

Prison's closing results in donation to OpSun

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Operation Sunshine's winter fundraising campaign got an unexpected kick-start last week thanks to an \$8,585 check from the former Oneida Correctional Facility.

When the state closed the Rome prison in September, it was a blow to the community. But it also led to funds from the facility's now-defunct Inmate Occupational Therapy Fund being available for local charities.

The inmates decided where the money should be spent, said Peter Cutler, director of public information for the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.

"When the prison closed, several of the inmate funds had money left in them, so they had to make a decision about what to do with them," Cutler said. "And the decision was made that from this Inmate Occupational Therapy Fund they wanted to donate it to Operation Sunshine, so that's what they did."

The Observer-Dispatch's charity raises money each winter to provide toys, food and clothing to families in need during the holidays. A separate summer campaign helps send local children to summer camp.

The donation puts this year's fundraising drive more than one-tenth of the way toward its \$65,000 goal right out of the starting gate.

But O-D President and Publisher Donna Donovan stressed that plenty of help still is needed from the community.

"Operation Sunshine agencies are anticipating unprecedented need, as the area continues to suffer from the economic problems affecting the nation," Donovan said. "Especially at this giving time of year, we believe the many generous residents of the Mohawk Valley will step forward and make donations to help the less fortunate."

The participating agencies this year are the Neighborhood Center, the Salvation Army of Utica, Catholic Charities of Oneida and Madison Counties, The Rescue Mission of Utica and Catholic Charities of Herkimer County.