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Hernando seeks donations to help needy

Open hearts and wallets, mayor urges

By Henry Bailey

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Hernando Mayor Chip Johnson has issued a public challenge following an anonymous gift: Match the \$2,500 donation to the Mayor's Relief Fund so more people in need can be helped this year.

The fund is designed in part to provide emergency relief to Hernando residents unable to meet financial obligations due to circumstances beyond their control.

"This fund would help keep the power or water on for someone who faced a shut-off at Christmastime," Johnson said. "We'd like to see that money grow to \$5,000."

The mayor said a single, generous donor has been assisting with these emergencies for the past two years, "and we would love to see others come forward to help us help the less fortunate. It's a way to serve others -- and there are tax advantages.

"We have a group advising this fund, good people with big hearts, and the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi has agreed to handle the fund for us," Johnson said. "We don't want to duplicate efforts; that's why we've sought the wise advice of those who have been helping Hernando residents for a long time."

Members of the fund committee include Johnson; Christine Greer with Holy Spirit Catholic Church; Chip Hatcher with First Presbyterian Church; Sister Adelia Milligan with Sacred Heart Catholic Social Services; Hernando Alderman Marcus Manning; Shelly Johnstone, Hernando director of Community Development; Julio Arancibia; Geminie Bowdre; and Dr. D. D. Sidhu.

One goal of the group is a comprehensive review of all available social services and a coordinated approach to helping, "so that no one drops through the cracks," Johnson said.

The group is aware, he said, of local benevolent funds for people passing through who need help as well as the work of Sacred Heart Southern Missions, the Interfaith Council and Habitat for Humanity.

Long-term goals of the Mayor's Relief Fund include a 24-hour hotline.

To donate or otherwise assist, call the Community Foundation at (662) 449-5002 or the mayor's executive assistant, Julie Harris, at (662) 429-9092.

-- Henry Bailey: (901) 333-2012



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