

Natick Service Council Receives \$4,500 Grant from Middlesex Savings and Mass Bankers

By Thomas Burke

Special to the Bulletin & Tab

December 22-29, 2011



Natick Service Council Food Pantry volunteers Howard Shea, Gloria Estey, Violet Tutuny, June Shea and Rick Waldman with Volunteer Services Director Patty Shaffer and Executive Director Greg Tutuny. (Photo by Tom Burke).

Greg Tutuny and his team of about 150 volunteers at the Natick Service Council had just caught their breaths after distributing 240 meals in the Council's annual Thanksgiving program when they received some unexpected but most welcome news: a \$4,500 contribution would be coming their way, just in time to help with their clients' Christmas meals and celebrations.

Middlesex Savings Bank, whose corporate giving functions are directed by executive vice president Dana Neshe, had nominated the Council for a year-end gift from the Massachusetts Bankers Association Charitable Foundation. When Mass Bankers approved a grant of \$1,500, Middlesex immediately matched it through its corporate giving program. The Middlesex Savings Charitable Foundation, in keeping with its mission to meet basic human needs in its communities, also stepped forward with a \$1,500 match.

The majority of the \$4,500 will go to purchasing fresh produce, dairy products, and other healthy foods by the Council's food pantry. Tutuny, the organization's executive director, points out that the need for assistance with food supplies continues to increase because unemployment has remained high. Food pantry use rose by 8 percent in 2010 and by 8.9 percent in 2011.

"The families that we serve have tended to be the lower-income earners, but lately we have seen the need for help creep up into the middle class, and even the upper middle class. Many people have lost their jobs and are finding that they have to choose between paying the mortgage and buying food," he said.

"If you look at the state numbers, the unemployment figures seem to be going down, but I don't think that reflects real life. I think a lot of people have given up looking for jobs, and they essentially fall off the unemployment rolls. From the number of clients we see coming in here, unemployment has continued to rise. "

Council volunteers are also busy with the Holiday program, responding to requests for over 400 gifts for children, teens, and elders. Approximately 200 youngsters will receive gift boxes of toys, clothing, and books. Teens will receive gift cards to purchase items at popular stores, and elders will receive gift cards as well as clothing, blankets, and other personal necessities.

The Natick Service Council will mark its 50th year of service in 2012.

"We'll have a big celebration coming up," Tutuny said.