

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Village approves contract for study of wastewater treatment options before expansion, Page 4

ONE-STOP SHOP

Job seekers look for opportunities, gain knowledge at Job and Resource Fair, Page 5



PURCHASE POINTS

Resources for getting a place abound in 22nd Century Media's 2016 Home Buyers Guide, Inside



The New Lenox Patriot™

NEW LENOX'S AWARD-WINNING HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER newlenoxpatriot.com • September 22, 2016 • Vol. 9 No. 28 • \$1

A **22nd CENTURY MEDIA** PUBLICATION

Anna Cunningham, of Joliet, carries a box of goods to her car at ShareFest's Main Event Saturday, Sept. 17, in New Lenox. JASON MAHOLY/22ND CENTURY MEDIA



SEASON OF GIVING

New Lenox's largest community service gathering brings neighborhood together at ShareFest's Main Event, Page 3

Hundreds of families benefit from ShareFest's Main Event

JASON MAHOLY
Freelance Reporter

Forty-three pallets of food, and estimated 20,000 books, and the equivalent of a semi-tractor trailer filled with clothing.

Those were the goods hauled to Spencer School Campus for ShareFest's 10th annual Main Event, which represents the conclusion of the New Lenox-based community service organization's flurry of September activities in its home village. A job and resource fair kicked off the Main Event on Sept. 15, and the book drive and free exchange of food and clothing finished off the effort two days later.

The Main Event also featured legal advice from Sterk Family Law in Orland Park, checkups and teeth cleanings by Orland Park Dental, a cancer prevention lecture courtesy of Riverside Healthcare, and vascular screenings by Presence Health. All of the services were provided for free to attendees.

ShareFest founder Gary Cheney estimated that 300 to 350 families came to the campus, 1711 Spencer Road, within the first three hours of the event's official start at 9 a.m.

"There were 80 people lined up just waiting to get in before the doors even opened," an excited but exhausted Cheney said as he began loading the remains of the day onto trucks. "They came in droves in the morning, and they pretty much wiped the food out."

By 12:30 p.m. all that remained from 43 pallets of food – an estimated 50,000



Joliet resident Virgil Switzer, a volunteer at ShareFest's Main Event on Saturday, Sept. 17, helps a woman find what she needs before packing the goods into her car. JASON MAHOLY/22ND CENTURY MEDIA

pounds of mostly non-perishable goods, which required three tractor trailers to carry – were several boxes containing potato chips and bread. The effort to move so much food from the tables in the school's parking lot to people's vehicles required about one-third of the volunteer team that assisted at the event.

Approximately 120 volunteers were on hand at any one time to help attendees find the food, clothes or books they were seeking. Cheney estimated 250 volunteers were at the school over the course of the six-hour event. His philosophy is to delegate tasks to his volunteer leaders and get out of the way.

"I ask them what do you need from me to help you succeed in this, and they tell me and I do that, and I tell them have at it," he said. "I don't know how to feed people, but I know who does."

Setting up for the Main Event began the night be-

fore when the trucks containing the donated goods arrived at the school. Volunteers unloaded the trucks, set up tables and prepared everything for the rush to come in the morning.

"That was a blast," Cheney said of the setup. "We had a boatload of volunteers here last night. That's always a lot of fun, everybody's in a great mood, stuff is flying all over, we're pulling things in and pulling things out. It was pretty awesome. I love it! I love the setup as much as I love the giveaway."

The first Main Event was held in 2007 as a one-day endeavor. It has since grown into a nearly month-long fest of sharing and caring that includes the collecting of goods for the Main Event, Recyclepalooza on Sept. 10, Patriot Days on Sept. 11, and the job and resource fair on Sept. 15. Between 500 and 600 vol-

Please see SHAREFEST, 8

SHAREFEST

From Page 3

unteers help make the organization's mission possible.

"I'm glad we've been able to make September [in New Lenox] something special, and I hope that other communities would be able to mimic that or imitate that or learn from it or whatever," Cheney said. "It can be duplicated."

Virgil Switzer, of Joliet, was among the volunteers who helped move more boxes than he could count to people's vehicles. Switzer said the load included six pallets containing only donuts.

"A couple people from my church talked to me and asked me if I would be interested in helping out and I said sure, why not," Switzer said. "I mean, that's what

our Lord wants us to do is try to help each other out. It feels good to help the community out and brighten kids' faces. That's what it's about – giving back and helping out the ones that are having the hardest times."

New Lenox resident Jackie Vanisko and her daughter Anna, 13, and son Daniel, 10, were inside helping attendees find clothes and continually working to keep

the clothing selection organized. The trio was volunteering for the second consecutive year after getting involved with ShareFest through St. Jude Church.

"We enjoyed helping last year," Vanisko said. "It's about reaching out in the community. We really liked it, so we made sure to rearrange our schedules so we could get here to help again."

Never missing out on an opportunity

Hundreds of job seekers, nearly 60 employers meet at Job & Resource Fair

JAMES SANCHEZ, Editor

Essence Clark saw herself in an ironic scenario when she walked into Sharefest's Job and Resource Fair.

For nearly five years, Clark was on the other end, helping people find their path as the Director of Career Services at DeVry University.

However, earlier in the summer she was blindsided by a string of layoffs at her job. Her management team of 10 dwindled to only two people, and she was one of the odd people out. She's been looking for greener pastures since then — most recently on Thursday, Sept. 15 at New Life Church, where the job fair was hosted.

"In some ways, it's a bit humbling, but in the end I have nothing to lose," Clark said of going to the event.

It's all about opportunity at the fair, and job seekers won't turn that down when it comes to potentially making a better life. Hundreds of people were at the event with resume in hand to make connections and inquire about employment from nearly 60 businesses.

There were many who have similar stories to Clark at the event, like Ed Andrade, of Manhattan, who worked in logistics for a supply chain before the Downers Grove-based business he worked at moved off shore more than a year ago. However, he left the event on a positive note.

"There was a good mix of companies here,



Chris Hunigan (right) and Mama Nanavy (middle), both of Microtrain Technologies, speak to a job seeker at the event held at New Life Church.

and surprisingly some that is related to my background so hopefully there's some interest there," he said.

And there was a broad mix of job seekers, as well — from those fresh out of college and contract workers looking for steady income to people looking for a second job to better help make ends meet. The variety of businesses on hand allowed people to find new possibilities that they probably never envisioned.

Technology companies, cosmetics, banks, non-profits, higher education, trucking, carpentry, medical, retail, sales, fast-food employers and more were there to welcome people with information and some freebies to take home. Throughout the day, there were seminars with different topics to help maximize one's job search, as well as free name-brand clothes and accessories for people to take home as part of the Dress for Success initiative.

All of this was held in one

room, contrary to years past when it was hosted at the Village Commons where the fair, breakout sessions and Dress for Success were scattered in different buildings. Sharefest founder Gary Cheney said the event outgrew its original host site and a change needed to be made.

"[New Life Church] has been longtime partners of ours," he said. "I've known the pastors here for years, and we've done a lot of good things together. It's a wonderful facility, plenty of parking space. We're able to bring the job fair right adjacent to the Dress for Success, right adjacent to all of the sessions going on. That makes for a beautiful set up. Right now in this [building], there are 70 organizations involved just putting this together. That's just amazing."

The Dress for Success was also vital to the event, Cheney added, as the struggles of finding a job trickles into other issues as well, including purchasing professional clothes for interviews.

"When people have just a



Joseph Divittorio (left) speaks with Xerox representative Patricia Wisniewski Thursday, Sept. 15, during Sharefest's Job and Resource Fair in New Lenox. PHOTOS BY JAMES SANCHEZ/2ND CENTURY MEDIA



Clothes and accessories from Dress for Success — donated name-brand items for people to take home for free — at Sharefest's Job and Resource Fair.

need, that's kind of unusual," he said. "Usually, if you need a job, you're going to need all those other things, so it really is tied together."

Cheney said Sharefest's community service activities is just a testament of "living our gospel calling," but at the same

time it is also about helping people in need. For those in need at the Job and Resource Fair, the opportunity could potentially change lives.