

From the Capitol / State Sen. Bob Duff

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There's an old saying that goes "the three most important things in real estate are location, location, location."

As a realtor, I've heard that. But what does it mean? For most people, it means seeking a home in a particular area of the state, or a particular town, or a section of that town, or even a certain street in that section.

That's understandable. Scenic views, good schools, reliable utilities and retail conveniences are all desirable. But there's a part of that equation that's missing. Views and schools and shops do not make a community, and it has been my experience over the years that when people talk about a desirable "location" for their home, what they are really seeking is a vibrant, supportive, stable "community."

Right now, with all of our global economic upheaval and the resulting chase for good-paying jobs, people are moving from place to place, and they typically don't have family members nearby. That means it's especially important for them to find a home where people feel positively supported -- where there are good schools for their children, yes, and libraries, parks and beaches -- but also a place where people care about and for each other.

I believe that Darien is one such place, and one of the ways that's evident is by the presence of long-standing community organizations like The Community Fund of Darien.

For more than 60 years, The Community Fund of Darien has brought local residents and businesses together to enhance the capacity of the community to care for one another through funding as well as through community engagement, collaboration and cooperation.

Every year, The Community Fund of Darien raises money to give to more than 30 agencies that provide services to Darien, Norwalk and Stamford, services like food, shelter, counseling for substance and alcohol misuse, mental health counseling, elderly services, youth development and more. Since 1951 it has distributed more than \$21 million.

The Fund's Human Services Planning Council brings Darien residents together to discuss local issues and needs, to find solutions to address gaps in services, and to provide education and information about resources. Council members include people who represent schools, nonprofit organizations, government, police, social services and faith groups as well as dedicated community volunteers. Collectively, they are working to improve the quality of life for all.

In addition, The Community Fund of Darien promotes volunteerism through its Youth Community Fund, the Darien High School Volunteer Fair and Darien Volunteer Recognition Day.

It is this tradition of caring that makes a mere "location" into a desirable, vibrant community.

For more information on The Community Fund of Darien, visit www.communityfunddarien.org. State

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