



# SANDY SPRINGS NEIGHBOR

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## Community Assistance Center touts growth at breakfast

articles

by Margot Carvallo

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Special Photo / From left, Community Assistance Center Development Manager Pam Jones, the Rev. Jeff Reams of Dunwoody Baptist Church and center past board president Cheryl Sykes.

The Community Assistance Center in Sandy Springs celebrated its breakfast and annual meeting last week at the Dunwoody Baptist Church with rising numbers.

"CAC serves [the cities of] Sandy Springs and Dunwoody, which had a population of about 50,000 when we started [in 1987]. The number of residents in both cities have grown tremendously," Tamara Carrera, the center's executive director, said.

However, this growth has also consequences. "The poverty rate in Sandy Springs is the highest in percentage growth in the nation," Carrera said.

"When we started it was at 5 percent. Right now it's approaching 17 percent, which only means that the population we serve is growing."

Christopher Rees, the center's treasurer and supervisor of oncology and business operations at the Northside Hospital Cancer Institute in Sandy Springs, also spoke.

"In 2014, CAC received over \$2 million in revenue, half of it in in-kind donations," he said.

Over the last five years the center has grown 27 percent, and it went from serving 3,500 families in 2000 to now serving 4,700 families, Carrera said.

This year the center invested \$1.3 million and 23,000 volunteer hours, she said.

The center partners with the Second Helping nonprofit, which has volunteers getting food from many donors and transporting it to recipient agencies in 90 minutes or less, according to its website.

"Now the center is able to serve nutritious food that Second Helping collects that otherwise would go to waste, providing nutritious meals instead of a can of soup," Carrera said.

Board president Catherine Lautenbacher presented student volunteer Jack Monahan with a plaque for his efforts in building a bench by the sidewalk outside the center's entrance that "has become a place where community happens," she said.

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