

Sharing a Thanksgiving Meal

Since 2008, Significant Sig Rick Warther, KENT STATE 1977, and his family have lent a helping hand to Philadelphia residents during the holiday season by ensuring they have food on the table. *By Evan Moore*

Below: Significant Sig Rick Warther, **KENT STATE 1977**, at far left, his wife Francie, her brother Kevin Truran and his daughters Rachel and Sophia Truran, deliver turkeys to the Garcia family in Philadelphia on Nov. 19, 2016.

After the stock market crash of September 2008, Significant Sig Rick Warther, **KENT STATE 1977**, figured that there were families who may struggle to make ends meet ahead of the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday. "We're sitting around the table with my daughter and wife preparing and talking about Thanksgiving and my daughter says, 'I cannot believe that people out there aren't going to have a turkey [at] Thanksgiving.' I agreed," says Warther, the fall quarter Mark V. Anderson Character-in-Action™ Leadership Award winner. "Then I said, 'We ought to get a bunch of turkeys and get our friends involved and give them to people [who] don't have

them or wouldn't have them [otherwise].'"

The Warthers set out to not only raise money from their friends to fund holiday meals for those in need, but also to collect donated turkeys from a local farm. That year, they gave about 500 turkeys to families in south Philadelphia. Since then, they have donated more than 10,000 of them through the organization that Warther's daughters, Katie and Natalie, started called Tons of Turkeys.

Last year, Warther and his organization teamed with Cityteam Ministries in Philadelphia to deliver turkeys and baskets of bread, canned cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie mix to residents of West Chester, Pennsylvania. Along the way, Cityteam provided Tons of Turkeys with 150 volunteers to assist in delivering the turkeys.

The first year that Warther and his family donated the turkeys, they received them from Jaindl Turkey Farm in Olefield, Pennsylvania, which is near his home in West Chester.

He says they also asked their friends for checks to help fund the Thanksgiving meals, along with the family's own personal money.

"We go to the turkey farm and put together a 501(c)3 with an attorney friend of mine and we got driving a rental truck and [found] out that the turkey farm had done turkeys for the White House for many, many years," Warther says. "So, we negotiated for turkeys that might have a wing missing or other lower-grade turkeys."

After Warther and his friends and family secured transportation to move the turkeys, they drove them in a truck to two of Philadelphia's most



Character-in-Action



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A person with good character shows trustworthiness, respect and fairness to others, as well as responsibility and citizenship. Those members who go out of their way to help others and those who overcome obstacles and lead with integrity are good candidates for the Mark V. Anderson Character-in-Action™ Leadership Award.

Sigma Chi has introduced the award to recognize the selfless acts of brothers. The Fraternity is known for building leaders, and its members have a reputation of acting with character to change their communities. A formal recognition of these actions by the Fraternity allows non-members to appreciate the scope of the organization.

From left, Significant Sig Rick Warther, **KENT STATE 1977**, his wife, Francie, and their niece, Sophia Truran, stand behind a bin of packaged turkeys as they prepare to deliver them to those in need in Philadelphia on Nov. 19, 2016.

impoverished neighborhoods. “We went to a place called Philabundance. It took a while for them to realize that we were just a family who wanted to hand out turkeys,” says Warther, whom the food bank presented its 2009 Harvester of Hope Award.

These days, Warther obtains the turkeys he donates from Wal-Mart, and he donates 500 turkeys to the Chester County Food Bank. “We get a lot of calls from nonprofits that are looking for ways to acquire turkeys,” explains Warther.

“He’s [a] model for generations to come on how to care for your community,” says Phoebe Kitson-Davis of the Chester County Food Bank.

Because the donations he receives are so great, he gives some of the birds to such nonprofits, which can in turn distribute them to others. “Now, I can say, ‘Just call Cityteam in Philadelphia or Chester County Food Bank [for a turkey].’”

Those organizations also value his efforts. “[Rick has] allowed people to have a Thanksgiving meal in

their homes like everyone else, rather than going to the soup kitchen,” says Phoebe Kitson-Davis, manager for agency and community partnerships with the Chester County Food Bank. We’re very grateful for what he’s done. He’s [a] model for generations to come on how to care for your community.”

Since Tons of Turkeys has grown, Warther’s daughter, Natalie, annually writes a letter that is direct mailed to over 50,000 small business in the area to solicit donations. Warther says that this results in donations from small business owners such as plumbers, electricians, dentists and doctors that range from \$50 to \$2,000 each.

He says that he is glad that his daughter’s idea several Thanksgivings ago came to life and has helped so many people. “It’s easy for us to do this and ask for support from small business owners,” he notes. He also says that the feeling of helping his fellow man is a great one, and that giving to others has impacted him. “I think we are blessed and fortunate to be in the situation we’re in,” says Warther, the CEO of Vanguard ID Systems Inc., a maker of custom-printed barcodes and radio-frequency identification cards. “This helped to humble us up a little bit in seeing the people who really appreciate [the donations]. It makes you feel proud to contribute and help these people who look at it as the good things they can celebrate in their lives.”