





In the moments that matter,
Community Shows Up













NEEDHAM COMMUNITY COUNCIL
FY2026 Annual Report

NEEDHAM
COMMUNITY
COUNCIL

BELONGING.
DIGNITY.
STRENGTH.
CONNECTION.
RESPECT.
HOPE.

Dear Neighbors and Partners,

These values were put to the test in FY 2026. As our neighbors faced the loss of SNAP benefits and the ripple effects of shifting immigration policies, it would have been easy to feel overwhelmed. Instead, we chose to lead with our mission. At the Needham Community Council, one theme defined the year: **In the moments that matter, community shows up.**

This report highlights what we achieved because you showed up for us, so we could show up for our neighbors:

- **Responding to the SNAP Crisis:** 209 new donors answered the call, ensuring no neighbor had to make the impossible choice between food, medicine, or housing.
- **Sustaining English Language Learning:** We welcomed 25 new tutors to maintain our 75-person network, providing the one-on-one support our ELL learners need to navigate uncertain times.
- **Expanding Community Support**: The successful launch of our Dementia Care Partners Support Program validated a profound local need. A new grant from Beth Israel Deaconess-Needham will now allow us to deepen this vital work.
- **Standing Strong Through Challenges**: Despite revenue losses from a flooded shop this year, the Council Thrift rallied to outperform last year's totals. Compounding this success, our supporters made history at the Party for the Pantry by raising an unprecedented $200,000 in a single night.



Our community is stronger than any obstacle. Because of your unwavering support, we didn't just maintain our programs; we strengthened the safety net that ensures every resident of Needham is treated with dignity. On behalf of our staff, volunteers, and the families we serve, thank you for another year of supporting Needham together.

With gratitude,

Sandy Robinson
Executive Director

Linda Farley
President, Board of Directors

When Fun Meets Purpose: The Droney Family Haunted House

It started with a guilty conscience and a Mediterranean cruise.

Lifelong Needhamite, Mike Droney was at the tailor before a trip when he spotted a woman picking up dry goods from the student-run pantry by Lewandos. "I was about to go on this cruise so I could eat the whole time," he says. "And I felt bad. I genuinely felt bad."

On the flight home, he had a plan. The family's elaborate Christmas displays had long made their home a local landmark, and their son Ryan had been pushing for a haunted house. "Why not build one, cultivate community, and have fun, while turning it into something good?"

Mike, an engineer, handled carpentry and sets. His wife Christine, self-described project manager, sourced costumes and props and made countless trips to Savers. Their three boys and their friends joined in with plenty of laughter along the way.

The setup is pure Droney: the front yard stays warm and welcoming for families and little ones. Around back, the real haunted house begins, a truly scary experience where every dollar goes directly to the food pantry. Christine sums it up best:

"It's so great to think out-of-the-box, have the family and community come together in a unique way to give back—and have fun doing it."

The event has also become an unexpected hit for local teens, who log community service hours doing everything from set design to performing. Now heading into year three, the Droneys are busy scheming new ways to surprise their guests.





$5,483
RAISED

515
COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS FOR TEENS

800+
VISITORS



The Droney family shows up for the Council in more ways than one. Beyond their generous donor contributions, they host an annual haunted house with all proceeds benefiting the food pantry.

Finding Connection: The Hillback Family and the Power of Memory Cafés



Marjorie and Elliot Hillback have called Needham home for over 36 years. No matter where life has taken them or where they have lived, their home has always been filled with music.

When Elliot was diagnosed with dementia four years ago, Marjorie immediately searched for support. Her sister-in-law, who was involved in California's "Memory Café" network, suggested looking into the social gatherings, but Marjorie found no active cafés nearby.

That changed when the Council launched its Dementia Care Partners Support program. Marjorie was the very first resident to reach out to Program Manager Stephanie Knoch. Since then, the Hillbacks have embraced both the program's consultative services and its newly expanded bimonthly cafés, which they describe as fun, upbeat, flexible, and pressure-free.

For their daughter, Shanna, the program provides her parents with a vital space to be together as husband and wife, to enjoy music, relax, and simply spend time with one another. "This is a lot to balance," Shanna says.

"My mom has lost the ability, to some degree, to be a partner because she's a caregiver now. The café is a place where you can go and just be together."

While the family appreciates national organizations like the Alzheimer's Association, Shanna notes that the Council offers a deeply personal, hyper-local touch. Marjorie agrees, feeling lucky to live in a town that prioritizes this care. "We are so lucky to live in a town that has these facilities," she says. "And it provides help for all levels of the community, financially and emotionally."

500
INDIVIDUALS SERVED TO DATE

198
PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR CARE PARTNERS ATTENDED MEMORY CAFÉS

97
PARTICIPANTS IN DEMENTIA FRIENDS INFO SESSIONS

BUILDING ON OUR PROGRESS:

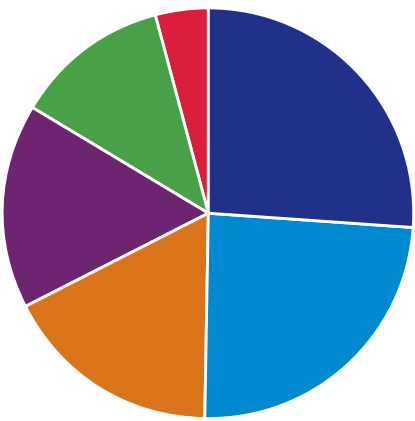
Care Partner Consultations launched in December 2025, providing families with personalized guidance, resources, education, and practical strategies to better navigate the challenges associated with dementia caregiving.

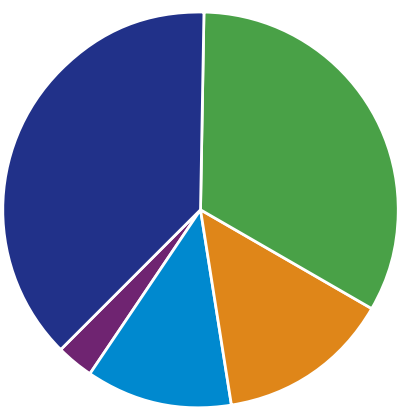
Memory Cafés doubled to twice-monthly beginning in June 2026 due to growing community interest and consistently strong participation.

THE NEEDHAM COMMUNITY COUNCIL is a private non-profit organization that supports people in Needham who have under-met health, educational or social needs and promotes volunteerism, community, and a sense of shared responsibility.

FY26 REVENUE $1,771,217

26%	Annual Appeal	$459,241
24%	Council Thrift	$428,468
17%	Party for the Pantry and Private Fundraising	$302,323
16%	Legacy and Commemorative Giving	$285,468
12%	Food Pantry and Supplemental Programs	$217,217
4%	Grants	$78,500





FY26 EXPENSES $1,453,999

33%	Food Pantry	$479,833
14%	General Admin	$207,271
12%	Council Thrift	$167,669
3%	Flood Restoration and Mitigation	$44,060
38%	Other Programs	$555,166

Council Care Rides	$134,592
Dementia	$124,062
Volunteer, Outreach, Community Support	$84,957
ELL	$71,888
Tech & Tutors	$67,829
Mindful Community	$38,909
Medical Closet	$32,929

When our community shows up, real impact follows.
Powered entirely by our volunteers, donors, and partners, we have strengthened Needham's support system together, ensuring every neighbor is met with care and treated with dignity.

1,576
UNIQUE FINANCIAL DONORS

396
NEW DONORS

217
BUSINESSES, ORGANIZATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS

17,842
VOLUNTEER HOURS

$23,973
DONATED THROUGH EMPLOYEE MATCHING GIFT PROGRAM

During the
SNAP crisis,
our community showed up:
681 donors
gave to the Council, including
209 new donors

TOP 20 businesses and organizations that supported the Council this year:
(in alphabetical order)

- Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital – Needham
- Cans For Calcium
- Community Foundation for MetroWest
- Copley Motorcars
- Direct Federal Credit Union
- Forklift Catering
- Greater Boston Food Bank
- Hope & Comfort
- MetroWest Health Foundation
- Middlesex Savings Bank Charitable Foundation
- Needham Bank
- Needham Fire Department
- North Hill Residents
- Roche Bros. Supermarkets
- Saint Joseph Parishioners
- Spoonfuls
- Target
- Temple Beth Shalom Congregants
- Topher Cox Photography
- Vanguarden Farm of Dover

Mohamed's Journey: Resilience, Community, and the Power to Rebuild

In 2014, Mohamed arrived in the United States with his family, embarking on a bright new chapter. Sponsored by Libya's government, he had come to pursue his PhD.

Then civil war broke out back home, and his funding vanished overnight.

Forced to pivot, Mohamed secured asylum and a job with Verizon while welcoming three more children to his family. But hardship struck again during COVID-19 when he lost his job, followed by a divorce that left him carrying the full financial responsibility for food, rent, and daily expenses for his four kids.

During the heart of the pandemic, Mohamed found the Council Food Pantry. "I would die without your help," he says simply. "I appreciate everyone."

As Mohamed was slowly rebuilding, disaster hit again: a home fire left his residence condemned. Once more, the Council stepped forward, providing thrift shop vouchers to help him replace essential household items.

Through civil war, job loss, and a house fire, Mohamed's spirit has remained unbroken. "I'm a fighter," he says. "You need to fight for your life!"

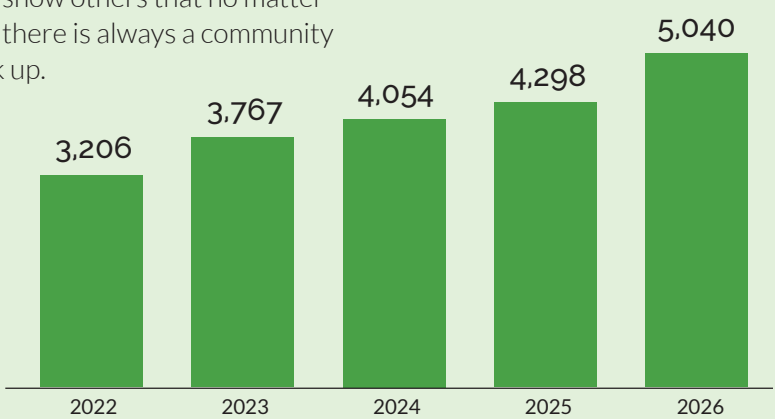
Today, Mohamed deeply appreciates everything the food pantry has to offer, including fresh produce, cooking oil, fish, culturally relevant staples, and seasonal programs like *Back to School*, *Thanksgiving*, and *Holiday Hearts*. He wanted to share his story to show others that no matter how overwhelming life gets, there is always a community ready to help you stand back up.



127+
DONORS GAVE ITEMS TO THE FOOD PANTRY

147,460
POUNDS OF FOOD AND ESSENTIAL ITEMS DONATED

Visits to the food pantry continue to increase each year



You can help us show up for our neighbors:

MAKE A FINANCIAL DONATION

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

DONATE ITEMS OR FOOD

CREATE A FUNDRAISER

LEAVE A LEGACY

Scan the QR code to give to the Needham Community Council

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Linda Farley, President
Kathleen Berner, Vice President
David Carter, Secretary
Carol Oberle, Treasurer

Myra Anderson
Alrie McNiff Daniels
Leslie DeSanti
Jennifer English
Lynn Gotwals
Joan Halford
Leigh McCloskey
Susan Mitchell
Avery Newton
Rajesh Thomas
Rob Ticktin
Deb Tormey

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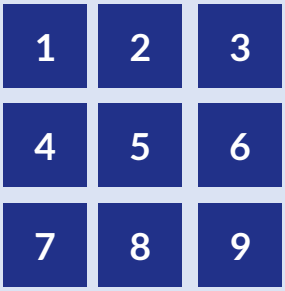
STAY CONNECTED

Thank you to Topher Cox Photography for donating services throughout the year, including the portraits in this report.



On the cover: OUR COMMUNITY SHOWING UP

1. Continuing his family's annual tradition, Sawyer celebrated his birthday by collecting donations in lieu of gifts.
2. One-to-one tutoring is at the heart of our English Language Learning (ELL) program.
3. The Droney family's Halloween haunted house raised over $5,000 for the food pantry.
4. Walk and Talks provide a fun way for English language learners to practice their skills.
5. As part of the Tech & Tutors program, our Tech Teens hosted a hands-on robotics showcase.
6. A Mahjong Mixer Party brought players of all skill levels together to raise money for the Council.
7. A movement activity during Memory Café provides a way for individuals living with dementia and their care partners to relax and connect.
8. Second graders at Broadmeadow Elementary School collected 196 lbs of cereal for the food pantry.
9. Needham Community Farm donated 800 seedlings for food pantry families to grow at home.