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Cape Cod Times Needy Fund Changes Its Name, Not Its Mission: Charity Renamed Cape Cod Times Neighbors Fund, Plans to Increase Response to Rising Community Needs

Hyannis, Mass., April 30, 2024---The Cape Cod Times Needy Fund, one of the area's most stable and venerable charities for almost 90 years, is changing its name to the Cape Cod Times Neighbors Fund. Based in Hyannis, Mass., the Needy Fund has responded to the changing needs of individuals and families on Cape Cod and the Islands since 1936. The oldest continuously operating nonprofit of its kind on Cape Cod, it last year raised a record \$1,656,143, helping 8,080 people seeking financial assistance or other resources.

With such a successful track record, why did the Needy Fund's Board of Directors feel the need to change the organization's name and logo?

"We've always been about neighbors helping neighbors," says Susan Johnson, Executive Director of the Neighbors Fund since 2022. "So the name change makes sense and is a natural transition."

She adds, "We continue to respond to clients facing temporary financial hardships. At the same time, it's not accurate to classify all those we serve as 'needy.' We want to accent dignity and empowerment. We want to build a stronger and more sustainable community."

According to Board member Peter Meyer, President Emeritus of the Neighbors Fund and former President and Publisher of the Cape Cod Times, "The needs of the community keep changing, but the mission of our charity has not: We provide urgent financial assistance and resources to our neighbors on the Cape as well as Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. Our vision has always been to foster a thriving community where basic human needs are met."

To respond promptly to those requesting assistance, the Fund's intake specialists evaluate each person's situation and work to find solutions to their challenges, whether it is financial aid through vouchers to landlords and vendors or referrals through other channels.

Nimble about Changing Needs

A trademark of the Neighbors Fund has been its flexibility. In 2016, following Hurricane Sandy, which was headed for the Cape but thankfully changed its course, the Needy Fund decided to form a new program—the Major Crisis Relief Fund. "Recognizing that it's a matter of 'when,' not 'if' the big one hits us, MCRF was created to provide humanitarian aid in the wake of a disaster, either weather-related or man-made," says MCRF Managing Director Judy Walden Scarafile. While MCRF expected to respond to a hurricane or a blizzard, it was first mobilized when COVID-19 struck, raising almost \$1 million and helping more than 2,000 local residents. "Our world is very fragile, our precious peninsula is very vulnerable, and we will pivot as necessary to address the next disaster," says Scarafile.

The community has always responded as needs have changed. In the Fund's first holiday campaign in 1936, the major need was food. Today, while there is still food deprivation, the top requests are related to housing, transportation, and utilities.

"Cape Cod and the Islands have unique demographics and unique challenges," says Meyer. "We have a growing elderly population, more single families, a greater need for child care, and of course, a housing crisis that can make it so difficult to live here."

Beyond the Pandemic

"It's important that we not become complacent," says Johnson. "Even though the pandemic may be over, many related hardships persist. Public funding has declined, and we must fill the gaps. We need to reach additional donors and continue to partner with other local agencies to coordinate the most efficient allocation of funds to the community."

The Neighbors Fund ensures accountability with an all-volunteer board of community leaders. The Fund features financial transparency, and 91% of funds raised go directly toward services, one of the best records of cost effectiveness of any major charity.

"Looking ahead," Johnson says, "we are prepared to respond to individuals who generally don't label themselves as 'needy' but who may experience unexpected challenges—like job loss, medical issues, or other financial turmoil. Our model allows us to help individuals and families become stronger and more secure. And we believe our new name may be a way to help us connect with more donors and ultimately help more of our neighbors who are in need."

The Cape Cod Neighbors Fund, founded in 1936 and based in Hyannis, Mass., is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) registered charitable organization. For more information and to donate, visit www.neighborsfund.org and www.majorcrisisrelieffund.org. Call [508-778-5661](tel:508-778-5661) or 1-800-422-1446.

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