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# Community Chest calls for holiday aid

By Corey Hunt

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As we awaken from our Thanksgiving-induced turkey comas and prepare to hit the stores in search of the season's deals and steals, organizers of the Brentwood Regional Community Chest will begin their annual quest to provide holiday meals and toys to hundreds of local families.

Lill Pierce has been involved with the Brentwood Regional Community Chest Christmas Basket program her whole life, incorporated into the commitment of lending a helping hand by her mother Rose, one of the original founders of the organization. In the mid 1950s, Rose would volunteer and help out in Brentwood, eventually using her zeal to team up with volunteer firefighter Mike Currier and create the Delta East Coalition, which evolved into the modern day Community Chest.

“We used to get letters addressed to Santa Claus delivered to our house,” said Pierce. “Mom would read them and send the kids a card, but primarily she was looking for the two or three every year who would say ‘we just want food; we’re hungry,’ or ‘my mom is cold; she needs a coat.’”

Once the proper items were assembled, Currier would travel to different homes in his fire truck to deliver food and gifts to families who would otherwise go without.

Today, the Brentwood Regional Community Chest supplies families in need with boxes of nonperishable food items, fresh fruit and vegetables and a frozen turkey to be enjoyed during the Christmas holiday. Toys are also provided for each child in the family. There are bins scattered throughout the community to collect food and toy donations.

Unfortunately, things have taken a slightly more difficult turn over time as the nonprofit organization faces an uphill battle with Brentwood’s growth, rising corporate influence and an economy that still sputters along.

“A lot more businesses used to support us because they were locally-owned,” Pierce explained. “We have a lot of big box stores here now that make that decision in a corporate office somewhere else. It’s harder to get people involved now because the community is a lot larger.”

In spite of this, Pierce and the other board members remain moved by the assistance they receive from others around town – especially from the school district, city government, and farmers – and maintain hope that it will continue.

Kevin King, a retired Brentwood police officer who serves as co-president alongside Brentwood Union School District Superintendent Dana Eaton, certainly sees it this way.

“For the last three years, the packaging night has really become a sort of family event. That’s really rewarding for us to see so much local support and appreciation for what we are doing,” he said. “It’s just one of those things that’s been going on for so long and continues to do so much good – not just during the holidays, but throughout the year.”

While donations are crucial to the success of the Christmas Basket program, volunteers are also needed to help box and bag food and toy donations the day before the distribution event. Volunteers will assemble Friday, Dec. 20 at Brentwood Elementary, 200 Griffith Lane, at 4 p.m. to pack donation boxes, and they’ll work through the evening until all the packages are ready for the distribution event the following morning.

Volunteers are also need for the distribution event Saturday, Dec. 21 at Brentwood Elementary. The magic begins at 7 a.m.

Monetary donations may be sent to Brentwood Regional Community Chest, P.O. Box 845, Brentwood, CA 94513.

For more information about the Brentwood Regional Community Chest and how you can help the cause this holiday season, visit [www.brcchest.org](http://www.brcchest.org).