

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

CHATHAM CARES AND SHARES ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2014

Transitions to *Chatham Bridging the Gap* a 501 C 3 Not For Profit

Jim Lonergan –Council Liaison

Janice R. Piccolo- Borough Liaison

Mary Lonergan, Chair Woman

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Membership: Marcia Casais, Elaine Dangler, Ellen Blazoski, Ann Whitman, Jane Maltby, Dawn Paskalides, Jenee Moore, Alicia Murray, Stacey McEvoy.

Chatham Borough has always provided for a local approach to temporary public assistance supported by local houses of worship and identified through Borough department interaction with residents.

Total annual families assisted in 2014 = 18

6 Families received holiday support through St. Patrick's Christmas in a Box.

In 2014, a mission statement, name change, and organizational structural change to a 501 c 3 nonprofit status was a primary focus. On January 16, 2015 the Borough's Cares & Shares Advisory Committee officially transitioned to *Chatham Bridging the Gap* as an approved Internal Revenue Service not for profit status.

The Advisory Committee presented *Chatham Bridging the Gap's* Goals, Mission, Bylaws and the 1023EZ Recognition of Exemption to the Borough Council; all documents are on file in the Office of Community Services.

Bridging the Gap conducted its first meeting on Monday, March 2, 2015 and reviewed its newly developed Application Form. The Borough Council will transfer donated funds by Resolution on or about March 23, 2015, accumulated by the former Cares and Shares Advisory Committee totaling \$7,256.08 to act as seed money. The nfp group is mentoring 6 total families presently.

Attachments: *Chatham Bridging the Gap- Helping Our Neighbors in Need* Mission and Summary

Chatham – Bridging the Gap
Helping our Chatham Neighbors in Need
February 1, 2015

I. Mission Statement:

Bridging the Gap is committed to temporarily alleviating financial hardship due to an unexpected emergency situation for Chatham individuals and families through the power of local support; providing material, emotional and financial assistance; bringing residents together with organizations and opportunities that help improve the quality of life; all while preserving the dignity and confidentiality of those served.

II. Rationale:

Often times families in desperate need exist in the shadows. Unaware of where to turn, they might leave Chatham. Short-term assistance may be sufficient to get the family back to a position of stability. While a range of social services is available through Morris County, nothing seems to formally exist to provide this type of short-term “gap” emergency assistance right in Chatham. It is our desire to continue to support our Chatham neighbors in need.

III. Background:

Since 2008, Cares & Shares, a Chatham Borough Committee, has provided primarily the following assistance:

- Distribution of grocery cards which were provided by a local church
- Waiving of town recreational sport and pool fees as well as third party camp and YMCA fees
- Assistance in accessing school financial assistance for lunches and activity fees
- Assistance with overdue town water payments and tax liens
- Distribution of clothing, toys, sports equipment and household items received through email solicitation (when a particular need was identified)
- Holiday gifts for children through a church’s “Christmas in a Box” program

Chatham Cares & Shares has provided assistance to 48 individuals and their families and is currently helping nine families. We hope to continue to meet the unexpected needs of families and individuals in our local community and raise awareness of the services offered.

IV. New 501c3 – Chatham Bridging the Gap:

It was determined that Cares & Shares should no longer be a committee within Chatham Borough but should be set up as a separate 501c3 for the following reasons:

- ✓ The group would like to increase its presence and visibility in Chatham by aligning itself with other organizations outside of the Chatham Borough Municipality such as religious institutions, service organizations, schools, and Project Community Pride/Madison Area YMCA.
- ✓ Increase the level of support which the group can provide by building a larger financial base primarily through tax-deductible donations from local residents, organizations, governments and other sources.
- ✓ The group would like to be able to support individuals and families in both Chatham Borough and Chatham Township.

V. Planned Program Services To Be Offered:

A. Direct – Financial/In-Kind Donations and Services:

- Expenses Covered:
 - Grocery cards, clothing and household items (through solicitation/Ogden)
 - If revenues permit, ability to fund larger expenses such as housing/utility expenses, emergency repairs or homes or autos, medical expenses, etc. For comparison purposes, Down the Block's average level of assistance is \$2,500.
 - Work with Chatham Borough to provide sport/pool fee assistance and tax assistance.
 - Continue to seek assistance from the Madison Area YMCA and Mr. A (for example) for waived/reduced class and camp fees.
- Services Provided: Budgeting assistance; job referrals, emotional support, filing for government assistance, filing for other bill relief options (e.g. JCP&L, water, utilities)
- Holiday Needs: food, toys

B. Indirect – Provide In-Person Assistance and Resource Directory on Other Support Services Available: e.g. Local Food Pantries, financial planning, continuing education, job search, counseling, daycare, etc.

C. Program Eligibility- Identifying Need/Vetting Candidates for Support:

- Individuals and families can be identified through overdue water and tax bills, word of mouth, churches, Project Community Pride, schools.
- Personal interview by at least 2 members of committee.
- Application filled out completely and signed. Verification of income/resources.

D. Community Relationships to Establish:

1. Project Community Pride is a non-profit organization serving several local towns. They provide emotional and mental health treatment for middle and high school students who are experiencing serious family issues, anxiety, drug overdosing and suicide attempts. The students are primarily referred directly by the schools or by the police departments. At times the families which we are assisting are also receiving treatment from this organization. They might have other families who would find our assistance helpful as financial instability can be a factor in a child's emotional distress. Project Community Pride has recently joined with the Madison Area YMCA which has very generously provided C&S with assistance in the past.

2. Churches also provide support to families in distress. Most of their assistance is targeted outside of Chatham where the need is more significant. It does not appear that many families seek out assistance from our church community but those that do ask for assistance are in extreme need. When asked, most of the churches attempt to provide limited help. Several of the churches have been very generous in assisting C&S – see Appendix 1 for more details on local church support services available.

3. Service Organizations such as the Jaycees, Kiwanis, Elks, United Way.

4. School Counselors and Administrators may be able to forward our information to families. Millburn High School has been very supportive of Down the Block with the students starting a Down the Block fundraising committee.

5. Other Local Area Support Services for continuing education, job search, counseling, daycare, etc.

E. Fundraising: The “Hyper-Local” aspect of the organization will be stressed – all funds raised in Chatham will be distributed within Chatham. Individuals, churches and service organizations will be approached. Awareness of the need within town, and our organization, must be increased through publicity in local papers, meetings with instrumental individuals, word of mouth.

F. Website: A website for the new organization is underway (www.chathambridgingthegap.org) which will outline the mission of the organization, the application process, prior annual levels of support provided/testimonials, and information on ways to donate and resources for individuals and families in need.

VI. Next Steps:

1. Transfer of Chatham Borough Public Assistance Funds: Determine amount of Public Assistance I and II funds available to be transferred over to Bridging the Gap 501c3 in order to continue the outreach program.
2. Facilities: Bridging the Gap will meet monthly in either Borough Hall or the Fire Commons as arranged through Liz Holler.