



# Building Community

Keeping You Up-to-Date with the Work of the Acton-Boxborough United Way

Fall 2003

## ACTON-BOXBOROUGH UNITED WAY Campaign 2003

### Local Dollars Helping Local People

*The Mission of the Acton-Boxborough United Way is to identify and raise public awareness of community needs, link needs with quality services, and raise and allocate funds to support the charitable efforts of the community.*

**Building Community**, the Acton-Boxborough United Way newsletter, is published three times a year and distributed to corporations, businesses and households in the Acton and Boxborough communities. Its purpose is to communicate the health and social service needs of the community and to describe the ways these needs are being addressed.



Every fall the Acton-Boxborough United Way (ABUW) holds its *Annual Campaign*, soliciting contributions from residents and businesses to support local health and human services agencies.

In these tough economic times, the need is greater than ever. We see greater attendance at food pantries, more counseling sessions for families under stress and increased incidents of domestic violence. Yet with state and local government programs being cut back dramatically, community agencies are finding it increasingly difficult to provide their programs and services. They need our help. Our goal this year is to raise \$250,000, and we cannot reach our goal without your support.

We hope you will think carefully about the important work we do here in our community and become a contributor to YOUR local United Way.



**Volunteers at the Acton Community Supper**

**“We count on the Acton-Boxborough United Way to help pay for the weekly supper.”**

— Mike Tobia, Chairman of the Board,  
Acton Community Supper

### Why you should give to the ABUW

- **There is a lot of need in Acton and Boxborough—even if we don't always see it.**
- **We support agencies that serve Acton and Boxborough residents.**
- **Some agencies wouldn't be able to serve our residents without our support.**
- **Many agencies have experienced cutbacks in funding from state and federal governments.**
- **We carefully evaluate the agencies' financial stability and the effectiveness of their programs.**
- **We are your neighbors who care about our neighbors.**

We can only help if you help. If you have never given, please consider doing so; if you have given before, please consider increasing your donation. Your neighbors need you. If you would like more information on the ABUW, please go to our website, [www.abuw.org](http://www.abuw.org); contact our Executive Director, Sandy Campbell, (978) 263-1777 or [info@abuw.org](mailto:info@abuw.org); or stop by our office at 570 Massachusetts Avenue in West Acton.

# Funded Agencies 2003–2004

## Children & Youth

- Acton-Boxborough Community Education
- Big Brother, Big Sister Association of S. Middlesex
- Community Partnership for Children
- The Community School
- Concord Family & Youth Services
- Doli Atamian Campership Fund
- Patriots' Trail Council, Girl Scouts USA
- Project Wellness Day

## Developmental Disability Services

- Friday Night Fun Club
- MinuteMan ARC for Human Services

## Domestic Violence Services

- Domestic Violence Victim Assistance Program (DVVAP)
- The Network for Women's Lives
- South Middlesex Legal Services

## The Elderly

- Cooperative Elder Services
- Friends of the Acton Council on Aging
- Friends of the Boxborough Council on Aging
- Minuteman Senior Services

## Family Support Services

- Acton Housing Authority
- Eastern MA Literacy Council
- A Friend in Need

## Health Care—

### Education & Treatment

- American Red Cross
- Pediatric Intervention Team

### Hunger & Housing

- Acton Community Supper
- Stow Food Pantry

### Mental Health Services

- Eliot Community Human Services
- Restoration Project

# Campaign 2003

## We Are Your Neighbors

The ABUW is a local organization run by 25–30 volunteer board members, all from Acton and Boxborough. We live in town—on Central St., Newtown Rd, Concord Rd., Hosmer St., Minuteman Rd., Bicentennial Way, and Charter Rd., among others. All fundraising, financial management, and fund distribution is undertaken and controlled locally—in our Acton office—by board members, with assistance from a part-time Executive Director.

## Funding Decisions Are Made Carefully

All agencies hoping to receive funds from ABUW must submit an extensive application and undergo a rigorous review process. In addition to the written application, each agency is interviewed by a team of board members. By the time the process is finished, board members—your Acton and Boxborough neighbors—typically have spent hundreds of hours reviewing the applications.

## Our Funding Makes a Difference

We provide critical support to many local health and human service agencies. Without our help, many agencies would have to cut programs; others would have to turn away clients; and some agencies would struggle simply to keep their doors open.



Seniors at work on holiday project at Cooperative Elder Services

“We would have to cut some of the valuable services we provide to the senior population were it not for the support of the ABUW.”

— Linda Duvel, Friends of the Acton Council on Aging

## How to Contribute

There are a number of ways you can make a contribution to the Acton-Boxborough United Way's *Annual Campaign*:

- **Direct Gift:** Send a check in the enclosed response envelope (or see address on back).
- **Credit Card:** Charge a contribution on your MasterCard or Visa.
- **On the Web:** Contribute on our website at [www@abuw.org](http://www@abuw.org).
- **Payroll Deduction:** If you participate in your company's United Way campaign, designate your gift to the ABUW. This insures that your dollars stay in the community, helping your neighbors.

# A Year of Challenges

Meeting late into the night in early June, the Budget and Allocations Committee of ABUW deliberated about how to allocate limited funds among 26 local agencies and organizations. “It was a challenging and sometimes frustrating process this year,” said Ann Little, committee chairperson. “After meeting with all of the organizations throughout the month of May, we were very enthusiastic about the great contributions each of them is making to the A-B community. It’s a difficult task to weigh the relative merits of each organization and to allocate funds accordingly, especially when there is both greater need and fewer funds to distribute.”

“While we are happy to provide needed support to all of these organizations, we wish we could do more,” Little said. Many agencies noted that they would have applied for larger grants, and in some cases, additional programs, but did not, knowing there were fewer dollars available. “State budget cuts, coupled with an economic downturn, have made our job more challenging. We’re hopeful that the situation will improve over the coming year.”

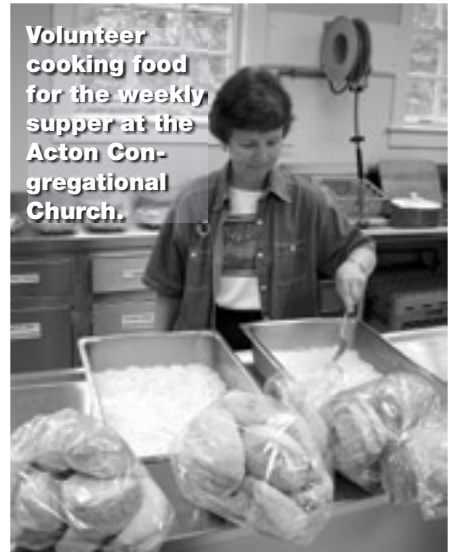
## Local Needs Are Real: Investing in Our Community

### Surprising Statistics About ABUW-Supported Programs

- **100-120 bags of groceries** are distributed to residents each week
- **6,240 Community Supper meals** were served to Acton and Boxborough residents last year
- **61 Acton and Boxborough families with 91 children** live in subsidized housing, many of whom receive support services
- **203 uninsured and underinsured residents** received mental health and substance abuse services
- **152 seniors** participated in the Meals on Wheels and Eating Together Luncheon programs
- **1135 hours of tutoring services** were provided to illiterate or non-English speaking residents
- **215 individuals with developmental disabilities** were given physical and/or occupational therapy and vocational day services
- **90 low-income victims of domestic violence** received legal assistance; **61 victims received crisis intervention** and safety planning

### Other Programs We Supported

- A part-time social worker at ABRHS for students at risk
- Adult day care services for frail elders and those with dementia
- Equipment and supplies for pediatric support program at Emerson
- Social, wellness, and exercise programs for local senior citizens
- Scholarship funds for day care, after-school care, and summer camp for low-income children
- Mentoring program for troubled youth
- Parent mentoring program for low-income parents
- Dating violence prevention program for youth
- Transition program for 7th graders and their families
- Emergency financial aid for residents in crisis situations
- Social and recreational programs for special needs adults
- Girl scouting program for girls in after-school day care
- Vocational training for mentally ill adults



Volunteer cooking food for the weekly supper at the Acton Congregational Church.

## Community Supper

### Providing meals and food to needy residents

The Acton Community Supper has been providing groceries and meals to our community for over 20 years. The recipients are our neighbors—low-income single mothers, unemployed families without savings, the working poor, seniors on fixed incomes, and mentally and physically handicapped residents. Community Supper serves the most basic need of residents, and the ABUW has been a long and consistent supporter of its work.

#### *“Ben” represents a typical client:*

Ben, a retired senior citizen in his seventies, lives in one of the subsidized rental units in Acton. With his limited retirement income, he is having problems paying all his bills, particularly those for medical expenses. Ben has a number of health problems, and his insurance does not cover the cost of all his medications. To supplement his meager income, he picks up a bag of groceries at the food pantry every week and eats dinner at the Supper on Wednesday night. Between the meal and the groceries, he receives about two days’ worth of food—not a lot, but enough to help him get by.

# Parent Aide Mentor Program

Providing support for low-income single parents

The Parent Aide Mentor Program, a joint project of the Acton Housing Authority and Eliot Center, and an ABUW grant recipient, serves single parents—usually mothers—living in subsidized housing or receiving a housing subsidy. Often overwhelmed—and sometimes depressed—the mother is also coping with the stigma and difficulty of being a low-income family in our affluent community. One mother said, “I buy my kids brand-name clothes so they feel like they fit in. But this means I buy less food.” To assist these parents, a parent aide is matched with a parent for a year. The aide acts as a role model, friend, listener, and support system to help the parent cope with the isolation, loneliness, and stress of raising children.

## “Sally” represents a typical client

Sally, a young, single mother with three school-aged children, lives in a subsidized rental unit in Acton. She feels different and out-of-place here, she does not believe she is adequately providing for her children, and she is worried

that her kids do not fit in. Sally began to feel overwhelmed with the needs of her children, and her own isolation and loneliness. When Fran Spayne, the Parent Advocate at the Acton Housing Authority, called to see how she was doing, Sally relayed her concerns. Fran asked her if she would like some support through the Parent Aide Program, and Sally readily agreed.

Sally was matched with a parent aide and the two of them began spending a few hours a week together. The aide helped the mom evaluate special need educational services for her son. Sometimes she and Sally helped the kids with their homework, and occasionally they all went on an outing. The aide found a parent support group for Sally where she began to make some friends. By the end of the year, the mom and the aide had become very close. Although Sally can still feel overwhelmed at times, she has become more confident, less stressed and less isolated. She believes that her relationship with the parent aide has made a significant difference in her life and has made her a better parent.

“Without ABUW funds, the Acton Housing Authority would have to suspend the Parent Aide Mentor Program.”

— Betty McManus,  
Executive Director, Acton  
Housing Authority



## News & Updates

The **Parent Aide Mentor Program** is in need of volunteers. Over the past few years, the number of families needing services has increased dramatically, but the number of volunteers has not. The volunteers receive training, supervision, and support while serving as a mentor, listener, and support system for a parent. If you are interested, call Debbie Hardy at the Eliot Center, (978) 369-1113.

The **Acton Community Supper** is in immediate need of donated food. Items can be dropped off at Roche Brothers, Donelan's or the main Post Office.

**ABUW Night at O'Natural's Restaurant, October 28**—Come enjoy an evening at one of the area's newest eating establishments and support a great organization as well. 10% of dinner receipts from 4:00–8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 28, will be donated to the ABUW.

**Save the date! Saturday, May 8th**—Dr. Elliot Steger, a well-known local musician, will be hosting a benefit concert for the ABUW. Watch for more information in our next newsletter.

If you wish to make a contribution, please send a check to: **ABUW, 570 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA 01720**. If you would like more information, visit our website ([www.abuw.org](http://www.abuw.org)); contact our Executive Director, Sandy Campbell, (978) 263-1777 or [info@abuw.org](mailto:info@abuw.org); or stop by our office in West Acton.

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