE RACES"** fundraiser will be held Friday, May 19 at the BYO Elks Club on Richmond Avenue. Copies of the event flyers will be sent to you again to refresh your memories. This is a fun, no stress, evening of camaraderie and easy gaming. The evening will include a buffet dinner, open bar, racing presentation (you can bet on the horse races), and high-end valued raffle gifts. The tickets are \$75/person or you can get a little added incentive by paying \$100/ticket which includes three chances at the raffles. This is a great evening to come as a couple; come with a group of other ladies/gentlemen; or with a table of friends, neighbors, family. This event provides a little something different and is appropriate for everyone, every age. Next month's **"BRING ALONG"** will be scratch-off lottery tickets to build a raffle basket of this form of gaming. See the theme happening?!?!?

SPECTACULAR SPEAKER

One of the great features of many of our monthly meetings is our guest speaker roster. Wednesday's speaker was truly Special.

One of the premier initiatives we invented and have been implementing is establishment of **JUNIOR GIVING CIRCLES**. The concept is pretty self-explanatory to all of us; they are based on our senior mission but the projects and ideas are executed by students in our grammar, junior and high schools. We knew ahead of time that it might be very tricky to attract kids/students to form/organization a Junior Giving Circle because they have so, so many other school obligations, outside interests and commitments. We are so happy and proud to say that since this concept was conceived about four years ago, we have been able to help willing students construct a half dozen Junior Giving Circles. The first Junior Giving Circle took root at CSI High School, then I.S. 75, P.S. 42, P.S. 3 and at the Academy of American Studies in Long Island City.

Olga Horbal, currently a Junior at the Academy of American Studies in Long Island City was our guest speaker. Before going further, I can tell you that she is an extraordinary High Honors student whose educational/career goals are already pretty solidified as she has a passion for Science/Biology/Genetics and hopes to be accepted at Columbia University to major

in Genetics. When I was in 11th grade, probably my biggest concentration was meeting a friend or two downtown to shop at Woolworth's on the weekend.

Olga and her family are personal friends so her involvement in creating a Junior Giving Circle is particularly gratifying. I am so proud of her. And, believe me, she didn't do this for ME; Olga is a like-minded community outreach advocate all on her own. She is extremely dedicated and active in church activities as well. She is low-key, modest, keenly intelligent and articulate and the adjective most of you used after her presentation was POISED. Olga is multi-lingual and academically gifted. But, more importantly, she is kind, compassionate and aware of those less fortunate. I feel sure she will make room throughout her life for those looking for help.

With a short PowerPoint presentation accompanying her verbal presentation, Olga gave us an up close, personal look at her school's Junior Giving Circle. These kids are unbelievable. They have conducted numerous collections of food, worked in a Brooklyn soup kitchen; collected hygiene products, kids' needs, and are cognizant of the needs of seniors and the homeless.

After Olga spoke, I was happy to announce that I will be using the Junior Giving Circle concept as my "thesis" for applying for a huge monetary award from Encore.com's Generation to Generation contest. It's the perfect platform in my opinion. A mentor will be assigned me and may find my pitch not what is wanted, but it can be modified to spotlight some facet of our work with the younger generation. Let's see what happens. Any "winning" will be shared with our Junior Giving Circles.

REMINDER/ALERT

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.

OUR EXQUISITE NEW TRI-FOLD INFORMATIONAL BROCHURES were unveiled at our February 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).

CALENDAR OF EVENTS (at a glance)

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

APRIL 19

- **Monthly Meeting, Old Bermuda Inn, 7:00 p.m. Our guest speaker will be Tom Tyburczy, President of the South Shore Rotary Club.** You think WE have a lot of plates spinning, wait until you hear this service organization's agenda. This is an international service club so their span is much wider than ours and you will be in awe of all they do.

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 AN ACTIVITY THAT ENTICES YOU. ALSO PROVIDE IDEAS FOR OTHER ACTIVITIES!

ALWAYS LOOKING FOR USED CELL PHONES AND EYE GLASSES

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: "Do not wait; the time will never be 'just right.' Start where you stand, and work with whatever tools you may have at your command, and better tools will be found as you go along." George Herbert, English author (1593-1633). Very old adage, but still strong. Jump in and be a part of helping others.