



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

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ISSUE:

- [Local Government](#)
- [Constituents Corner](#)

COMMITTEE:

- [Local Government](#)



The Mayor, Sebastian and the Holidays

Things happen for a reason and if you look closely enough you may find signs that, no doubt, the universe is progressing as it should. There is a synergy to it, a cycle. I was reminded of this just recently by two seemingly unconnected events.

I'll begin with Leonard Wurzel, the long-time (22-years, to be exact) mayor of Sands Point who recently passed away at 95. He supposedly retired from his office in 2011 but anyone who knew Mayor Wurzel also knew that was impossible for him. He loved his village and the people in it too much to simply walk away, even if it was much-deserved. I know that his passion and joy were wrapped up in his public service.

After retirement, Mayor Wurzel remained at the village hall as an unpaid volunteer, working on numerous projects and offering his steady advice from behind the scenes. That guidance was available for anyone who asked. When I heard the news of his passing, I felt as if someone had punched us in our collective, public-service gut. He was a giant, a person who left an indelible fingerprint on the greater Port Washington community. He will be sorely missed.

The very next day I received a letter from a youngster named Sebastian who lives in our Senate district. Interestingly enough, it begins, "One day my dad and I were at the mall getting clothes." With my interest peaked by the most intriguing opening I've read in a long time, I continued. It seems the author and his dad ran into a

homeless family begging just outside of the mall. He wrote, "The thing that upset me the most was that the kids were living on the street and begging for food. I've never seen a family living on the streets and I hope to never see that again. In the future if I see another family homeless I will do whatever I can to help the family." Most notably, he signed his heartfelt letter, "future lawyer and senator."

And just like that, young Sebastian renewed my faith. In a few simple words and with clarity that belongs only to children, he reminded me of why I do what I do, gave me hope-filled assurance that future generations will do the same, and motivated me just as Mayor Wurzel had for so many years. Most important, Sebastian reminded me to make a difference.

As your state Senator I am afforded the opportunity to reach our neighbors on a large scale, so I send this message on behalf of Sebastian: The holiday season is now upon us. Soon most of us will be swept up by the excitement of parties, decorations, and neatly wrapped, shiny packages. Before that happens, I strongly urge you to please remember our most vulnerable neighbors. We live in one of the wealthiest counties in the United States, therefore the world. There's no reason there should be a family living on the streets, exposed to the elements, begging for food. Not here in our own backyard.

Before the holiday rush consumes us, before you write your greeting cards or buy any gifts, might I suggest taking a moment to give to one of our many worthy Long Island nonprofits? If you will, make it the first thing on your to-do list. If you don't have a favorite, a gift to one of these would be much appreciated and put to excellent use.

- The INN (Interfaith Nutrition Network) addresses hunger and homelessness head-on right here on Long Island by providing food, shelter, and support services. They operate 19 soup kitchens throughout the Island and feed 7,500 neighbors per week. Visit www.the-inn.org or call 516-486-8506.

- Island Harvest is the largest hunger relief organization on Long Island. By relying on volunteers, in-kind services, and donated food, it devotes more than 95 cents of every dollar contributed directly to its programs. Visit www.islandharvest.org or call 516-294-8528.

- Last but not least, Newsday Charities' McCormack Foundation administers the venerable Long Island tradition known as the Christmas Help-A-Family Fund. They

assist the numerous Long Island agencies reaching out to local families in immediate need during the holiday season. Notably, the foundation will match your gift.

Visit <http://www.newsday.com/services/programs/newsday-charities/newsday-charities-help-a-family-1.1549286> or call 631-843-3056.

Thank you, Mayor Wurzel for your years of tireless public service. Thanks Sebastian for reminding me of the Mayor. And thank you all in advance for helping make the holidays a little brighter on Long Island.