

Norwalk Ohio News staff 4 days ago



Norwalk firefighters donate \$500 to CLI



Norwalk firefighters presented a \$500 donation to CLI today.

CLI (Community, Life & Innovation) is a non-profit agency whose mission is to increase the earnings, status and quality of life for people with developmental disabilities.

In the past few years, the organization — through its legal entity CLI Local Investments LLC — has purchased and renovated buildings to help fulfill that mission, including [16 W. Main St.](#), 36/38 W. Seminary St. and [Kenilee Lanes at 14-16 E. Seminary St.](#)

Today's donation took place at 16 West, where firefighters Ben Blodgett and Michael Frado presented a check to seven friends of CLI and Kerrie Close, who serves as the community settings coordinator for the organization.

Close said CLI is "very appreciative" of the firefighters' generosity.

As an expression of thanks, the group created two signs, which they gave to the fire department.

Frado said the firefighters love their relationship with CLI.

The donation will go toward CLI's initiatives — one of which is making Kenilee Lanes "fully accessible for the entire community," Close said.

"We're really looking forward to getting back out into the community," Close said.



Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, CLI was fulfilling its goal of integrating those they serve, helping them to be part of the community in various ways. The closures and restrictions hampered that, forcing people to spend most of their time inside a facility, Close said.

Now that things are reopening and restrictions are being eased, CLI officials hope to re-engage with the community and once again provide services, though likely in smaller group settings, Close said.

CLI officials outlined their vision and goals for this year at a recent staff meeting.

Blodgett said firefighters enjoy being part of the community and helping wherever they can.

The money for today's donation came from various fundraising efforts organized by the Norwalk firefighters' union — International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Local 1199. Those included squares sold for the Super Bowl and the NCAA basketball tournament title game.

In October, the IAFF Local 1999 made a [\\$500 donation to the Norwalk Area Food Bank](#) and a [\\$500 donation to Fisher-Titus](#) for the Breast Health Fund, thanks to proceeds from a summer

[charity raffle.](#)

The union also organizes an annual [coats-for-kids program called "Operation Warm,"](#) donates to the Muscular Dystrophy Association and provides two \$500 scholarships to high school seniors — one at Norwalk and the other at St. Paul — who are pursuing a career in public safety or the medical field.

The firefighters' annual [St. Patrick's Day charity event](#) is hosted at 16 West. However, the last two have been cancelled because of COVID-19 concerns. Blodgett said he hopes circumstances will allow the event to return in 2022.

CLI, meanwhile, is involved in its [own fundraising efforts.](#) The organization recently made contributions to the [McGuan Park revitalization project,](#) including \$914.97 from a "sip, shop and stroll" fundraiser March 13 at Kenilee Lanes, according to John Schwartz, the CEO of CLI, Kenilee Lanes and Firelands Local LLC.





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