The Intelligencer kicks off 2019 'Give A Christmas' campaign

By Chris Ruvo, Correspondent
Posted Nov 17, 2019 at 8:53 AM

Over the past 30 years, Intelligencer readers have contributed more than $3 million to help families in need. We're once again asking for your generosity to support the Give A Christmas campaign.

The Bucks County couple already had three children of their own, but that didn't stop them from stepping up to obtain custody of their two nieces when unfortunate circumstances reared.

The addition of two more children placed intense strain on the working family's budget — so much so that there was no extra money for Christmas gifts.

Still, all five children woke up to presents on Dec. 25. That was thanks to The Intelligencer's Give A Christmas Fund.

Administered by the Bucks County Opportunity Council, with 10% of the proceeds shared with the Keystone Opportunity Center, the fund provides financial assistance to individuals and families in need during the holidays.

Benefiting in-need locals in Central and Upper Bucks County, as well as Eastern Montgomery County and the North Penn and Indian Valley communities, the fund provides a variety of assistance. That includes everything from help with buying gifts and groceries, to paying rent, medicine bills and utility expenses.

"The individuals and families served by Give A Christmas are living in daily instability. Very often, they are making a series of decisions — trade-offs regarding whether to pay rent, utilities or feed their families," said Tammy B.

Schoonover, director of community services at BCOC. "Give A Christmas provides an opportunity for low-income, under-resourced families to be relieved from the daily stress of this raw decision-making and to experience some joy during the holiday season."

The Christmas miracles in struggling households only occur, however, if the community is generous. Donations from individuals, businesses and families provide the financial fuel for Give A Christmas.

Fortunately, the community has come through during each of the 31 holiday seasons that the do-gooding initiative has operated. Since 1988, locals have contributed approximately $3 million to Give A Christmas, with 2018's total tallying $131,409.

"I'm thrilled we have the privilege of working with the Bucks County Opportunity Council again this year," said Shane Fitzgerald, executive editor of The Intelligencer. "Intelligencer readers have a long history of using the Give A Christmas program to help those in the most need, at Christmas time and beyond. It's so humbling to have that kind of support."

In 2018, organizers used the money raised through Give A Christmas to help 420 families (1,310 individuals). Average assistance provided was $210. Average family/household income was only $16,826.

Organizers noted that, after the program satisfies eligible requests for assistance during the holidays, the remaining fund balance could be used to provide similar types of assistance to eligible locals in need throughout the year.

But with the weather turning colder and the holidays well in view, now is the time for the community to draw on the true spirit of Christmas and support neighbors in need.

"Our Give A Christmas goal is to brighten the holidays of families in need," said Joseph Cuozzo, director of development at the Bucks County Opportunity Council.