

Together We Cope . Bridging the Gap

708-633-5040

Volume 25

November 2011

TWC Happenings

TWC Board Meetings

November 14
January 19

TWC Office Closed *Nu2u Shop Closed*

Thanksgiving , November 24 & 25
Christmas, December 24, 25 & 26

Adopt a Child Gifts Due

November 28

Gifts From the Heart *Children's craft projects for siblings*

December 10

Together We Cope Holiday Party

Sunday, December 4, 2011

Adopt a Child Distribution

December 6, 7 & 8

Project Share Distribution

Week of December 12

Business After Hours at TWC

Tuesday, February 7, 2012

"A Red Carpet Event"

TWC Dinner & Silent Auction
Odyssey Country Club
Friday, February 24, 2012

TWC Golf Outing & Dinner

Odyssey Country Club
Wednesday, June 6, 2012



The Together We Cope Board of Directors and staff thank you for your donations and contributions this past year. We extend our best wishes for a happy holiday season.

Adopt-a-Child aims to help 1,500 youngsters

From warm socks and pajamas to toy trains and iTunes, thousands of Christmas presents will be collected at Together We Cope again this year in the annual Adopt-a-Child holiday program. This year about 1,500 youngsters have been invited to participate in the program and TWC now seeks sponsors to adopt them and make their holiday wishes come true. This year children will list two gifts they would like to receive, and sponsors are asked to provide the two gifts at a cost of about \$15 each. In the



past, local businesses, churches, civic organizations and individuals have adopted the children or made donations directly to TWC for the program.

Sponsors of teenagers are especially needed. Typical teen gifts are gift cards, video games, and personal care products.

To adopt a child this holiday, contact Tina Kessens

at (708) 633-5040

or tkessens@togetherwecope.org.

From the Director ...Kathy

We can stretch \$20 further than anyone!



We at Together We Cope were not surprised when the U.S. Census Bureau announced in September that the nation's poverty rate rose to 15.1% in 2010, its highest level since 1993. Nor were we surprised to learn that the median household income for middle class Americans continues to drop in our country, and that the poverty rate for children under 18 rose to 22% in 2010. About 46.2 million people now live in poverty in America.

These statistics are more than numbers for the staff at TWC. Daily we see the faces behind the numbers and hear the stories about the absolute cruelty of an impoverished life.

While our staff often can provide relief in many forms, from housing to medical aid to new shoes for school, the simple gift of a bag of groceries provides the most immediate and satisfying assistance to our clients. Nearly everyone who comes to TWC for help gets a bag of groceries as they leave the office.

Our food pantry keeps the shelves stocked by donations from local businesses, churches, community organizations and

residents who sponsor food drives in their neighborhoods. But the major source of food for our pantry is the Greater Chicago Food Depository, where agencies like TWC get free USDA food and purchase other groceries at greatly reduced prices.

There is a donation envelope stapled to this edition of our newsletter, and we hope you can help us continue in our mission to assist families in crisis. If you can afford even \$20, consider how far we can make that \$20 go. We can purchase groceries of all kinds for as little as seven cents a pound from the food depository (that includes canned, boxed and bagged food). For just four cents a pound, we can purchase food (including meat and poultry) from the depository's "food rescue" program with Chicago area stores and restaurants. Additionally, TWC enjoys significant discounts from local grocers when we purchase food items in bulk, and donations of free food that is soon to be out of code.

Hosting a food drive for Together We Cope is a wonderful opportunity to involve family, friends and neighbors in a good cause right in our own community. But if time does not permit that activity for you, consider letting us stretch your \$20 bill to cover several bags of groceries for a local family. Your donation could put many meals on someone's table.

'Red Carpet Event' marks TWC's 30th anniversary

Together We Cope's annual dinner dance on Friday, Feb. 24 is a special occasion this year. It celebrates the agency's 30 years of service to the south suburban community.

"Our 2012 'Red Carpet Event' is very significant this year," said Karen Moran, fundraising coordinator for TWC. "At the same time that we look back joyously on 30 years of gratifying work in our community, we look forward to the funding challenges facing us in this weak economy."

TWC traces its origins to 1982 when Oak Forest resident Lorraine Cook began a food pantry in her garage to help neighbors in need. The agency moved to several temporary locations before finally landing in its current home at 17010 South Oak Park Avenue in downtown Tinley Park.

Today, TWC helps thousands of people each year through its food pantry, resale shop and help with some costs like rent and utility bills. Food assistance alone in the past year was valued at more than \$1 million. New programs have been launched to provide school supplies to youngsters in need and Christmas presents to families through the Adopt-a-Child initiative.

Tickets for the dinner dance at Odyssey Country Club in Tinley Park are priced at \$90 per person in this 30th anniversary year, with a special bonus: If you buy a table of 10, the 10th ticket is free. As always, there will be raffles and games that provide fun throughout the evening, as well as the wonderful Odyssey dinner buffet, open bar and dancing to a live band. There will be a live auction of special items, silent auction of dozens of gift baskets, raffles for cash and prizes, and a 'Spin to Win' wagering game.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.togetherwecope.org or by contacting Karen Moran at (708) 633-5040 or kmoran@togetherwecope.org.



Charlotte Burns greeting guests on the Red Carpet



One of the many auction items from last year. Kathy Straniero, Patricia Slack, State Senator Maggie Crotty, John Slack & Kathy Scatena

Save the Date

Friday, February 24, 2012

30th Anniversary Celebration

Texas Roadhouse donates holiday turkeys

Texas Roadhouse restaurant in Tinley Park supports Together We Cope in various ways at the holidays, and this year is making a special outreach on our behalf.

The restaurant, through its partnership with Walt's Foods, will donate a turkey to TWC's food pantry for each patron who buys \$50 or more in gift cards through Nov. 23. Texas Roadhouse is located at 18345 La-Grange Road in Tinley Park.

Manager Randy Warchol said this is an initiative taken on by his crew at the Tinley Park restaurant. "I worked previously with the Hard Rock Café in Chicago and we always gave back to the community," he said. "It's a great thing to do, and my crew here also believes in that concept."

Warchol, of Orland Park, said he chose TWC to benefit from this project because he has partnered with the agency in the past and supports the good work it does in the community.



Community supports TWC's pasta dinner

Together We Cope's annual Pasta Extravaganza and Night at the Races was a wonderful success this year. A large crowd filled the banquet room at Orland Chateau in Orland Park on Sept. 14 for great food and lots of fun with the videotaped horse races. We are especially grateful to all the staff and volunteers who spent hours making sure our guests had a good time. Below are the restaurants that donated food to the fabulous buffet we offered.

Thanks to these restaurants and businesses

Aurelio's Pizza * Barraco's Pizza * Beggar's Pizza * Brown's Chicken * Buffalo Wild Wings * Chick-Fil-A * Cuzzin's Cafe * Culver's * Diana's Kitchen * Durbins * Edible Arrangements * Euro Fresh Market * Frankie's Ristorante * Gatto's * Hienie's McCarthy's * Hooters * Isabella's Italian Cafe * Jersey Mike's * Jewel * Jimmy John's * Kathie Kellogg * Kenootz Pizza * Labriola Baking Company * Little Joe's Restaurant * Luby's Pub * Mama Vesuvio's East * Marcotte's * McDonald's * Nancy's Pizza * Nick's Barbecue * Olive Garden * Palermo's Restaurant * Papa Joe's Restaurant * Patio Restaurant * Rosati's Pizza * Rubino's Italian Imports * Salina's Pasta and Pizza * Subway * Trio * Village Pizza * Vito and Nick's II Pizzeria * Walt's Food * Winston's Market



More than a bag of groceries

It took a village

Sometimes Together We Cope's greatest strength is getting people together quickly in order to help someone out.

Such is the case with Sam, a man in his 70s whose sole income is a modest Social Security check. He came to our attention initially through a local service organization. He was facing the loss of his home at the time. TWC connected him with a mortgage counseling agency that successfully negotiated a loan modification for him.

Then the furnace went out at Sam's home, and he had no money to replace a needed part. He found the part on sale at a local store, and then went to a second store to see if they could match that price. They did, and added another 10% reduction.

Now Sam was at our door seeking help with buying the part and having it installed. In just two hours, we got "the village" together to solve Sam's dilemma. We asked the second store to waive the tax on the part because we are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency, and the manager agreed, bringing the price down even further. We tapped our Salvation Army resources for most of the

money needed for the part, then found TWC funds to cover the remainder. Then we contacted a local heating contractor who has been generous with us in the past, donating his time and talent to make repairs at the homes of our clients. He agreed to fix Sam's furnace that evening. We brought the money to the store and made the purchase – all on the same day Sam came to us for help.

"Cases like this are so difficult because most of our funders will not cover something like a furnace repair," said our staffer. "I didn't want to try for help through any weatherization or 'green' programs because they can't react as quickly as we needed."

Sam has been helping others for many years through his good works in the neighborhood. He was surprised, and very grateful, to find that so many others were willing to come to his aid so fast. Every time he turns on the heat in his home now, he thinks about all the people who made it possible. "What a blessing it is to find such kind strangers," he said.

Hats off to our loyal volunteers!

There is no doubt that volunteers are critical to Together We Cope's operation.

"Our volunteers keep every facet of Together We Cope up and running every day," said Kathryn Straniero, executive director of TWC.

In August TWC hosted more than 100 volunteers to a picnic that honored their service to the agency. Special recognition awards were presented to three persons who contributed the most volunteer hours in 2010. Leonard Schaafsma of Oak Forest was honored for giving 1,567 hours of service last year. Patricia Slack of New Lenox earned honors for 645 hours, and Edward Hill of Midlothian for 641 hours.

Fifteen-year service pins were presented to Cindy Beneventi, Robin Fredrickson and Louise Obiala for their work beginning in 1996. Ten-year pins were

awarded to Gene Orrico, Karen Roman, Nancy Rosian, Dee Surlak, Rosemarie Swan and Mary Ann Tambellini for work beginning in 2001. Five-year pins went to Cheryl Bruozas, Mattie Buckner, Valerie Chudy, Dolores Doyle, Barbara Harris, Nellie Hayes, Charles Lilly, Nancy Lilly, Terry Strong and Al Vallejo.



Len Schaafsma, Patricia Slack & Ed Hill



A Shopper with a Keen Eye

A Volunteer you should know!



Valerie Chudy

Valerie Chudy of Orland Park has no trouble keeping busy in her retirement. She golfs, bowls, gardens, reads and helps her brother Gil Hannon run the annual MetLife Duathlon that benefits Together We Cope. She also makes time to volunteer at TWC on Tuesdays and for special events, bringing an unusual talent to our agency.

Val works with food pantry director Carol Ettema to create the dozens of gift baskets TWC uses in its fundraising events or as donations to other organizations trying to raise funds. "I learned how to do that here at Cope, working with Carol for special events," said Val, who has given her time to the agency for five years.

Carol and Val can be seen strolling down the aisles of the Nu2u resale shop or perusing the back room where donations are accepted, keeping a sharp eye out for new and unused merchandise that can be used in the gift baskets. "Sometimes we have a theme, like kitchen or bathroom, or we're making a basket for a baby or maybe a young boy or young girl. We look for little things that apply to that project, things that will fill out the basket and make it look more appealing," she said.

Val's professional background positions her well for this task. She retired after 30 years with Peoples Energy in Chicago, where she worked in the special events department shaping her company's participation in events like the Taste of Chicago and African Festival.

"Yes, I have to admit it was a great job," Val recalls. "There are so many community celebrations in Chicago that we spent the whole year getting ready for those events. I think that's why I like this work at Together We Cope. I like to get things organized and create something from scratch. I like the challenge of using what's available and making it work for our different projects."

Val and her husband, Bob, are both retired from Peoples Energy. She enjoys her time with twin stepdaughters, 27, both of whom are pharmacists.

Like most of the volunteers at TWC, Val keeps coming back because of the wonderful people involved with the agency. "I really like the people here, such interesting people," she said.

Together We Cope
17010 S. Oak Park Ave.
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Return Service Requested

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Help families this holiday season by making a donation

Gifts From the Heart

On Saturday, December 10th, Together We Cope will be hosting our annual "Gifts From the Heart Program," which will be held at Zion Lutheran Church in Tinley Park. This one-day event provides the children of our clients an opportunity to make holiday gifts to give friends and family members. Once again the Beta-Beta Chapter of Alpha Kappa Gamma sorority has volunteered their time and talents to create the crafts and prepare the supplies for the children. In addition to the various crafts, there will be a "gift-wrapping station," holiday music, snacks and a visit from everyone's favorite, "Jolly Old Elf".



TWC to host chambers at Mardi Gras party

Together We Cope once again hosts members of area chambers of commerce to a Business After Hours event themed to a Mardi Gras party. This season's event is Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2012 and is open to members of the Chicago Southland Chamber of Commerce, as well as members of chambers in Tinley Park, Orland Park, Oak Lawn, Oak Forest and Crestwood.

As in past years, TWC's offices and the Nu2u resale shop will be transformed into a Mardi Gras celebration, complete with food, drinks and entertainment. The professional networking event is free to chamber members.

The party is an opportunity to introduce Together We Cope and its work to local business people, and invite their participation in the operation of our agency.



Mayor Ed Zabrocki enjoying Mardi Gras

Winter coats at Nu2u

Hundreds of area youngsters will be toasty warm this winter in jackets and coats provided by Together We Cope in its



annual children's winter clothing program.

TWC seeks donations of new and gently used coats for distribution to children of families registered with the agency for assistance. All sizes and styles are appreciated, but larger size boys' coats are especially needed.

Donations can be brought to the rear of TWC's resale shop, Nu2u, at 17010 South Oak Park Avenue in downtown Tinley Park. Further information on the campaign is available from Pat Hosman, store manager, at (708) 633-9180.