

DAILY TIMES OPINION

Opinion

Guest Column: 'Tis the season for #GenerousDelco



By Frances Sheehan, Times Guest Columnist

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If you're anything like me, you've been collecting a pile of charitable appeals that you have every intention of attending to at Thanksgiving or Christmas ... or maybe in the new year. It's the season of giving and we Delco residents are a generous lot.

How do we know Delco residents are generous? The Philadelphia and Knight Foundations conducted an informal poll last May of those participating in their On the Table Philly events last May, including those who participated in our three On the Table Delco gatherings. Results show Delco residents were more likely than those from other areas of the Philadelphia region to respond that they voted, volunteered, donated and contribute to collective efforts to improve our communities.

But we don't limit our good works to holiday time. The Crozer-Keystone Community Foundation, a new community foundation serving Delaware County, hosted On the Table Delco to begin what we hope will be a long and productive conversation about how to come together to improve our health, well-being and neighborhoods. We know that encouraging philanthropy is critical to a community's health. Our residents' heartfelt generosity bodes well for Delaware County's future in an increasingly divided world.

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We've also been exploring why Delco residents give and here is some of what we've learned:

- In Delaware County, we care about and trust each other, so we tend to give because friends ask, or because a friend or family member has a need.
- Here, local means local. So, while we will give to a cause in a broader geographic area if the organization is doing good work, or it is working on an issue we care about, we tend to favor giving in Delaware County and in our towns or neighborhoods.
- The idea of a “community foundation” is new to many Delco residents. We have yet to experience the transformational change that 780 community foundations have spurred in their communities across the country.

As we enter Community Foundation Week from Nov.12-19, we would like to share more about the tremendous opportunity we have here in Delaware County with the birth of the new Crozer-Keystone Community Foundation.

Community foundations around the country play a unique and increasingly important role in convening government, business, the nonprofit community and individuals to address such critical issues as the opioid crisis, inadequate housing and lead poisoning, often working across party lines to find and implement real solutions.

They pool resources for impact, including direct donations, gifts for specific causes and programs, donor-advised funds, and planned gifts — all to benefit local communities like Delaware County now and for generations to come.

We believe that your zip code should not determine your health and well-being. Yet more than 20,000 Delaware County children live in poverty and do not have access to resources that can assure them safe, healthy and productive lives. To address these problems, our new foundation is running programs with impact that many of you have grown to respect and support, such as Healthy Start and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program. These high quality, evidence-based programs are critical to getting our children off on the path to long, healthy lives.

We'll also be making grants to strengthen Delaware County's nonprofits because we are all relying on them to meet the needs of our most vulnerable citizens, particularly our children. And we'll be encouraging Delco's residents to step up and be even more generous than they already are.

Community foundations make it possible for everyone to be a philanthropist, to have a real impact on issues of importance, and to engage the next generation in giving back thoughtfully. So stay tuned, keep giving back, and let's tell the #GenerousDelco story together.

For more information on Community Foundation Week visit www.cof.org/cfweek and follow #CFWeek on Twitter. To learn more about your new community foundation in Delaware County visit www.ckcommunityfoundation.org and follow @CKCommFdn on Twitter.

Frances M. Sheehan is president of the Crozer-Keystone Community Foundation