



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

This Holiday Season, Give Back

PATTY RITCHIE December 1, 2014

| ISSUE: **CONSTITUENTS CORNER**

Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

For most, the holiday season is the busiest time of the year. Between the shopping, the baking and get-togethers with family and friends, there's often little time for much else. However, this holiday season, I'm encouraging you to remember to give back to those in need.

It's estimated that roughly 34 percent of all charitable donations are made in the final three months of the year, with 18 percent of donations being made in December. While giving a financial gift is a great way to support those in need, there are other ways to give back too:

Give blood: By donating blood during the holiday season, you can essentially give the gift of life. Because this time of year is so hectic, it's difficult for many to find the time to give blood. However, patients rely on donations to survive each and every day. For more information on where you can donate, visit www.redcross.org.

Donate your time: Often times, devoting a few hours to a worthy cause can be just as valuable as a monetary donation. Throughout the holidays, many local organizations depend on volunteers to staff activities that help raise funds or collect items for those who are less fortunate. If you have an hour or two to spare, contact your local Salvation Army, food pantry, soup kitchen or other organization to lend a hand.

Stock the pantry: Just thinking about the holidays can conjure up images of everything from turkey dinners to tasty pies and other treats. However, during the season and beyond, many people in our region will be seeking assistance with getting food on the table. If you'd like to donate to those who are hungry, contact your local food pantry or the Food Bank of Central New York at www.foodbankcny.org.

Clean out your closet: Despite the calendar still saying it's fall, winter weather is already here. In the coming weeks, take a look inside your closet and see if there are any coats or cold weather gear you're willing to part with. By donating them to a local thrift store or coat drive, you can help ensure no one is left out in the cold in the coming season.

Often times, the holiday spirit moves us to do something to help our neighbors in need. However, it's critically important that we strive to give back not only during the coming weeks, but all year round too.