



Medina County Auditor

HOMETOWN HERO

Keeping hearts and bellies full throughout the COVID-19 crisis

By Melissa Martin

BRUNSWICK HILLS – Early on in the COVID-19 crisis, Brunswick Hills Township Administrative Assistant Ellen Young received a phone call when she was working at the Brunswick Hills Police Department.

The caller was a young mother from Medina who, along with her two children, had just been placed under a 10-day quarantine by the Medina County Health Department. The family was awaiting testing for coronavirus and was in desperate need of assistance.

“She was sick and scared and in desperate need of food, but she wasn’t allowed to leave her house,”

Young said. “She told me that she tried all agencies to get food, but due to her situation (and the fact that she was presumably contagious) nobody could help her.”

The Brunswick Hills Police Department, the woman claimed, was her last hope.

For several years, the BHPD, operating in conjunction with the Brunswick Hills Police Association, has been operating a food pantry at the township’s Substation Road police station. Though the food



pantry operates year-round for those in need of assistance, the pantry is known throughout the community for helping those in need when students head back to school in the fall and throughout the holiday season when it sends out a call for help for both food and Christmas gifts for families in need of assistance. The community has always responded with abundance.

In fact, over the years, the Brunswick Hills Food Pantry has become such a beloved community institution that this year, when the BHPD had to cancel its annual Breakfast with the Bunny in light of the state's Stay at Home order, many who purchased tickets for the event elected to donate the money to the food pantry instead of opting for a refund.

Those donations, Young said, enabled the BHPD to assist the Brunswick City School District with its school lunch program, which has kept hundreds of students who would normally qualify for free and reduced school breakfasts and lunches fed despite the fact that the schools have been shut down for nearly two months now.

Recognizing the township's food pantry had joined the cause to help the schools, community donations to the food pantry increased substantially since March, with residents donating everything needed to supply the lunches – from peanut butter and jelly to bread, lunch snacks and more.

When coupled with the additional donations the food pantry has continued to receive, Young said the police department and members of the township's police association, which includes Young, Chief Tim Sopkovich, BHPD Officer Wayne Fisher and township residents Ed Kelly and Stephanie Rocksandich, decided they couldn't turn their backs on the Medina family who reached out for help.

"We worked with her and we were able to provide her with about three weeks-worth of food," Young said, noting that she worked with the mother and was able to arrange for a family member to pick up

donations for her. “She was so grateful that we took the time when she was scared and had nowhere left to turn.”

In the weeks since, Young said the woman has since been tested for coronavirus and those results were negative.

But the police associations’ efforts throughout the COVID-19 crisis didn’t stop there.

“We have helped many families in between – some have been laid off and others who are just too afraid of the virus to go out and shop. The unknown can be a scary thing for some,” Young said.

In addition to ongoing community donations, the township-based business, Crimcheck, as well as the Brunswick Eagles Ladies Auxiliary have made generous donations to the township’s food pantry in recent weeks, which has enabled the department to provide a week’s supply of groceries for several families in need throughout the pandemic.

Those groceries are either picked up in the police department lobby or are hand-delivered to those families courtesy of the department’s officers, police chief and police association members.

Being able to provide a solution for those living in fear these past several weeks, Young said, has been a blessing for all those associated with the township’s food pantry.



“Some people who have never needed help need it now,” she said. “We are so lucky that we get to help the way we do.”