



**Webster Community Chest
Donor News Vol 2 #1 - 1st Quarter 2025**

**2024 ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT
OF THE WEBSTER COMMUNITY CHEST**

You may have seen our greatly abbreviated report in the *Webster Herald*. This is the complete report.

Seventy-seven years ago, in 1948 when the Webster Community Chest was founded, hundreds of communities in New York also had their own Community Chests. It was a national movement. The Chest in some larger cities, such as Rochester, were converted to United Way agencies, but most have failed over time, leaving us as one of nine remaining. No other community in our region gets the services we provide Webster residents. Our work in Webster is recognized. In December, the Webster Chamber of Commerce honored us as their "Business of the Month," noting the impact we have in this community. We provide our services on behalf of our donors to residents in Webster and in the northern third of Penfield in the 14580 ZIP Code area—but I will shorten that to "Webster" here. It gives me pleasure to now report our 2024 successes.



The Webster Community Chest was recognized as Chamber Business of the Month in December 2024. From left to right, Chest Board members Michael Grenier, Steven Yahoodik, Mary Kay Barrett, and Sharon Pratt, Chamber of Commerce Chair Tim Shortsleeve.

The Chest relies upon the donations of the citizens and businesses of the greater Webster community for its operations. Most donations come from individuals. Grants and donations from local foundations, trusts, and churches are our next largest source of funds, followed by fundraising events on our behalf by local organizations. We thank the Lions for their Breakfast with Santa, Webster Schroeder art teachers and students for their two Empty Bowl projects, the United Church of Christ for their annual Caring Concert, and Webster Masons for the Spaghetti Dinner. We also get donations from businesses, clubs, and other groups in the community. Note that we have never taken money from any government for our operating expenses.



Volunteers—most from Thomas and Schroeder High School Service clubs—joined with regulars and served scores of customers at the Masons' Spaghetti Dinner

We do everything we can to ensure that our donors get the greatest possible value for their gifts. Our administration is entirely volunteer, we have no facilities, and overhead expenses are incurred only when unavoidable, so almost all of our funds go directly into meeting the needs of residents.

This past year a record 601 families and individuals contacted us for assistance. Our professional part-time Benefits Counselors, Tracy Dennis and Kris Lombardo, are partners with over 90 other local agencies. They successfully match our clients' needs to these other resources most of the time, saving our donors' money for needs that cannot be met any other way.

When there is no immediate recourse or other help in a crisis or emergency, we provide direct aid. Our funds—your donations—were used to prevent 25 needy and deserving Webster families from losing their homes and assets, with another five aid payments preventing utility shut-off, providing auto repairs, and assisting in moves. Most clients are single parents, disabled, or elderly. If you know of someone who might need assistance, please have them reach out to us by phone at (585) 671-2060 or by e-mail at webcommchest@gmail.com. Any resident who is in need may contact us.



Our Meal Center operation continues to expand. In our first year in 2022, we provided over 3,000 ready-to-prepare meals to needy families. In 2023, over 7,000 meals went out. This past year we were up to an astonishing 11,146 meals distributed to food-insecure families. The distributions are usually made on the last Thursday each month just as SNAP benefits (“food stamps”) run out for many families. Groups and organizations have held food drives to help with this. We thank the Immanuel Lutheran Church in the village for providing the space to operate this.



In conjunction with the Meal Center, our Benefits Counselors and volunteers organized a Coat Closet to provide coats, hats, mittens, and more to needy families, oftentimes refugees who arrived here with almost nothing (see pages 8 and 9 for the full article). They also led in establishing a partnership with Webster Hope and with The Gathering Place to jointly provide holiday meals for 126 low-income families in the Spring, 88 for the 4th of July, and 181 for Thanksgiving. Our share for the end-of-year holidays was 10 families with 23 children who received food, gifts, and gift cards.

We subsidize Meals on Wheels for elderly and disabled residents who are on the waiting list and would otherwise not get meals. In all other local communities, these folks would not get meals until other funding becomes available, which can take months. Only in Webster do they get wellness visits and meals right away thanks to your donations. We subsidized 866 of these meals in 2024 up from 221 meals in 2023. We serve the average client for nine weeks while on the waiting list.



Meals on Wheels delivery



Your donations also sent children from low-income families to a week at summer camp.

We continued to aid lower-income families who have children with disabilities. In partnership with a local foundation, we have made it affordable for our clients to put their children in developmental therapy programs with Heritage Christian Stables (riding) and Gliding Stars (skating). We helped send several Webster residents to Camp Joy at Rotary Sunshine Camp for developmentally disabled adults. We also provide scholarship money to the Special Education Parent and Teacher Association (SEPTA).



Our annual Shirley Miller Award is given to local graduating high school seniors to recognize exemplary efforts as young volunteers and to encourage community service in their schoolmates. We awarded eight unrestricted scholarships to Webster residents this year at three high schools: Thomas HS—Sophia May, Eliza Drum, Kenyon Later, and Martina Broiou; Schroeder HS—Mason Drew, Carly Mason, and Erin Mueller; McQuaid HS—Alex Steele.



Shirley Miller Award winners at Webster Schroeder High School

Some of our funds are used to help other non-profit groups in Webster in our Aid to Organizations program. This was a core program for Community Chests since the movement began. The food cupboard at Willink Middle School wanted to provide "break boxes" in December to 15 families for whom the two-week break would be especially hard, as they depend on free breakfast and lunch for their children. They ran into a packaging problem, but the Chest responded by buying 15 large insulated reusable grocery bags for them. These sturdy bags will be used again and again now.



Webster Girls on the Run 2024 with coach

Girls on the Run Rochester offers programs designed to inspire girls of all abilities to recognize and embrace their inner strength and to make meaningful connections with others. We covered the fees for four girls from lower-income families in Webster.

We sponsored three community garden boxes at Hope House used to raise fresh food for the food cupboard there. Our "Underwear Project" in all the WCSD schools has taken on an expense that used to be out-of-pocket for nurses and teachers by keeping a stock of clothes at each school to use when young students have had accidents that soiled their clothes.

A qualified volunteer instructor organized a Chest Strategic Planning Committee to consider how we should operate in the future and particularly to identify services not currently available that the Chest could provide. Donors, clients, and volunteers were all surveyed during the process. You'll see more in 2025 as we develop these recommended programs.

For example, of the six "Little Pantries" in Webster, only one had no sponsor and was usually empty. Our volunteers led the adoption, refurbished the box at Phillips Village, and have kept it stocked with needed food ever since.



The Phillips Village Little Pantry

It is the people of our community who make this such a wonderful place to live! I would like to recognize the members of our Board of Directors and our officers who have all volunteered their time and skills to oversee the operations of the Chest. Anyone who is looking to serve our community as a volunteer should consider joining this dedicated group. Other residents have been generous in donating their time to assist in the delivery of services and to help raise funds. If you want to help, learn more, or donate, go to <https://webcommchest.org/>.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Grenier
President, Webster Community Chest

NEW IN 2024: WCC'S COAT CLOSET

Coat Closet Coordinator Trish Knisley and volunteer Nancy Robinson must have been paying attention to early forecasts of a severely windy and cold winter. Always thinking of other people, they organized Webster Community Chest's first and very timely Coat Closet for Webster residents in need.

The Coat Closet opened with a healthy inventory of winter gear for clients identified by WCC's Benefits Counselors. Trish and Nancy sought and obtained a large donation of coats from Goodwill and similarly acquired coats in other sizes with a Knights of Columbus donation and individual donations from generous Webster residents and other WCC volunteers.

Keeping people warm this winter is only part of the story. Trish and Nancy help clients look through the coats and other gear, creating for them a positive and caring experience. Trish brings a large mirror from home each time the Closet is open, and she and Nancy help the clients choose the best styles and colors, creating something of a boutique experience.



The Coat Closet was opened to clients four times in 2024, serving 23 families with 43 coats, 2 snowsuits, a pair of snow pants, 4 hats and 6 pairs of gloves. January 30 was the final shopping day for the winter. Stay tuned to hear our plans for spring... WCC HomeHub for new and gently used home basics is coming soon!

Contributions by Kathy Taddeo, Trish Knisley, Tracy Dennis, Kris Lombardo, Bonnie Reynolds, Mary Kay Barrett, Steve Yahoodik, and Michael Grenier.

For more information, visit us at <https://webcommchest.org/>

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