

SARATOGA SPRINGS MAYOR-ELECT Meg Kelly announced on Tuesday that Lisa Shields is her choice for deputy mayor. **C2**

THE DAILY GAZETTE

CAPITAL REGION

Giving Tuesday boosts nonprofits

Raising awareness of missions important

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Tuesday was a day to spend money on something other than possessions.

After a weeks-long onslaught of holiday shopping promotions that climaxed with pre-Black Friday, Black Friday, Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday sales, Giving Tuesday appealed to Americans to support non-profit entities working to make communities better.

No fewer than 42,283 orga-

nizations were listed on the #GivingTuesday website as options for people who wanted to participate.

Dozens in the Capital Region were among them, ranging from higher education (Union College) to tennis (15-Love) to housing (Habitat for Humanity) to senior services (the Wesley Foundation.)

Giving Tuesday is a chance for these organizations to not only raise funds but to raise awareness of what they do

the other 364 days of the year.

"We adopted Giving Tuesday a couple years ago," said Eugene White, marketing manager for Albany-based human services organization Northern Rivers.

"It's an opportunity to say 'this is us; this is what we do.'"

And that's still a message Northern Rivers needs to get out, White said, despite serving 14,000 individuals and families -- with the help

of 1,400 employees -- in 36 counties.

He credited Director of Development Stephanie Douglas with the successful monthslong preparation for the annual day of giving.

Douglas said effective use of social media is important to the success of Giving Tuesday, and enlisting the right ambassadors for the message is crucial.

That done, Northern Rivers can attract donations of time and money and prompt a large number of "shares" on



ERICA MILLER/GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER

Pit bull mix Bella, 3, is pictured during a canine behavioral class in October hosted by the Animal Protective Foundation.

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social media, which is just as important.

“That’s the true power of social media,” she said. “The momentum lives on throughout the year -- we’re able to make those introductions.”

Giving Tuesday has grown rapidly since its creation in 2012, so much so that New York state Attorney General Eric Schneiderman issued an advisory on how to avoid being scammed by fraudulent organizations.

The day is timed to follow the big shopping days so as to serve as a kickoff to the traditional end-of-year charitable giving period.

Most organizations seeking support point out the year-round nature of their needs, even as they express gratitude for the support they receive on Giving Tuesday.

The American Red Cross Eastern New York Region is on call around the clock in a 24-county zone, bringing in donations of blood and sending out volunteers to disasters as far away as California and as close as Albany.

Soon after dawn on Giving Tuesday, the Red Cross was on the scene in Amsterdam to help 13 people who were burned out of their home.

“Giving Tuesday is an opportunity to get the word out about what we do all year long,” said spokeswoman Kimmy Venter. “It goes from right in our own backyard to across the country.”

She said the Red Cross has wondered whether it would see any signs of compassion fatigue this year, with so many big disasters across the nation attracting attention and donations. But the opposite sometimes happens, with more people moved to help as the need grows, she added. The biggest month for donations to the Red Cross is December, traditionally, so the organization will soon know which is the case this year.

“We’re asking people

throughout the holiday season to give something that means something,” Venter said.

That can be money (for assistance to fire and disaster victims and to U.S. service personnel) or blood (for hospitals across the region) or time (as a volunteer).

“And there are people who do all three, which I think is pretty incredible,” Venter said.

Much-smaller organizations, such as the Animal Protective Foundation in Glenville and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Schenectady, rely on Giving Tuesday for the same things: both money and visibility.

“We are seeing an increase in online donations today due to Giving Tuesday, a definite growth from last year,” said Colleen Keating, of the APF.

“We have come to realize that, no matter how much effort we put into this campaign, the day is much more about marketing our organization than it is about bringing in immediate financial support,” Boys and Girls Club Executive Director Shane Bargy said via email. “Having said this, we believe there is great value in getting our brand out there, as it can certainly benefit our young people in the long run.”

Giving Tuesday is very timely this year for the Albany Damien Center, a resource center for those affected by HIV/AIDS.

“It’s a unique time for us because we just moved into a new building,” said Jonathan Richardson, development director.

The grand opening/open house event is scheduled for Friday.

The organization views Giving Tuesday as a chance to show community members the impact they can have in helping people fighting the disease.

“We haven’t devoted too much time to the effort,” Richardson said. Nonetheless, “It’s very popular,” he added. “We definitely see a great response from community members.”