



# *Sterling House*

COMMUNITY CENTER

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(203) 378-2606

## **A special 'Christmas Tree Angel' visits Sterling House with a gift**

STRATFORD – (Dec. 24, 2016) – A special donor who wished to remain anonymous provided the staff at Sterling House Community Center “a very special 10 minutes of Christmas” cheer and goodwill in mid-December.

Each year Sterling House Community Center conducts a Christmas tree sales fundraiser led by a very special volunteer, Anne Wargo, who is ably assisted by many others volunteers, including her husband. Bob. As many in the community know, hundreds of Christmas trees are purchased wholesale each year by the Main Street based agency that among other programs runs a preschool, food pantry, summer day camp and a very active year-round athletics program.



This year, based on past year’s results, the agency purchased more than 400 trees and began its sales Thanksgiving week, according to Executive Director Amanda Meeson. Tree sales were consistent and on par with year’s past, Wargo noted, for the first three weeks.

Fast-forward to Thursday, Dec. 15, when Sterling House had about 40 trees remaining with a forecast for rain and snow for the coming weekend.

It was mid-afternoon on the 15th when a local woman along with her daughter came to the front office and asked how many trees were remaining. She had seen Sterling House’s Facebook page where the agency had been promoting its Christmas tree sales.

According to Donna Kelly, front office manager, the woman then pulled out an envelope and said, “I think I have about enough money to buy them all,” and proceeded to hand Kelly \$2,000 in \$100 bills.

Her instructions were to give them all away “to families who need them.”

Shocked by the generosity and kindness, Kelly burst out in tears, and proceeded to thank the donor, who did not leave her name nor wish to be formally acknowledged, and Kelly then spread the news to agency staff, who were also awe-struck by this person’s generosity.

But the story doesn’t end there.

## *Merry Christmas & Happy Holidays from all of us at Sterling House!*



### ***Christmas Tree Angel -***

Sterling House is currently undergoing a major construction project to install a four-stop elevator to better serve its clients and members, and especially those utilizing the agency's Food Pantry, which annually helps feed more than 7,500 area residents. Also part of the renovation will be a new front office, lobby and reception area.

Just moments prior to what staff now calls the "Christmas Tree Angel" appearing, the elevator construction crew at Sterling House's site at 2283 Main Street cut through the electrical supply line to the agency's garage, which housed among many other items all the necessary items for the tree sales: including wreaths, tie strings, chainsaw, other supplies, etc ...

The agency would have no way to open the electric garage door nor proper outdoor lighting to conduct its tree sales, at least for the moment.

But putting aside for the moment the garage access and outdoor lighting inconvenience, according to Meeson, about 10 minutes after all the trees were purchased and instructed to be donated at the agency's discretion, a local mother of three children appeared at the front desk inquiring about a Christmas tree.

Well, when Kelly told the mother that she was in luck in that Sterling House was now giving away all its remaining trees, the tears began flowing again, this time with Meeson joining the two in a teary group embrace.

Facial tissues were liberally distributed.

## ***Christmas Tree Angel -***

The mother told Kelly and Meeson that she really didn't think she could afford a tree, but that her children continued to ask, telling her, 'it's not Christmas without a tree.' Needless to say, this household now has a tree courtesy of "The Christmas Tree Angel."

And there's more, as it rained and snowed all the following weekend, Sat. and Sun. Dec. 17-18, which would have made the last weekend of sales difficult if not downright unhealthful for all involved.

Instead, on Saturday, Dec. 17, as Stratford EMS assisted Sterling House in making its annual holiday toy deliveries to families as part of its holiday toy drive directed by another super volunteer, Sue Kostopoulos, EMS staff distributed free Christmas trees vouchers to those families who still needed a tree.

The remaining trees were all distributed to these families this past week, prompting Meeson to recall, "It was a powerful 10 minutes at Sterling House that clearly represents the spirit of giving and just how far one gift can go."

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**For more information on Sterling House Community Center, its programs and services, call (203) 378-2620, visit the House at 2283 Main St., or go to its web site at [www.sterlinghousecc.org](http://www.sterlinghousecc.org).**