

State employee donations to benefit agencies

By LAURA D'ANGELO
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

By donating a few dollars from every paycheck, state employees will pump \$61,000 into Staten Island non-profit agencies this year.

The State Employees Federated Appeal (SEFA) set citywide and boroughwide records this year in its pledges of monetary gifts to private organizations.

Under the program, state employees donated cash or pledged a payroll deduction to any of 500 organizations, both community-based and national. Employees can choose the particular charity they want their money to benefit.

"But many people who live on Staten Island naturally chose Staten Island-based agencies," said Fiorello Cicero, Staten Island chairman of the appeal.

Cicero said this year, borough agencies are to receive 25 percent more money than in 1989.

The groups benefitting from SEFA include: The Native American Rights Fund, which provides legal protection nationwide to Native American tribes; Senior Action in a Gay Environment, which promotes the general welfare of elderly homosexuals; New York Women Against Rape Inc., which assists women who have been sexually assaulted; Bayley Seton Hospital and the Visiting Nurse Association of Staten Island.

Payroll deductions began during the first pay period in January and will continue for 12 months.

According to a brochure distributed by SEFA, a \$10-per-pay period deduction provides six

days of shelter for a family of four burned out of its home or an orthopedic chair for a cerebral palsy victim.

A \$2.50-per-pay period deduction provides enough money for home visits by a registered nurse to six disabled senior citizens for health screening.

Cicero said this year the employees at South Beach Psychiatric Center gave the most money — \$19,780 — a 250 percent jump from last year.

"We considered (the center) as the sleeping giant which has finally awakened," Cicero said, explaining that there are 1,100 state workers in the center, the largest number on the Island.

The Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook, and the Arthur Kill Correctional Facility in Charleston donated \$13,490 and \$10,220 respectively.

Cicero also praised the 100-percent participation in SEFA by the employees at the County Clerk's Office, which added up to \$2,100.

SEFA brought films and brochures into Island offices. Videos included personal stories from people who benefitted from the services: One man displayed his new wheelchair; an AIDS patient talked about receiving family counseling and urban youths were shown playing in camp activities.

"There's a real resistance to give money, until people see the need and identify with it," Cicero said. "It's not only for disadvantaged or the underprivileged but for everyone."

The money goes to 409 United Way agencies, 32 National Voluntary Health Agencies, 19 International Service Agencies, five National United Service Agencies, Black United Fund and other independent and non-affiliated agencies.

On Staten Island, SEFA contributes to such organizations as Staten Island Community Services, Staten Island Family Services, Staten Island Mental Health Society, Staten Island Aid and St. Vincent's Medical Center.