

## **OUR COMMUNITY CAME TOGETHER TO HELP OUR NEIGHBORS**

Thanks to an amazing community for stepping up to help provide a safety net for residents struggling through another challenging year. You helped provide brighter holidays for over 800 Highland Park/Highwood students, holiday meals for their families, and holiday gifts for over 150 seniors who use township services.

As you may know, with almost 25% of Highland Park / Highwood elementary students eligible for the federal free/reduced lunch program based on family income, and over 150 units of senior affordable housing in our community, food insecurity was a reality in our community even before COVID. Thanks to you, our food pantry was able to help residents and their families all year long. You hosted food drives and made monetary donations to keep pantry shelves stocked. You provided the resources to distribute over 200 Thanksgiving dinners with all the trimmings! Many of you added a monetary donation when checking out at Sunset Foods in early December. Your generosity ensures our pantry will offer fresh produce, dairy, and meat throughout 2022.

After 15 months of a weekly drive-through pantry (with delivery to 35-50 households a week who were unable to get to the Pantry), we re-opened our Pantry for client shopping in July and are easing back to a normal that provides food while also implementing measures to help clients, volunteers and staff stay safe during these challenging times. Clients are happy to return to shopping for the food their family enjoys, and your donations help us keep our shelves stocked!

And none of this would be possible without our amazing army of volunteers! Time is our one finite commodity and our incredible community give and give and give. Volunteers worked through the pandemic packing bags, loading cars and delivering food. In our re-opened pantry, volunteers work weekly stocking shelves, assisting clients, cleaning up, hosting food drives, and greeting Sunset shoppers. Volunteers help residents sign up for health insurance, prepare free income tax returns for low-income taxpayers, provide clerical help and so many other efforts that make life a little easier for our struggling neighbors. If we had to pay staff for the work our volunteers do, we would not have the resources to offer the food and services we are able to offer.

Moraine Township has distributed over \$365,000.00 of rent, utility, and other emergency assistance to residents since March 2020 to help residents weather this unimaginable crisis.

It takes a village, and we are fortunate to live in such a caring and generous and amazing village! The saying "we're all in this together" has never resonated more, and the spirit of our community has never shown brighter.

Thanks to your generosity and support, Moraine Township will be here for our neighbors for the long haul, and with you, look forward to better days in the coming year.

Wishing you and your family a happy, healthy & terrific 2002!

**If you know of Moraine Township residents in need of assistance, please have them call 847-432-3240.**