

Benches final part of Soldiers and Sailors Park

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sponsored a bench in honor of Jill's father, who was shot down and became a prisoner of war in Germany for the duration of World War II.

The Mullock family purchased a bench to honor Col. Henry Sawyer of the 1st New Jersey Cavalry, who was captured at Brandy Station and traded by President Abraham Lincoln for Gen. William Henry Fitzhugh Lee, the second son of Gen. Robert E. Lee. The Mullocks own the Chalfonte Hotel, built by Sawyer.

The Mullock family, which founded Cape May's Harriet Tubman Museum, also purchased a bench in her honor. The plaque reads: "Harriet Tubman, Moses of her people, Underground Railroad nurse, soldier abolitionist, Soldiers 22nd United States Colored Troops, a number buried in nearby cemeteries."

Food insecurity

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hygiene items and diapers, as well as infant formula, baby food, tuna fish, peanut butter, canned vegetables and canned fruits.

"What we've seen change in the pandemic and a little bit beforehand is that we used to have a lot of single adults, and now we've increased representation with families with children under age 18 by about 35 percent," Hanslowe said.

The 30 percent to 40 percent increase in need that started at the beginning of the pandemic has not slackened, Hanslowe said.

"It's trended pretty steady throughout the year and it's spiking up," she said. "It's one of the trends you're going to see across the county. The need has not gone down."

The foodbank has been filling grocery bags and delivering them to the parking lot to reduce contact amid the pandemic, but after the holidays will allow fully masked individuals inside while maintaining social distancing. All volunteers wear masks and entrants will be limited.

"This will allow people to have much more of an ability to select their own food," Hanslowe said.

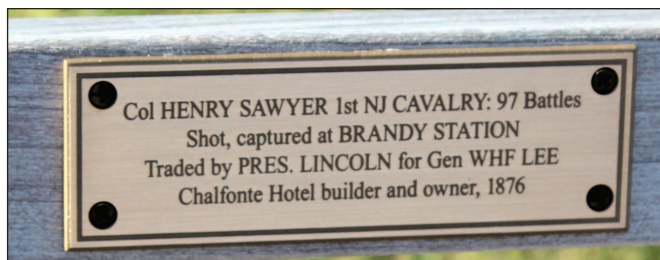
The Community Food Bank's Williams agrees with Hanslowe that the cost-of-living increases, especially in food, have made it more difficult for people who are already struggling to put food on the table.

"These [cost increases] have driven up the need for us to maintain more food to meet the needs [of the community]," Williams said. "In New Jersey, the cost of living is up about 6 percent before the pandemic and increases in the food range from 4 (percent) to 7 percent, depending on the area of the state."

At the same time, Williams said, the foodbank is operating with about half the amount of food as in the past, as grocery stores have decreased their donations.

"Between panic buying during the pandemic and supply issues, supermarkets are having trouble keeping their shelves full, so there is less for them to give to us," Williams said.

The Ocean City Ecumenical Council operates a food cupboard at St. Peter's United Methodist Church, where demand is rising.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Right, Tom Carroll, a member of the Fund for Cape May and Historic Preservation Commission, sits on one of the benches at the new Soldiers and Sailors Park. Above, one of the benches honors Col. Henry Sawyer.

chased a bench to honor Capt. Frank Furness, a Medal of Honor recipient from the Pennsylvania Cavalry Company F and the architect who designed the Emlen Physick Estate.

All of the benches are constructed of Ipe wood. Carroll said he and Curtis Bashaw selected the benches after researching them in New York City parks. Carroll said the benches were selected

for their comfort factor.

Soldiers and Sailors Park follows the Victorian style of a meandering walkway, he said. The park is surrounded by a number of historic landmark buildings, Carroll said.

Many obstacles delayed completion of the park, including the COVID pandemic, discovery of a broken water line and delivery of granite from North Carolina.



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"There has been an incremental increase in clients coming into the food cupboard in the past few months," coordinator Regina Ralston said. "I attribute it to the higher food prices and also that the additional federal and state government allotments have either stopped or been diminished."

Ralston expects an increase in the need for the food cupboard's services if the rate of inflation continues at the current pace.

Meeting the demand

Despite the ongoing pandemic, Williams said individuals, companies, and government groups have been keeping pace with monetary donations.

Almond Weech, compassionate ministry director of Seashore Community Church of the Nazarene in the Erma section of Lower Township, said donations have remained steady, including businesses holding food drives.

"Our supplies have been OK for the most part. We really haven't seen any major change at the moment, I would say we are pretty much in a safe zone right now," Weech said.

Ralston has witnessed the same in Ocean City.

"The donations have been amazing," she said. "The week before Thanksgiving, our two local schools sponsored food drives which resulted in over 2,000 pounds of food donated."

The donations included turkeys, hams and "blessing bags" containing personal care items. Ralston said the food cupboard is currently well stocked.

"We also continue to receive monetary donations, and gift cards are always appreciated because it allows us to buy a variety of food and personal items that can be distributed in addition to our standard stock items," Ralston said.

However, Weech said, foodbanks are always in need of food donations due to a constant flow of food coming and going.

"Now that winter is here, we will need soup. We can never have enough soup," he said, adding that oatmeal and other cereals are always needed.

He said the church's food bank tries to keep in mind the homeless population

and those who don't have cooking accommodations. It is helpful to provide soups and canned meats that do not require a can opener, Weech said.

Protein bars are also helpful for the homeless population, he said.

Seashore Community Church of the Nazarene will be hosting a homeless seminar for the public in February. The church is also the official warming center for the homeless in Lower and Middle townships during Code Blue events.

The food bank accepts donation of groceries and toiletries. Monetary donations are also accepted. They are used to purchase items that have not been donated.

The church website has a giving area for the food bank: scnaz.com. A list of needed items is also posted on the website.

Sought after items by the food bank include pasta, macaroni and cheese, hot cereals, sugar, canned beans, applesauce, canned fruit, deodorant, toothpaste and toothbrushes, paper products, cookies, crackers, plates, napkins and spoons. The food bank is located at 446 Seashore Road in Erma. Call (609) 886-6196.

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