

The Dallas Morning News +

\$310,000 in gifts kicks off Dallas Morning News Charities drive

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Published: 20 November 2014 11:35 PM

Karen Blumenthal reached into an unlikely chapter in American history Thursday to make a point about community efforts to aid the needy.

Blumenthal, a business journalist and author of *Bootleg*, a history of Prohibition, noted that the constitutional amendment that banned the sale of alcohol in the 1920s was a disaster. The ban was widely ignored by the public and contributed to the rise of lawlessness and gangsterism.

In her speech at the kickoff of the 29th annual Dallas Morning News Charities fund drive, Blumenthal reminded her audience at the Winspear Opera House that Prohibition was nonetheless a sincere effort to curb the pain and poverty caused by drunkenness.

“What strikes me most about all this is how politicians and voters saw what we now call substance abuse as a community problem,” she said. “They saw this as something that we could — and should — fix by all joining together.”

For representatives of the 25 agencies benefiting from the DMN Charities drive who gathered for the kickoff ceremony, the costs to the community from substance abuse are all too apparent a century later.

But, thanks in large part to those nonprofit agencies, progress is being made.

‘Relentless efforts’

Bob Mong, editor of The Dallas Morning News and chairman of DMN Charities, noted that the homeless population has declined in recent years and treatment of homeless people has become smarter and more humane.

The community organizations “have been making a dent in homelessness through their relentless efforts,” he said. “And it has been relentless.”

In partnership with the Communities Foundation of Texas, The News covers all administrative costs of the charity drive, so that 100 percent of each donation benefits the fund’s charities.

As is traditional, there is no annual fundraising goal. But organizers hope to surpass last year’s record of \$1.7 million from about 2,000 donors.

The kickoff began with a \$310,000 head start — fueled in large part by a \$125,000 donation from Jonell Williams and the J.L. Williams Foundation, a \$75,000 gift from United Way of Metropolitan Dallas, \$29,373 from The Chababa Estate Fund and \$10,000 from the Granville C. and Gladys H. Morton Fund.

Camille Grimes, community relations manager for The News, also announced that officials of the AT&T Performing Arts Center have promised to donate a portion of each ticket purchased for the upcoming performance of the musical *Once*.

The first benefits of those donations went to the 25 agencies Thursday through checks distributed to representatives of those nonprofits.

The 2014-15 fund drive marks Mong's 16th and final year as DMN Charities chairman, in which he raised \$19.4 million from 30,000 donors. Publisher Jim Moroney presented Mong with an inscribed crystal vase Thursday in recognition of that work.

Social problems

In her keynote remarks, Blumenthal, former business editor of The News, said that one of the unfortunate legacies from the failure of Prohibition is a reluctance to tackle social problems with political tools.

"Alcohol and drug abuse — and I might argue, mental illness — are today seen largely as individual problems, not public ones, challenges that many people believe call for individual, personal change, rather than public attention," she said.

But she noted that most individuals, especially those fighting addiction, are unable to defeat such issues on their own. The lack of public commitment, meanwhile, means the heads of social agencies must divert energy from helping their clients to fundraising.

"I'd never want a return to Prohibition," she said. "But sometimes I find myself wishing for just a little spark of that time when people felt they should rally as a community to provide ongoing support to those who are hurting most."

AT A GLANCE: Agencies benefiting from 2014-15 DMN Charities drive

Allen Community Outreach: Emergency assistance with rent, utilities, food and clothing for families in Allen, Fairview and Lucas. Financial literacy and GED classes are also offered.

Arlington Life Shelter: Emergency food and shelter, employment assistance and family counseling for homeless men, women and children in eastern Tarrant County.

Assistance Center of Collin County: Qualified and prompt short-term financial assistance to individuals and families in financial crisis.

Austin Street Center: Food, shelter, medical, psychiatric and psychological treatment and substance abuse counseling for the homeless.

The Bridge (returning to the fund drive list this year): Emergency and transitional shelter, supportive housing services, meals, primary and behavioral health care services, job search and educational services for the homeless.

Brother Bill's Helping Hand: Food, clothing, medical assistance to families in West Dallas. Job training, parenting, healthy living and ESL classes are also offered.

City House: Emergency shelter and transitional residential services for homeless children and young adults. Emergency youth shelter for children ages newborn to 17 and transitional living program for 18- to 21-year-olds.

Crossroads Community Services: Food, nutrition, clothing and life skills education.

Dallas Life: Emergency short-term and long-term shelter for homeless men, women and children. Employment training, medical and dental services are also provided.

Duncanville Outreach Ministry: Food, clothing and financial assistance with rent, utilities and prescription medication for Duncanville residents.

Family Gateway: Short-term, transitional and permanent supportive housing programs; life skills training and case management for homeless families and children.

Frisco Family Services Center: Food, clothing and financial assistance with rent/mortgages, utilities and prescription drugs to families living in Frisco or Frisco ISD. Adult life skills workshops are also offered.

Genesis Women's Shelter: Emergency shelter, transitional housing, long-term counseling, food, clothing and other necessities for battered women and their children and an on-site school for elementary-age children.

Lancaster Outreach Center (new to this year's list): Emergency assistance, food, clothing and shelter. Case management, job training, counseling and school support services are also provided.

LifeLine Shelter for Families: Financial assistance to families who are homeless or on the verge of homelessness in Grand Prairie ISD. Life skills training is also provided.

NETWORK of Community Ministries: Food, clothing, financial assistance for rent and utilities, as well as a children's clinic and a comprehensive program for those 60 and older.

North Dallas Shared Ministries: Food, financial assistance for rent and utilities, clothing, gas vouchers and bus tokens, eye exams and glasses, job counseling, ESL classes, free medical and dental clinic for the working poor and family members.

North Texas Food Bank: Food 4 Kids program provides weekend food assistance for elementary school children at risk of being chronically hungry.

Our Calling: Faith-based organization that serves the unsheltered homeless in Dallas with food, showers, clothing and other resources.

Our Daily Bread: Noon-day meals, weekend snack pack program, bus passes, counseling, personal care items, limited health screening and referrals, phone answering service and mailing address for homeless in Denton County.

Promise House: Shelter, food, clothing, counseling, educational services and transitional housing for homeless, runaway and at-risk teens.

Sharing the Bread Cedar Hill Food Pantry: Provides food, clothing, utility assistance and school supplies to needy families in Cedar Hill.

Sharing Life Community Outreach: Food, clothing and financial assistance for rent and utilities, educational programs and job skills training for low income residents in southeastern Dallas County.

The Stewpot of First Presbyterian Church: Urgent and long-term assistance to the homeless and at-risk families; meals; ID documentation; representative payee program; dental, medical and mental health services; job assistance; and inner-city youth programs.

White Rock Center of Hope: Food, clothing, financial assistance with rent, utilities, transportation and prescriptions; school supplies for families in need in east and northeast Dallas. Christmas toys are provided to children younger than 17.

SOURCE: Dallas Morning News Charities

The Dallas Morning News is collecting money through Jan. 31 for distribution to 25 agencies that help the hungry and homeless in North Texas. Charities will receive 100 percent of all donations.

Total collected: \$310,000

Send your check or money order payable to:

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Dallas, Texas 75225-8146

Phone: 214-346-5546

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