

By Karen Mayne



*Suburban Acres Green* is taking a little diversion this month. Environmental topics and how we can be good stewards of our natural resources and save money in the process are our usual topics. But December is a good time to reflect on all that we have to be thankful for and how we can help others in our community.

Cultures and religions all over the northern half of the world have traditionally seen the period around the winter solstice and the returning light of the sun as a time of reflection, hopefulness, and helping others. The short days of December draw family and friends indoors, where stories, music, dance, and prayers were a way to bring the community together in safety and companionship. In our modern world, many of these traditions are slowly being lost, yet there is still a desire among us for community. The first definition of *community* in the Merriam-Webster dictionary is: *a unified body of individuals.*

We in Suburban Acres form a tightly woven community of individuals with many backgrounds, beliefs and faiths, yet we share our common interests in living in this area and in Norfolk. We have much to be thankful for in our beautiful neighborhood. lovely homes and yards, friendly neighbors who look out for each other, one of the lowest crime rates in Norfolk, and a very engaged civic league.

Americans are the most generous people in the world. a clear reflection of our country's culture of inclusiveness and caring. When times are tough, our nation's humanitarian spirit shines brightly. While the ways of expressing our thanks for all we have and helping others are limitless, here are a few things we can do to help those in our *community* of Suburban Acres and Norfolk.

**EnergyShare** is a program that provides energy assistance (electricity and natural gas) throughout the year to needy families and is managed by the Salvation Army in our area. By adding an additional \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10, \$15, or \$20 to your monthly bill payment, the

billing systems of Virginia Natural Gas and Dominion Virginia Power will automatically recognize the overpayment as a donation to EnergyShare.

The **Help to Others (H2O)** program provides assistance in paying water bills and is also managed by the Salvation Army. H2O contributions can be made through your on-line EZ Pay of the Hampton Roads Utility Billing Service or on the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission's website.

The **American Red Cross** helps those in crisis after disasters, and is a major supplier of blood. For information on how to donate blood at our local Red Cross office go to the Red Cross web site (see side bar).

There are a wide range of non-profit and social service organizations that help those in need in our community. Some of these organizations can use volunteers and some can use financial support. Good sources for comprehensive listings of community service organizations are provided by the local Public Broadcasting System station WHRO at its **Community Link** website, and at the **VOLUNTEER Hampton Roads** website. And there is nothing more important than helping and looking out for neighbors. Let our lights of caring shine throughout the year here in Suburban Acres!

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Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (**Help to Others / H2O**):

[www.hrpdcva.gov/H2O/H2o\\_home.asp](http://www.hrpdcva.gov/H2O/H2o_home.asp)

**American Red Cross** [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

**WHRO Community Link**

[www.whro.org/home/hcommunitylink/nonprofit.htm](http://www.whro.org/home/hcommunitylink/nonprofit.htm)

**VOLUNTEER Hampton Roads** [www.volunteerhr.org/](http://www.volunteerhr.org/)