

## ALLOCATIONS PROCESS IS A BIG JOB

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As **the Community Fund** of Darien concludes its yearly allocation process, panel members say it was a worthwhile and educational experience. **The** process, which began about two months ago, has panel members visit various interested local services to evaluate what, if any, money they may be eligible for from **the Community Fund's** total donations. This year that amount is approximately \$700,000.

A recent visit to **the** AmeriCares Free Clinic in Norwalk, for example, explained **the** process of **the** clinic to panel members.

**The** group was given a tour of **the** clinic, including **the** cheerful rooms and recent expanded facilities. They met with **the** dedicated staff who told panel members what is handled in **the** clinic, and **the** challenges of raising money for a much-needed service.

Panel members were impressed at **the** staff and services.

Nancy Gramps, who has volunteered with **the** panels allocation for two years, said that had no idea **the** clinic was there before she

"I was really impressed with **the the** visit. Facility," she said.

Gramps said **the** process panel is important because trust donors that **the Community Fund** will **the** due diligence to sure make **the** money is given out "appropriately." "It is important that meet with **the** various determine whether or not **the funds** agencies should be given out to them,"

Gramps said **the** process is an incredible experience.

"We really learn about **the** agencies and their staff and get a good sense of their missions and dedication to them. They are very open about **the** challenges they are facing," she said.

Volunteer Susan Balloch said she has been part of **the** process for **the** last two to three years.

"**The** process is so important because it allows a group of third parties to look at and understand what these agencies are doing," she said.

It also helps volunteers understand what **the** money is used for at **the** agencies.

"I think it has another beneficial effect, which is it gets a lot of people involved in **the Community Fund** and understand what kind of agencies they support," she said

Balloch said many people don't realize how many different services are provided to **the**

greater **community**, and how important those needs are.

"I certainly didn't," she said. "I guess you could say it raises awareness," Balloch said.

Gramps said that in addition, it helps people in town meet their neighbors.

"I have met so many wonderful people that are just in different circles," she said.

Gramps said that **the** experience in working with her panel members has been great and "so much fun."

Each group of services is evaluated by a panel of six or seven volunteers. **The** panel forwards questions to each provider after reading its application. Then **the** panel makes site visits to talk with each staff about **the** questions and possibly get a site tour.

Turning down an agency isn't always a negative for that agency, said Kiki Karpen, **the Community Fund** executive director. Sometimes, **the Community Fund** decides against money for an agency because it is so successful.

"We say, You don't need us," she said.

Gramps said her panel reported their findings to **the** board of **the Community Fund** Wednesday. **The** board votes on **the** final allocations this month.

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