



## Ready for the best party in 2015? Our Red Carpet Event is March 6

One of the south suburbs' most popular fundraisers will draw hundreds of supporters for a night of dining and dancing at Odyssey Country Club on March 6. Tickets are still available for Together We Cope's Red Carpet Event dinner dance and auction, a celebration for all those who support our mission and a chance for new friends to join us.

This year's event will feature an exciting performance by painter Elliott From of ArtBeat Live, who will create a portrait to high-energy music while the audience watches. From's one-of-a-kind piece will go to the highest bidder that evening.

Silent and live auction items will include great prizes like sports tickets and memorabilia, jewelry and airline tickets, among other things. And since Auctions by Cellular proved so popular last year, guests once again will be able to bid using their own smart phones or tablets furnished by the company's roving staff.

Tickets are \$100 each or \$950 for a table of 10 reserved in advance. The cost covers an elegant buffet dinner, open bar and an evening of dancing to the popular band, Connexion.

The Red Carpet sponsor for the second year is C.D.E. Collision Centers. Owners Chuck and Donna Freiberg's generous gift assures that this year's event will be a big success. "This event is always so popular with our supporters because it's a fun evening with family and friends," said Karen Moran, fundraising coordinator. "We rely on the Red Carpet Event to support our client programs and services all year long."

### Celebrate while you support Together We Cope!

When TWC rolls out the red carpet, it's time to gather your friends and get tickets. It's also your chance to support us as a sponsor, reaching a broad audience of area residents and business owners with an ad in the Red Carpet Event program. Buy tickets online at [togetherwecope.org](http://togetherwecope.org) today or call our fundraising staff at 708.263.0302 to secure your sponsorship for this year's celebration.

## Shampoo drive teaches students a new way to help neighbors in need

A new program at Together We Cope is teaching children a new way to help their neighbors in need. Launched at local schools last fall, the donation drive asks kids to collect soap, shampoo, deodorant and other personal care items for food pantry clients.

These donations make a big difference for TWC client families because SNAP benefits don't cover personal care products, enabling them to stretch their food dollars further.

Orland Junior High School students (pictured below) responded by filling 12 huge boxes. Students at Central Middle School filled nine large boxes. Even some school administrators answered the call, with teachers and staff at Bremen High School District 228 donating six big boxes.

The project quickly expanded with the help of volunteer Tom Savick, a name familiar to anyone who attended Arbor Park Middle School in Oak Forest, where he served as principal until retiring in 2006. Reaching out to other school administrators across the 27 communities that TWC serves, Savick is helping to line up shampoo drives and other projects, the first step toward establishing relationships with grade schools and middle schools and organizing annual programs that will benefit TWC. "Food and shampoo drives are concrete programs with tangible results that let students experience what it's like to help their neighbor," Savick said. "And they're fun."

TWC executive director Kathryn Straniero said the effort is welcome on many levels. "All donations are welcome," she said, "but when they come from children, it really touches our hearts."





## New ideas, new projects as we head into a new year

Change is good, especially when it creates forward momentum. At Together We Cope, we will always put clients first, doing everything we can to help them through times of temporary crisis. But every so often, it's good to take a fresh approach to how we get our work done.

You are holding one change in your hands, our redesigned newsletter. It's a step toward an even bigger change—the chance to start sending it via email instead, a move that will save us countless dollars on printing and mailing. If an electronic version is right for you, let us know. Otherwise, you'll continue to get our quarterly newsletter by mail.

Another new program is our outreach to local schools, which got off to a good start recently with "shampoo drives" that brought in personal care products. We're always glad to have the youngest members of the community pitching in; it's the kind of change that makes you hopeful about the future. We'll work to develop partnerships with more schools in the year ahead.

We've even got something new and exciting planned for this year's Red Carpet Event—a performance by artist Elliott From, who'll create a painting that night that we can auction off later in the evening. With the much-appreciated continued support of C.D.E. Collision Centers owners Chuck and Donna Freiberg, who are our generous event sponsors for the second year, we're anticipating the best Red Carpet Event ever. I look forward to seeing you there!

Kathryn Straniero  
Executive Director

## How wishes come true

Nothing brings out the community support like the holidays. A mountain of toys, warm pajamas and other goodies were donated by area residents, businesses and community groups who supported TWC's annual Adopt a Child program in 2014. Hundreds of others made generous monetary donations, which helped our "volunteer elves" find exactly the right items on the Christmas wish lists of our youngest clients. This year, TWC distributed gifts and clothing worth \$134,000 to more than 1,600 children and teenagers, a new record for TWC—and for our donors.

Dozens of food drives from the community, including donations of turkeys and hams, stocked the pantry as well over the holidays.

"People were incredibly generous this holiday season," said executive director Kathryn Straniero. "It was an amazing year."

## Homemade and heart felt

More than 75 children from client families got a chance to give homemade gifts last Christmas, thanks to the members of Beta Beta chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma. The educators service society hosted Gifts from the Heart, a popular annual event, at Zion Lutheran Church in Tinley Park. It also drew a group of volunteers just to wrap presents—an estimated 780 gifts in four hours.

## In memoriam

We were sad to lose the following members of the TWC family recently, and our hearts go out to their family and friends.

**Dolores Doyle**, volunteer  
**Ishbel Frame**, volunteer  
**Pat Howe**, employee at Nu2u  
**Ginger Muchna**, volunteer  
**Tom Obradovich**, volunteer

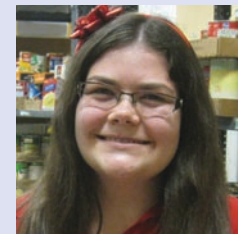
## Who volunteers at TWC?

It takes 200 volunteers to make TWC run smoothly every day. Here are three who are sharing their time and talent with us.



**Sue Leigh** of Oak Forest, one of our "volunteer elves" with the Adopt a Child program, braves the holiday crowds to shop for the

toys and pajamas. "I love the challenge of getting a sale. And I love trying to fill the wishes of these kids," she said. Her warm-weather job with Masters Irrigation, a lawn sprinkler company, gives her the free time in November and December to help TWC. Sue also is the mother of Katlin Bewley on our fundraising team.



When you spot **Cheyenne Gallai** of Palos Heights in the food pantry, you know there's a school on break. The Moraine Valley

Community College student has been spending her free time at TWC since 2012. "I love it here. I've made so many friends," she said. "What I like about volunteering at Together We Cope is that sometimes it gets really busy, but nobody ever gives up. Even if I were working, I'd volunteer here."



One of the newest volunteers, **Tom Savick** of Frankfort, first helped TWC as principal at Arbor Park Middle School in Oak Forest, where

students ran food drives. Retired since 2006, he became a volunteer last fall and helps in marketing by asking schools to partner with us on a regular basis. Tom is now reaching out to principals to set up shampoo drives and food drives this spring. "I enjoy helping TWC because I know everything raised goes directly to local people in need. It's like helping your neighbor across the street."

## Champps' reopening benefits TWC



Together We Cope was once again the charity of choice for a restaurant opening its doors in Orland Park—or in this case, reopening them.

Champps, 16165 S. La Grange Road, donated 10 percent of all sales on Jan. 29 to TWC.

From 6 to 9 pm, guests were welcome to enjoy an array of complementary foods and to purchase signature drinks for \$2 each. The party was certain to draw crowds that would make Champps glad to be back in Orland Park.

The event also drew media attention from WCIU-TV's *You & Me: This Morning*.

TWC executive director Kathryn Straniero said, "We were delighted to partner with Champps for this event and grateful that they have chosen to support our efforts."

The agency also was the charity of choice in 2013 for the opening of Bonefish Grill and Uncle Julio's, events that generated funds for TWC and also helped lay the foundation for the restaurants' success in the south suburbs.

## TWC taking the newsletter online

Readers undoubtedly have noticed the new look for Together We Cope's quarterly newsletter. TWC's communications team is also taking the newsletter into the digital age. Starting in May, we'll make the quarterly newsletter available via email.

The move enables our supporters to read news at their convenience on their laptops, tablets and other devices. It also will help save the agency money by reducing the cost of printing and mailing the publication.

TWC will continue to send out a printed copy to everyone on the mailing list unless we hear from you. If you would like to switch from the print to the electronic version, email Patty Houlihan at [phoulihan@togetherwecope.org](mailto:phoulihan@togetherwecope.org) or call her at 708.263.0302, ext. 6116.



## Student chefs get credit for rising to the second annual Food Pantry Challenge

The second annual Food Pantry Challenge not only generated great recipes for our clients, it also helped earn college credit for 18 culinary students at Robert Morris University.

Based on the success of the inaugural event in 2013, RMU turned the Jan. 26 competition into a for-credit course. Before this year's cook-off at RMU's campus in Orland Park, student chefs spent 10 weeks developing recipes to be judged in each of six categories: 30-minute meal, child-friendly dish, great leftovers, key ingredient (this year, it was canned pumpkin), cultural diversity and chef's specialty.

The inaugural cook-off in 2013 generated 50 recipes including chicken tetrazzini, gumbo, and fried ravioli. TWC handed out the resulting cookbook to food pantry clients, who said they appreciated a novel twist on staples like canned pumpkin, which students used to create sloppy joes and brownies. This year, clients said they were looking for more vegetable-based recipes and help using beans including lima, kidney and pinto varieties.

The second annual cook-off drew media attention to TWC, raising the public's awareness of hunger as well as the agency itself. It also strengthened TWC's relationship with RMU. "This is a great partnership for us," said Mark Wroczynski, chef instructor. "The ingredients are challenging for our students, and they know the recipes can make a real difference for the clients at Together We Cope."

## Is it New Orleans, or is it Tinley Park?



Mardi Gras is the theme for the Business After Hours on Feb. 17 at Together We Cope.

Members of four area chambers of commerce (Oak Forest-Crestwood, Oak Lawn, Orland Park and Tinley Park) are invited for a fun evening of New Orleans-themed food and music starting at 5 pm at 17010 S. Oak Park Ave. The event was once again sponsored by BMO Harris Bank.

"We love turning our food pantry and resale shop into a little bit of New Orleans for this event," said Karen Moran, fundraising coordinator. "People in the business community get a chance to enjoy themselves and also to see where we do the work that supports our neighbors in need. It's always a good evening."

For information, contact Katlin Bewley (pictured at left) at [kbewley@togetherwecope.org](mailto:kbewley@togetherwecope.org) or 708.263.0302, ext. 6107.

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Charity Navigator granted Together We Cope a four-star rating for the fourth year in a row, commending TWC for sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency.

## A client's story

### All she wanted was a white blouse

If you had met Maureen at work, you would never have imagined her as a client at Together We Cope. A professional with a career in real estate, she lived in the south suburbs. A single woman, she supported herself and saved for the future, knowing the importance of having funds for a rainy day.

The firm reduced staff and Maureen suddenly found herself out of work. She now faced a common situation: trying to find a new job as a woman in her mid-50s. She received unemployment compensation, which supported her for several months as she looked for work. But it came to an end, forcing Maureen to dip into her savings. At the end of four months, her money ran out, putting her in a position she never thought she would be in.

Fortunately, Maureen was able to move in with a friend, and she continued

to work hard at finding a job. Finally, she lined up a job interview. All she needed was a white blouse. That's when she turned to Together We Cope.

Case manager Ann Rodgers brought in one of her own shirts to make sure Maureen had one with a good fit. She also gave her food, a clothing voucher, and several other job leads, just in case. "The potential job fell through," Ann said. "But five days later, she called and said one of the leads we had given her had worked out. She found a full-time job with benefits. It turned out she was the right person at the right moment."

Relieved, grateful, and delighted to be back at work, Maureen continued to live with her friend—temporarily. "After being out of work for more than a year," Ann said, "she didn't want to commit to housing until she knew the job was going to work out."

## How you can help

Unrestricted donations help us provide assistance wherever clients need it most.

You can also help by donating new and gently used clothing and household items, which helps clients and raises funds that support our programs.

**Of every dollar donated to TWC, 93 cents goes to client programs and services.**

**[togetherwecope.org](http://togetherwecope.org)**