

village view

by Andrea Leonard

Christmas is just around the corner and another year is about to slip away. In a few weeks, 1977 will be "last year" instead of now.

Along with finishing touches for the holidays, your wrap-up of year-end details, if you're at all foresighted, will include steps to alleviate the meanness of your tax bite on this year's income.

Perhaps you'll check your investments on Wall Street and arrange to sell some stocks at a loss. When preparing your tax return, you'll write that loss off against 1977 earned income. Perhaps the sale will free up cash to improve the quality of your stock portfolio when the market takes another dip.

If you're like a lot of other people, you've delayed making charitable contributions until the end of the year, letting your charity dollar earn savings account interest. You'll still need the deduction next April, of course, and will write these checks in December.

Should you be among these, please consider making a substantial contribution to the Cape Cod United Way.

The agencies supported by United Way make substantial contributions to the quality of your life on Cape Cod; they depend upon your generosity; they deserve your help.

Too frequently, we see dollars donated to charity as dollars spent for intangibles. How intangible are the benefits accruing to our communities from dollars contributed to our United Way? Are the services provided as intangible as they may seem at first glance?

A goodly portion of the fund's allocations support the

youth groups on Cape Cod. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Camp Fire Girls cannot survive without your help. Running the programs does cost money, but not nearly as much as it would cost if children weren't occupied in healthy educational programs to build character, citizenship, and moral values.

When girls and boys join such youth groups and participate in offered programs, they are far less likely to be out spraying the rear of buildings with graffiti and obscenities. These aren't kids who vandalize, steal or get involved with dope, either.

Is that intangible?

The Cape Cod Chapter of the American Red Cross is beneficiary of a hefty allocation from United Way. A year-round program on the Cape, Red Cross blood is available at no charge to any person who needs a transfusion. The Red Cross conducts safety training programs that save lives. It stands ready and is prepared to help in emergencies, whether individual ones requiring transportation, or community-wide aid in time of disaster.

Is that intangible?

Children's Protective Services is on 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week, call to assist children who may be neglected or abused by their parents. To a suffering child, that's not intangible.

Cape Cod Homemaker Service makes available home care for disabled, sick, and elderly persons, enabling them to remain at home instead of entering institutions. Caring for people in institutions becomes a public expense since personal financial resources are soon exhausted if a person must leave home.

Certainly there's a tangible savings in taxes we would otherwise have to pay.

Two Cape Cod agencies, the Mental Health Association and the Family and Children's Services, offer counseling to help the troubled, the disturbed, the emotionally distressed-people in crisis. Personal relationships are often difficult; marriages are threatened, parents and adolescents view one another as adversaries, people suffer depression. Emotions of anger, fear and anxiety can be overwhelming. Counseling can and often does relieve such pressures.

A marriage saved, a suicide, or bodily harm to another person prevented, strengthened family relationships help keep our communities happy and healthy; because of them our neighbors are happier and healthier people.

The Council on Alcoholism helps people who abuse alcohol and other drugs. Of course, people don't abuse these drugs! They abuse themselves, their families, their friends and neighbors. To say they abuse alcohol is to couch the problem in deceptive terms.

You can't abuse a bottle of rum. But a bottle of rum can abuse us all. The drunk who smashes up your car abuses you, not the rum. And it costs you. Your insurance premium rises; your deductible comes out of your pocket. That's tangible.

When you give to the United Way you help provide care and treatment for the retarded citizens among us. Should you? Only those who can say positively "It could never happen to anyone I love," -- and none of us can be that sure -- can turn their backs on people afflicted with retardation.

What about Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Cape Cod? Children in single-parent families are numbered in the thousands in Barnstable County. Of these, one quarter need a Big Brother or a Big Sister.

Several years ago a 14-year-old girl was raped by her adoptive father; she ran away from home and soon was befriended by a 16-year-old boy with a long history of foster-home placements and delinquency. Before her 15th birthday she gave birth to a baby girl. Since then, she has had three more children, one each year.

The father of them all is the young man who provided the only haven and security the girl has ever known. He is presently incarcerated in Walpole State Prison for a series of criminal offenses, but he'll be released in due time.

A Big Brother for that boy could have saved him; a Big Sister for that girl could have saved her. We taxpayers support this 18-year-old mother and her four babies. We taxpayers support this 20-year-old criminal. It costs us approximately \$40,000 a year.

Intangible?

There are some of the agencies making up the Cape Cod United Way. Without contributions from us, they cannot exist.

Please make your contribution to the Cape Cod United Way a substantial one. If you've already made a token gift, mail another check. If you must, deprive yourself of some small luxury. Count the costs of NOT supporting the agencies that battle the scourges of social disease, right here on the home front.

May your Christmas be merry and your New Year prosperous.