

Can you help?

This year's needs are critical

"The Group" is broke. Since we started our efforts to provide Christmas for those families who, because of illness or tragedy, will not be able to do so for their families this year, we have never been so besieged, or gone through our existing funds so fast.

The needs this year are more critical than they ever have been. We suspect because of the economy, people have reduced their contributions.

"The Group" is a gathering of people from all walks of life who come together annually to come to the aid of their fellow man. Over the last ten years we have helped provide Christmas for children whose parents normally are able to do this for them.

Due to circumstances, an accident, a critical illness, a loss of income, the parents have to tell their children Santa will not come this year. These families, in most instances, are not receiving assistance from outside sources.

In most cases they are not aware that we will help them. Just before Christmas, an anonymous visitor arrives at their house with gaily wrapped gifts for their children from Santa Claus. We try to make the gifts meet the needs of the families. Sometimes it requires winter coats, all forms of clothing and, of course, toys and games to lift the spirits of the children. A child who is without a special present under the tree, if indeed a tree is

possible, is a child whose face does not light up with joy or excitement. Think back to Christmases past, about how your own youngsters would feel if they hurried to the Christmas tree and there was nothing there. For many who are involved in our Group effort, that thought motivates them. Some purchase presents they had always wanted, but never received. Others buy gifts that represent precious memories of their own childhood. And on Christmas morning, they sit in their own homes, amidst the excitement of their own family's Christmas, and a warm feeling encompasses their heart, and a smile appears, thinking about the joy they helped bring to the home of another family.

The identity of those helped by

The Group is never revealed except to a very small group who do the initial investigation and verify the needs of the family. The family has no way of knowing who we are, where we come from, nor do they have to feel humiliation or that their privacy was invaded.

To fund this effort we personally contribute as much cash as we can. We depend upon others in the community who are thankful for the blessings that were bestowed upon them and who are willing to reach out collectively to help others.

Our shoppers who fulfill Santa's list make every dollar we spend do two and three times the normal job. A few stores, which are members of The Group, give us substantial discounts. We have been aided by a manufacturer and his employees, who make knitted goods. The company donates the machinery and the material and the workers labor free for one hour. The production of sweaters and other items is donated to The Group. A few distributors and wholesalers have also offered us some of their goods at discounts. A department store donates boxes and wrapping paper, important items because it allows the money that would be needed for these items to be earmarked for gifts.

Because of the demand this year, this is not even enough. We are midway through the program and we are flat broke.

We know these are more difficult times for everyone but, if you can, we need your help. Any contributions you can make will be utilized to help someone who, through no fault of their own, will not be able to provide Christmas for their children.

Our Group operates with one simple motto that pertains to every one of us, "There, but for the grace of God, go I." None of us knows when it might be our turn to be in those circumstances. Please help. Please share in the feeling of satisfaction that you have played a part in helping to prevent the unfortunate circumstances of life from robbing the magic of Christmas from the lives of innocent children.

And why not?

Get realistic about drugs

For several years Suffolk Life has proposed and editorialized in favor of putting meat in our existing drug laws that can affect anyone found in possession of any amount of illegal drugs.

Our proposal is based on the current D.W.I. program, which has proved to be enormously effective in curtailing driving while under the influence of alcohol.

The basis of the program we have long advocated would be that persons found in possession would automatically lose their license to drive, and be required to go through a drug education and rehabilitation program patterned after the D.W.I. program. Second offenders would have all other licenses suspended, whether they be the license to hunt and fish or practice their trade or profession. Third offenders would do hard jail time.

The federal government recently passed a law that requires all states receiving federal highway aid to mandate the loss of a driver's license for drug possession convictions, in order to be eligible to continue to receive highway aid. The law is specifically directed toward New York and Cali-

fornia, states which have, in effect, decriminalized possession of small amounts of marijuana. In these two states you can be found in possession and, under normal circumstances, the worst you will receive is short-term probation. The record of the offense disappears if you are clean for six months. In most cases, possession is ignored unless some other crime or accident is involved.

Suffolk Life believes the federal law will and can be a particularly strong deterrent to young people, who connect their driver's license with freedom and their entry into the adult world. If a young person realizes that if he or she is picked up and so much as a trace of marijuana is found, and the privilege to drive will be lost, that penalty will provide a strong deterrent.

The law has its critics, some criticism legitimate and some not. One of the criticisms of the law is that it does not go the second step of requiring a violator to have to go through a similar program as drunk drivers must embrace. We agree, if it was mandated that an offender had to go through a

drug rehabilitation program, pay a steep fine, suffer the bad publicity and have to do community service, the program would be more effective.

A program such as the one described above was passed in the New York State Senate, but was blocked by the bleeding heart liberals in the assembly. With the prospect of losing critical federal aid, the state legislators must enact this law immediately. They should go the entire route, not only the suspension of the license but the rehabilitation program as well, and for second offenders, the loss of all other state or county licenses. This will put the adults who are so called recreational users of drugs in the same jeopardy as the youngsters. It would include doctors, lawyers, accountants, teachers and trades people.

"We must do something about our drug problem" is a favorite bit of rhetoric we hear from our legislators time and time again, especially at election time. Well, it's time to put our votes where our mouths are. Let New York, finally, be serious about saying "no" to drugs.

And why not?

Stand up if you dare!

The county executive and the county legislature have played pure, raw politics with this year's county budget. If any man or woman who took part in this debacle feels proud of their performance, let them stand up and be acclaimed. From where we sit, with the taxpayers of Suffolk County, there isn't one person who should rise.

Halpin initially presented a budget that, he alleged, would produce no new tax increases. It was a political instrument, better than some in the past but terribly deficient. There were no meaningful cutbacks in his own staff. There were no voluntary reductions in the salaries of his high price staff, which are mostly patronage appointments. They had theirs, they were keeping it, the workers could suffer.

The legislators, under Donald Blydenburg, were no better. They played political football with the budget. They, like the county executive, held their own turf and players sacrosanct. Not only did they refuse to reduce the cost of the legislative budget by reducing their salaries and those of their aides, they added back into the budget a whole host of political patronage jobs.

The taxpayers of Suffolk County had made their point very clear. They not only did not want a tax increase, they wanted tax reductions. They didn't stand up and scream, picket or show up at the circus as did many of those who were targeted for impact. They wrote, they buttonholed the legislators through taxpayer organizations to make their position clear. Things got so bad

the legislators refused to meet with the county executive. Democrats refused to meet and compromise with Republicans. It was all or nothing. My way or no way.

The final tax levies have now been announced. The county taxpayers got nothing, county government got all. Promises were made that there would be no tax hikes, but residents of five towns will see tax increases.

The legislature knew full well in passing the budget that it started out with a shortfall of at least \$4 million. They knew full well the state will cut back on local aid, which will impact the budget during the coming year. This month, the county, which is broke, will have to borrow money to make the county payroll and the welfare rolls.

In a recent discussion with a Southold

resident, he uttered his disgust by saying he is tempted to lead a contingent of his constituents to the next county legislature meeting and state plainly, "You are taking our homes through unjust taxation, you might as well take our bodies." With that, he envisions, the group would lie down on the floor, refuse to leave, and, when arrested, refuse to give their names. Do what the abortion advocates did when they wanted to make their point. Allow themselves to be put in jail until they reveal their names. At least that way, the disgusted taxpayer said, they could have cable television, which they now can't afford.

What a sorry state we have come to. Is there a politician who is proud of what he or she has done to the people?

And why not?

Six days from financial disaster

In six days, on December 18, 1990, a scandalous fraud will be put into effect which will, ultimately, enrich some but bankrupt the taxpayers of towns throughout this state. That is the day that the state's ban on the use of landfills goes into effect, a day that will go down in history as recording the driving of the final nail in the taxpayers' coffin.

Unless there is some last minute reprieve—a common sense extension that would offer sufficient time to come up with sensible solutions rather than dictatorial demands by Governor Mario Cuomo and the DEC—a tremendous burden will be put upon the shoulders of the taxpayers. With the current financial crisis that exists in the state and federal governments, and in our school districts, this added financial load will double the spending by the towns.

Why is this happening? That question begs a thorough investigation to weed out fact from rhetoric. The landfill ban was implemented under the guise of the "environment" and the "preservation of groundwater." The law was never based on scientific fact, it even ignored the findings of the one study upon which many say it was based, the 208 Study, which indicated landfills in some areas should be permitted to continue operations. Lawmakers jumped on a bandwagon that proclaimed landfills were destroying our water supply. They never asked for proof, they counted environmental votes in their heads and went along.

The "groundwater threat" has been the public motivating force that has put the DEC in the driver's seat as the enforcer of the landfill ban. Very little of what the state or the DEC has done in the matter makes much sense. Consider this: Brookhaven Town, according to a DEC plan, will take its garbage to Hempstead, and in return will accept ash from the Hempstead incinerator. Meanwhile, the towns of Southold and Riverhead, if they decide to take part in this garbage checkers game, would take their garbage to the Brookhaven landfill. If any of this makes sense, it escapes us and many others.

How about this for an example: The DEC has been pushing for regional approaches to solve the garbage problem. After numerous meetings, and verbal assurances from DEC and Frank Murray of the governor's office, Hunt-

ington and Smithtown agreed on a joint solution. Huntington would build an incinerator, Smithtown would take its garbage there and, in return, Huntington could utilize a new Smithtown landfill facility—Cell Six—which would cost Smithtown \$26 million to construct. Smithtown wanted assurances the town would get an extension to use Cell Six beyond the ban date, and town officials, and Senator James Lack (R-East Northport) who pushed legislation, were told "not to worry."

Well, now those same DEC and governor's people are saying the state legislature has to approve an extension for Cell Six. The senate did. But the assembly's environmental guru, Maurice Hinchey (D-Saugerties), will have none of it. In a published report he noted some towns have moved to meet the ban. "But," he said, "in this particular case where the extension is sought, they seem to have not taken the deadline seriously." That statement is a prime example of what is wrong in New York State. Here's a guy who has been part and parcel of creating the \$1 billion deficit in state spending this year, and up to \$3 billion next, and he dismisses the expenditure of \$26 million as not taking a deadline seriously!

Smithtown Supervisor Patrick Vecchio, who views all this as a gross injustice perpetrated on his town's residents, once said: "Every time the state writes and imposes a regulation, the mob hits a home run." The New York Times recently indicated in a headline "Mob Looks at Recycling and Sees Green." The article described how many individuals involved in organized crime, and the garbage industry, are now focusing their efforts on transfer stations, recycling operations, and the hauling of garbage. Even Hinchey acknowledged in that article that "A lot of transfer station in the State of New York are run by people connected to organized crime." One must wonder, then, why he stands in the way of two towns trying to solve their problem in a joint operation.

A Newsday story recently indicated the governor's brother and an individual once involved with the Islip Barge fiasco and who is alleged to have ties with organized crime, met with DEC officials to discuss a transfer station. What is going on here?

During our recent interviews with

state legislators seeking election, we asked if they would support and push for an investigation into the entire garbage matter, the creation of the ban, the lack of cooperative action by state or DEC officials, and the identities of those involved in hauling companies, recycling and incineration operations, and possible ties with state officials.

The incumbents voiced support for such an investigation, and vowed to support a demand for such a probe. Since Election Day, however, we have heard precious little from our legislators on this matter. If they are not part of the solution, perhaps they, too, should become targets of investigation.

Senate Majority Speaker Ralph Marino is a key player in this arrogant injustice upon the people. He, Assembly Majority Leader Mel Miller and Governor Cuomo are currently in the throes of negotiating a settlement over what budget cuts to make to offset the deficit. Not too many weeks ago Marino came back into his district seeking support from the voters. One of the reasons this newspaper, and many voters, supported Marino was the powerful position he holds in the senate. Well, it is now time

to use that power to benefit the public. If the governor wants Marino's support on budget cuts, Marino should get something in return: extensions and common sense solutions in the garbage crisis. The governor can resolve the problem, he simply refuses to do so. The DEC can resolve the problem. But they won't.

Since that is the case, Marino's support for any budget solution should be contingent upon the governor's support for extensions and a sensible garbage solution. Marino and other political leaders wield their power for political benefit; it's time they, for once, use it for the benefit of the people.

Make no mistake about it, the garbage crisis is going to bring financial ruin to the towns and their taxpayers. The costs will mount year after year, and will ultimately bankrupt both.

Mark the date in your records: December 18, 1990, the date that Governor Mario Cuomo helped the mob hit a grand slam home run to win the game. Unless state legislators and the governor take immediate action to undo the financial disaster their landfill ban will impose upon the people.

And why not?

Squeak and quack

We, as citizens, elect assemblymen and senators to represent us in the New York State Legislature. Most of our representatives are decent, smart, and have the ability to convey our wishes to their fellow legislators. Unfortunately, under the current system, their voices are not even heard.

During the last few weeks, the leaders of the assembly and the senate have been meeting with the governor in an attempt to work out a package to meet the projected billion dollar shortfall in state finances for 1990-'91. The leadership in both houses has virtually ignored the men and women we send to Albany to represent us.

Whatever deal is being made is being made solely between Cuomo, assembly leader Mel Miller and Ralph Marino, leader of the senate. When the deal is cut, regardless of the effect it may have on their constituents, the assembly and senate are expected to vote affirmatively like good little boys and girls. The whole package, which probably will be several hundred items with far-reaching consequences, will be

offered to the legislature on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. This is not a democracy. This is totalitarian rule.

Why have legislative representatives if they are not allowed to act and think as legislators? Why not have replicas of the 220 men and women made up, as Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck? When you push the button, they squeak or quack. We can save the money we spend on them and their staffs and have just as much representation as we are getting now on the important matters that affect our lives and our state.

If there ever was a time for thinking men and women who have been elected to a position of cherished trust to revolt, it is now. To a person, the legislature should refuse to vote on the package being put together until they are allowed to have input on the document. When asked to vote, the Democrats should go squeak, squeak, and the Republicans, quack, quack, leaving the big three to wonder how they have turned the New York State Legislature into a funny farm.

And why not?

A time for rededication

By Sharman Gordon

The children stand wide-eyed and excited as the Hanukkah candles are lit, and the blessing is sung: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to light the Hanukkah candles."

The home is decorated for the holiday, and the tempting smells of traditional delicacies fill the air. After an exchange of small gifts, members of the family participate in a lively game of "Driedel," and gather together to retell the meaning of Hanukkah.

On December 11, or the 25th day of Kislev in the Jewish calendar, free Jews all over the world will be reciting the blessing above in Hebrew, and lighting Hanukkah candles.

An Ancient Miracle

The first night, only two candles are lit; three the second day, four are lit the third day, and so on until the eighth day, when all nine candles in the menorah are aglow. The lighting of the candles recalls an ancient miracle.

In the year 332 B.C., Alexander the Great established the city of Alexandria in Egypt, and welcomed the Jews living in Judea to settle there. There is evidence that at that time over 250,000 Jews settled in Alexandria, enjoying the equal rights and opportunities afforded all citizens.

After Alexander the Great's death, his large kingdom was divided into four smaller ones. Two of them, Syria and Egypt, battled, with Palestine serving as a land bridge. After the wars, Palestine became Syria's possession.

In 175 B.C., Antiochus Epiphanes IV became the ruler
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Happy Hanukkah!

We would like to take this opportunity to wish all our friends of the Jewish faith a very warm and happy Hanukkah.

We are pleased to be able to reprint the story of Hanukkah written by Sharman Gordon, who for many years was the Art and Production Director of Suffolk Life Newspapers.

The story is moving and inspiring.

And why not?