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Organizations get 'holiday treat' for needy

"It will certainly make a big difference for hundreds of our neighbors who are struggling to make ends meet," the United Way of Bucks County president said.

By JOHN ANASTASI
STAFF WRITER

In the days leading up to Christmas, four area human services organizations received checks totaling \$38,000 from the United Way of Bucks County and its Critical Needs Fund.

Launched during the summer, the Critical Needs fundraising campaign was part of the United Way's effort to raise money to help nonprofit organizations handle rising demand for services in the economic downturn even as a budget crunch slowed some government funding streams.

"It was a holiday treat," said David Ford, of the Bucks County Opportunity Council, which received \$8,000.

The organization, which has offices in Bristol Township, Doylestown and Quakertown, offers economic self-sufficiency programs to help people obtain education and training as well as emergency assistance for low-income residents.

Ford said the money would provide immediate emergency funding for families that need it until they're able to register for government assistance programs. Ford estimated the fund would be able to provide 40 or so families with food or shelter for a week, one-time utility payments or rent for one month.

"This is help they can use until they link to a long-term, more permanent solution," Ford said.

Funding was also allocated to Warminster's Bucks Mont Center for Human Services, the Family Service Association in Middletown and the Salvation Army in Quakertown. Each organization received \$10,000 and plans to use the money to meet some combination of food, utility, rent and shelter needs.

"We felt we needed to do something over and above our ongoing efforts (to help in this particularly tough time)," Bill Schofield, United Way of Bucks County president, said in a statement. "This is not a cure-all, but it will certainly make a big difference for hundreds of our neighbors who are struggling to make ends meet."

The United Way started the Critical Needs Fund with a \$20,000-donation in June and then began recruiting community benefactors to make their own contributions. Those included the

Foundations Community Partnership, which kicked in \$10,000, and Bob Byers Jr., president of Christmas figurine manufacturer Byers' Choice, who donated \$5,000.

A task force then looked at various community groups to determine how the money should be allocated.

"It was given to agencies to make sure it would get into the hands of people who need it," said Schofield, who added the money was disbursed late last week.

The United Way is still accepting donations. Checks payable to "UWBC-Critical Needs Fund" can be mailed to The United Way of Bucks County at 413 Hood Blvd., Fairless Hills, Pa., 19030. For more information, call 215-949-1660.

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Securing air travel



Stocks change little

By GARA LEBRO and TIM BARANIS