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ST. LOUIS CHARITIES FOR DISABLED LOSE THOUSANDS IN DONATIONS DUE TO CHESTERFIELD BAN ON STREET COLLECTION

Knights of Columbus Council 9981 Permit Denied for Second Year

Chesterfield, Missouri— 11 September 2023 — The City of Chesterfield denied the Knights of Columbus Council 9981 a permit to collect donations for their annual “Tootsie Roll” drive for three days in October on the street corners of Chesterfield. After receiving an application for street collection at 7 intersections previously approved by the City, on 5 September, City Clerk Vickie McGownd stated in a phone message, “Your application asked for reconsideration, but there’s really no way for us to reconsider. That ordinance basically eliminates the ability for anyone to solicit from a roadway, so unfortunately the answer is still going to be no from here on out. We do not allow solicitation of any kind; where before it used to be allowed, but it is not anymore,” After the passage of Ordinance No. 3185 by the City of Chesterfield in March of 2022, Chesterfield denied 9981’s application for street solicitation in August of 2022. The council appealed to the mayor, Bob Nation, to Chesterfield city council members, and the City Attorney, citing the council’s safe history of collection with a permit over 13 years, their 501c(3) non-profit status, liability insurance, and a commitment to serving the community. Despite these appeals, the city will not allow any exceptions to the ordinance, denying the application for a second year.

Five Charities are Impacted

Jim Ressler, former Grand Knight and Chairman of the 2023 drive, stated, “While the intent of the ordinance is to prevent panhandlers from harassing people on the road, the adverse effect of the ban eliminates legitimate non-profit organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, Old Newsboys Day, and Monarch firefighters from appealing to motorists on as few days a year to voluntarily contribute to groups whose services benefit our wider community.” From 2015 to 2021, council 9981 collected and donated over \$20,000 per year to five St. Louis and Missouri-based organizations that serve those with Developmental Disabilities such as Down Syndrome, Autism, ADHD, and with injuries causing both mental and physical limitations. While the yellow-vested Knights give away free Tootsie Rolls, they accept small donations of cash and coin from motorists waiting at stoplights at busy intersections in Chesterfield.

The average collection on streets in the City of Chesterfield the previous 8 years yielded an average of \$12,500 raised, with a high of \$14,200 collected in 2021. Over 50% of the council’s fundraising will no longer be available to support the 5 recipient organizations that serve children with developmental disabilities. The Knights of Columbus Developmental Center at Cardinal Glennon Hospital is the major recipient, receiving 50% of statewide donations to the annual “Tootsie Roll Drive.” As reported in *Catholic St. Louis* in November 2022, developmental pediatricians are needed but rare in Missouri. According to 2020 data from the American Board of Pediatrics, there is one developmental pediatrician for every 153,000 children in the state. The donations from the “Tootsie Roll Drive” make a difference at the Developmental Center at Cardinal Glennon Hospital by offering one of the most qualified developmental pediatrician programs in the nation consisting of neurologists, psychiatrists,

psychologists, speech-language pathologists, and many other skilled practitioners focused on children's with a range of developmental conditions.

9981 Responds to Need

In response, council 9981 is pursuing other means of collection from donors to make up the gap in street donations, though it will be difficult to reassign volunteers and organize new methods of collection. More information about the DD Drive and online donations can be found at iwknights9981.com/dddrive.

Chartered in 1988, Knights of Columbus Council 9981 is a fraternal Catholic men's organization serving the Church and their parishes. The K of C is a Catholic order of men whose members strive to live the Christian virtues by the principles of Charity, Unity, Fraternity, and Patriotism. The K of C was founded by Blessed Father Michael McGivney in 1882 at St. Mary's parish in New Haven, Connecticut.

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