

Holiday Season Fast Approaching **By John Petrin, Town Manager**

As usual, it seems that the summer season flew by as we now approach the holiday season. With that come plans for family get-togethers and shopping itineraries.

An Ashland tradition for the holiday season is coordinating the massive undertaking of preparing holiday baskets for families in need. The Youth and Family Services Department, under Cara Tirrell coordinates the task of managing this project. A bevy of volunteers make this event happen. In order to have the food and gifts available, families and individuals adopt and give clothes and toys for families. In addition, we receive donations of gift cards, clothes, toys, stocking stuffers, \$ and food from various local schools, churches, individuals, town employees, and local groups. This ensures that every child that asked for something specific gets it. Food baskets are prepared for both Thanksgiving and Christmas/Chanukah weeks. It is always amazing the number of people who come forward to sponsor these baskets. The one area that they are in need of is gifts for teenagers. Gift cards for movies, video games, coffee, clothing stores tend to work well for this age group. If you are able to assist, please contact Cara Tirrell or Tammy Griffin at 508-881-0140, Ext. 18. This is the Ashland Spirit at work.

A main event of the early portion of the holiday season is Town Meeting. We typically hold a Town Meeting during the second half of November. This year, Town Meeting will be held on Monday, November 29 at 7:00 pm. Town Meeting is held in the Ruthfield Auditorium at the Ashland High School. Attendance is open to all registered voters of the Town. This is an open Town Meeting so that everyone may serve as part of the legislative body for the Town. New England is the only place in the Country where the citizen can still participate in the legislative body rather than using a representative form for policy decisions. The list of articles for this Town Meeting is printed in this edition of Ashland Directions. Hopefully we will see you there.

Thanks to all the poll workers who assist with elections. It is a long day for these folks as they start early in the morning and go past 8:00 pm in order to ensure that everyone has a chance to vote. They truly love what they do and try hard to provide the voter with a positive experience. The recent election turned out 65% of voters in Town. This was certainly better than the 18% we turned out for the Town election in May.

The Town still has several affordable housing units available for purchase. These are for sale for \$173,500. Income Guidelines are adjusted according to the number of persons in the household as follows: 1 PERSON: \$46,300; 2 PERSON: \$52,950; 3 PERSON: \$59,550; 4 PERSON: \$66,150. Thus, in general terms, a four person family with income less than \$66,150 would qualify to purchase affordable housing. It should be noted however, that any assessment for eligibility, for individuals or households, depends on a variety of factors including debt and asset levels. Prospective applicants for affordable housing should be pre-approved by a lender. If you think you may qualify and have interest in this opportunity, please contact the Board of Selectmen's office.

I have seen signs recently recruiting for the Boy Scouts. I will say that scouting, through the Eagle Scout program in particular, has been great for our community. We have seen many young men achieve this rank in Ashland. In order to qualify, a Scout must complete a community project. We have certainly seen the benefits of these projects throughout Town. We owe a debt of thanks to these young people for their dedication and commitment. Kudos to all the volunteers and mentors in all the Scouting programs.

Please remember the Food Pantry for donations of food and household goods. Donations can be made by dropping off items at public buildings such as the Post Office. Your consideration is appreciated. Please also consider a financial donation to **The Ashland Emergency Fund**, at P.O. Box 112, Ashland, MA 01721. The Fund supports residents in need and the Food Pantry. We wish to thank the Ashland Emergency Fund, coordinated by Rosemary Fedorchak, for their efforts to raise money around Halloween events. We also pass on our thanks to the Boy Scouts and St. Cecelia Church for their recent drives. They helped to replenish our bare shelves.

To follow what is happening in your community, follow the events and happenings in the MetroWest Daily News and WACA-TV as they provide superb coverage. Our website at www.AshlandMass.com has been

recently revamped. There is much information on the site for you to peruse. We are the recent recipient of the Common Cause Massachusetts 2010 e-Government Award with Distinction for our website. We are proud recipients of their highest award.