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Letters to the editor: Cutting finite sum endangers social services that are priceless

(<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/parkridge/news/forum/2764992,park-ridge-letters-100710-s1.article>)

October 7, 2010

I am writing to voice my disappointment at Park Ridge City Council's recent decision to cut funding to social service agencies and the arts.

While these funds only represented less than one-half of 1 percent of the total city budget, these services were priceless to those residents dependent upon the agencies. The concept of small government supports the cost effective, economically efficient outsourcing of services. By ear-marking a small amount in funding, the city in effect facilitates these services in the most affordable manner possible.

My husband and I have lived in Park Ridge for more than 20 years and during that time have served on numerous boards and commissions, believing our contributions made a difference. For 10 years, I served as the director of the Park Ridge Teen Center and currently am a member of the Board of Directors.

The Park Ridge Teen Center has been in existence for over 25 years, offering area teens a safe, supervised place to be with their friends. During years of Friday and Saturday nights, thousands of Park Ridge youths have found a sanctuary from drugs and drinking while being in the company of their peers and adults who genuinely care for them. The Teen Center currently has enough funds to cover only three more months of service. The board will be meeting in the next two weeks to agonize over what the future will be. Most likely we will have to close our doors. Many other community organizations will be having similar meetings, forced to either dramatically cut programs or close completely.

Schools, churches, community groups, fine arts and social services make up the very fabric of our community. A community that can't find it in its heart to support social services and the arts becomes a colder place. Thank you, Councilmen Allegretti, Carey, Ryan and Bach for standing up for what we all know is right, caring for our neighbors and ensuring the continued existence of a community with purpose.

Kate Kerin
Park Ridge