



Editorial: Donations not frozen in Green Bay area

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With the rest of the country, Northeastern Wisconsin has endured more than a year now through a recession as chilly as the air that has descended upon us recently. The Greater Green Bay Community Foundation provides an enduring reminder of what it will take to weather the cold.

A special section in this morning's edition of USA Today, "Sharing in the USA," chronicles the state of philanthropy in these times.

The Green Bay foundation recently awarded more than \$64,000 to promising local programs, including \$18,000 for two programs offered through the Brown County Homeless and Housing Coalition.

"A Pair and a Spare" is an annual collection of new socks and underwear that are distributed to people in need. Warm undergarments are among the most-requested items at thrift stores and shelters, but that's not the first thing people think to donate. This program helps fill that need.

The other grant supports administrative costs for a collaborative group of 12 local housing providers. By working together on administration, the organizations can focus on providing direct services to their clients. The grant leverages an Emergency Shelter Grant that has been funded through the Wisconsin Department of Commerce.

The foundation also announced grants to 12 programs in the areas of arts, health and human services. Donations to charity are harder to come by, and with rising unemployment the public sector is experiencing a sag in tax revenues. Philanthropic organizations, such as the Greater Green Bay Community Foundation, step up to the plate to attempt to fill the gaps.

There is plenty of evidence that the spirit of giving is down but not out, according to the USA Today stories.

Patrick Rooney, executive director of the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, is quoted as saying some parts of the nonprofit community have fared better than others, including the religious and educational sectors that accounted for nearly half of the \$307.7 billion in philanthropic giving in 2008. Though that total represented a 5.7 percent drop from 2007, adjusted for inflation, it was still the second-best year on record.

"At a time when unemployment is around 10 percent, when we are fighting two wars, and the economy is the worst since the Great Depression," Rooney said, "the fact that giving only fell a small amount really suggests to me a strong commitment to philanthropy."

Green Bay's spirit of giving is a microcosm of the best in America. From the foundation's work to the annual United Way campaign and the efforts of so many local churches, our generosity fuels a warmth that belies the autumn chill.