

Disbursement of Christmas Funds

as told by Joe Di Leo

at the Per Niente Club Christmas Party

Westwood Country Club

December 17, 2012

This is our Twenty-first annual Christmas Party and attendance wise it is a record breaker. Thank you.

Let me begin by thanking Bob Mangano for an excellent job in organizing this event. Getting twelve people to agree on a dinner location and then to make seating arrangements for a group this size is not easy. Thank you, Bob.

Also, I thank those who contributed so generously to help the less fortunate via our Christmas Fund. As such, the Fund has increased dramatically allowing us to help more and more of those in need.

This Christmas the Per Niente Club donated a record \$9000. \$2000 of which was spent on turkeys and staples for fifty-five families ensuring that they enjoy a traditional Thanksgiving dinner.

The remaining \$7000 was dispersed as follows:

\$500 was donated to assist the family of Chase Britton, a disabled five-year old boy with serious medical problems who requires a wheel chair conversion to the family van. We wish them Godspeed in their endeavor.

Through the auspices of the Independence Foundation, a group that assists the physically disabled to live independent self directed lives, we learned of a young man, Joseph Collen Shaw, who is afflicted with Muscular Dystrophy, and who, in order to function within his disability dreamed of a special-needs computer. The Independence Foundation was given \$700.00 to purchase that coveted computer for Joseph.

Another group we assisted is the National Alliance on Mental Illness in Buffalo & Erie County, an organization of more than 450 families and friends whose loved ones have serious mental problems. The Alliance sponsors *Christmas Is for Kids!* No child, whether in a hospital, a shelter, foster care or a group home is omitted. This ensures a bright holiday for those who do not have what we provide for our grand children. The Per Niente Club donated \$1000 to *Christmas Is For Kids*.

A Foundation, The Heritage Center, serves as an advocate for children and adults with developmental disabilities. Through them we learned of a family of five whose wish-list was, not for toys or electronic games, but for clothing; things we take for granted. We obtained each family members clothing size. We shopped for - and gift wrapped - \$500 worth of shirts, shoes, trousers and other items and brought them to the Heritage Center for distribution.

We also donated \$800 to the Little Portion Friary, a group of 100 plus volunteers who provide food and temporary shelter for the homeless in the inner city.

St Lawrence Church on Buffalo's East Side, through its Outreach Program, is noted for assisting and comforting the poor, the sick and the homeless of all races and denominations.

Through Deacon Paul Weisenburger and his wife, Mary, we offered to aid families with special needs. They told of hundreds of low income families that frequent the St Lawrence clinic but were quick to mention one family in particular that never asks for anything but whom they know needed a living room couch.

They spoke of an elderly women, a cancer survivor who lives alone and whose medication weakens her. As such her Christmas wish is for a clothes dryer to make her life easier.

The Per Niente Club presented the St Lawrence Outreach program with \$1500 so as to purchase the couch and dryer. We directed that any remaining money should be used to benefit the St Lawrence community.

Last Christmas, we gave a \$500 scholarship to a South Sudanese refugee, a young boy whose name is Garang Doar. He now attends Canisus High School where he founded a not for profit to raise funds to build a clinic and develop clean drinking water for the Sudanese village from which he came. A remarkable feat. Needless to say, Garang Doar is a bonafide success

story proving once again that education is the road to success for our next generation.

Through your help, the Per Niente Club has put \$1000 in trust for scholarships for two students, African refugees currently enrolled at Catholic Academy. Both students are altar servers at Holy Cross Church, they and their families, are active in the parish community. Upon graduation from Catholic Academy they will attend Canisius High School.

Msgr. David M. Gallivan, the pastor of Holy Cross Church made us aware of a young immigrant Sudanese boy stricken with Downs Syndrome and whose family faces a bleak Christmas. In a Christmas Card we inserted \$500 worth of gift certificates for them to use at Tops and Target Stores.

Msgr Gallivan personally delivered our Christmas Card. Upon seeing it the boy's mother said "what's this?" Msgr replied, "I don't know? Open it." She did. It took a moment for her to realize the contents of the card. Immediately, upon seeing the monetary value, her face filled with tears at which point she fell to her knees, looked up and thanked God.

A week later, I returned to Holy Cross with an additional \$500 worth of Tops Gift Certificates for others who may need help this Christmas. This is what you have done! Thank you!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, one and all.



Joseph Collen Shaw
On receiving his laptop computer,
a gift of the Per Niente Christmas
Fund

To the Per Niente Club:

First, I must thank you for your consideration in the matter of my notebook computer.

Second, I shall list below the reasons that having a personal computer, specifically a laptop, for my personal use in my group home is beneficial to me:

Writing is my life, and as long-hand writing pains me after a short while, writing on a computer is almost necessary for me to continue my practice as a writer of stories, screenplays, and plays. Though I am able to write on desktop computers at my day program, I feel that I do my best work at home, where I have considerably more privacy.

Having internet access at my group home, the computer has become a virtual social vehicle. With it I stay in touch with friends and family.

As getting to the public library is not always an easy outing, having internet access right in front of me has been so very helpful to the research that feeds my writing projects.

My most recent goal is to produce a "silent" film of one of my screenplays, and at home with a laptop, I could be editing the raw video footage we gather at my

Day Program.

Finally, I ask that you understand my position as an individual with a disability. I have the same dreams and desires as any human being, and my old computer, which was beyond repair, was an assistive technology for making my dreams come true and for staying in touch with the people in my life I still very much love but rarely if ever see.

Sincerely,

Joseph Collen Shaw