

Together We Cope . Bridging the Gap

708-633-5040

Volume 25

August 2011

TWC

Happenings

Next TWC Board Meetings
Mon. September 12, 2011
Mon. November 14, 2011

Aldon Block Party
Saturday, July 30, 2011

Rock Bottom Fundraiser
for Together We Cope
Thurs. August 11, 2011

TWC Volunteer Picnic
Sunday, August 21, 2011

Back to School Distribution
August 10, 2011

TWC & Nu2u Closed
Labor Day Sept. 5, 2011

Pasta Extravaganza
Orland Chateau
Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Oak Forest Awareness Fair
Saturday, October 8, 2011

Midlothian Health Fair
Saturday, October 15, 2011

Orland Park Community Days
Saturday, October 15, 2011

Anonymous
Oral Rapid HIV Testing
3rd Monday of the month

Bring your gently used children's coats to our Nu2u shop after Labor Day and help us keep our clients' children warm this winter.

Back to School Program Under Way

Believing that every child deserves a perfect start to a school year, TWC provides basic school supplies to the children of our clients each year. Last year the program provided school supplies and backpacks to 1100+ children and this year, 2043 children in 1026 families were invited. Responses are now being processed. And two wonderful volunteers, Anne Brandt and Diane Peloso, are sorting supplies according to grade level and getting ready for distribution which will start August 10th.



Especially needed this year is backpacks but any donation will help boost the confidence of a child. Little yellow school buses are stationed at local businesses and churches where school supplies can be dropped off. To make a monetary donation, go to the TWC website and click on donation. Your donation will be charged to your account.

From the Director ... Kathy



This is a time of the year that is so gratifying to all of us at Together We Cope. It's the season we help hundreds of parents to equip their students for a return to the classroom. It prompts all of us to recall the excitement of getting ready for school in the fall – remember your new shoes and all those shiny new school supplies? I wonder how many of you are old enough to remember covering your textbooks in brown grocery bag paper!

This year, through the generosity of our partners and donors, we will provide packages of school supplies to at least 1,500 south suburban children. Focus on the family is our mission here, and assisting parents to get their youngsters motivated for a new year of learning is one of our happiest endeavors. We know all parents want a good education for their children in order to equip them for the challenges of life, and we stand ready to help those families whose temporary financial crises might get in the way of this year's back-to-school plans.

Speaking of partners, one of our most loyal

Back to School Partner Locations

A.J. Smith Bank
Annunciation Byzantine Church
Archer Bank
Bettenhausen Dodge
Bettenhausen Jeep
Carmax
Edward Jones Investments
First Midwest Bank
Oak Forest Park District
Palos Heights Park District
Palos Hills Community Center
St. Julie Billiard Church
Tinley Park Library
Walgreens
Zion Lutheran Church



supporters launches a special event this month to benefit TWC. Rock Bottom Brewery of Orland Park hosts a fundraiser on Thursday, Aug. 11 in which they will offer a special brew in our honor. For \$5 customers can taste this new beer in a take-home glass. (Details of this event are contained elsewhere in this newsletter.) Rock Bottom treats many of our client families to a free Easter brunch at its restaurant each spring, and we are so grateful for their continued support of our efforts.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you at our annual Pasta Extravaganza on Wednesday, Sept. 14 at Orland Chateau in Orland Park. (Details of this event also are contained in this newsletter.) This is always a good time for old friends to gather for good food, great conversation and a little horse racing fun – not to mention the financial benefit to TWC to help us continue aiding local families facing big challenges in their lives.

As we move out of the summer months and into the crisp days of autumn, we at Together We Cope wish you and your loved ones all the best of the new season upon us. We value the support and friendship you have shown to us over the years. Our clients do not know who you are, but they give silent thanks every day for the strangers who fund Together We Cope's work in our south suburban communities.

More than a bag of groceries

It happens that quickly

The happy family of six was financially secure and living comfortably. Both parents worked, the older children excelled in high school and earned college scholarships. They carried a mortgage on their home, but put money into their "rainy day" fund every month. They always found the time and funds to support local charities.

So how is it these parents knocked on the door at Together We Cope one day this summer with the modest request for one bag of food to feed their children?

What happened to this family in just 24 months is another story from "The Recession That Lingers." The federal government says the recession is over and the nation's economic recovery is under way. But for many average Americans hit hard by this downturn, their lifestyle continues to deteriorate.

Dad and his eldest son were skilled tradesmen – until the bottom fell out of the construction industry and both were laid off. Unemployment compensation checks kept the family afloat, and Mom retained her full-time job. Then, suddenly, their boat began taking on water.

Unemployment compensation benefits ran out, but Dad and son still were not called back to work. Mom was injured at work and sent home. She qualified for workmen's compensation, but there was a delay in processing the claim. The family quickly exhausted the

savings so carefully set aside in previous years, and borrowed funds from family members in order to keep their home. One student in the family found part-time summer work, but the pay was meager.

Basically at zero income, the family finally came to Together We Cope. Then we did what we do best: Plug the client into all the resources at our command.

We immediately packed six bags of food and scheduled another food pickup for the next month.

Because we were in the midst of our annual Back to School drive, we supplied three of the family's students with school supplies. We issued the family a clothing voucher for our resale shop. We used our Salvation Army relationship to obtain funds to pay the family's ComEd bill, and linked them to other food programs in the region. We helped Mom complete an online application for food stamps. We directed Dad and his son to job training programs as they consider career changes.

Mom looked a little dazed. "We thought we'd get a bag of groceries. We never expected to be embraced like this. We feel like we've all been hugged," she said with a big smile.

Mark your Calendar! Thursday, August 11th

Meet us at Rock Bottom Brewery

A new fundraiser! Rock Bottom Brewery of Orland Park is hosting an event benefiting Together We Cope. They are brewing our very own beer which will be sold for \$5 each in Together We Cope take home pint glasses. Your support will allow TWC to continue its mission of assisting families in the southwest region.

Do you have an iPad2 yet??? Raffle tickets are now being sold for (5) tickets for \$20. The drawing will take place that night at Rock Bottom. Winner need not be present. Call Tina or Kerry at the TWC office for tickets.

Don't miss the silent auction baskets at this event!

You don't need an admission ticket, just come on over to Rock Bottom between 6pm and 9pm. 16156 S. LaGrange Rd. Orland Park. See you there.



'Thank You' to everyone who helped to make the TWC Annual Golf Outing a success!

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The Affinity Group Partners

**Eagle Sponsor
and Lunch Sponsor**
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We are grateful to our donors, golfers and our amazing volunteers as well as the following sponsors:

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Ed Zabrocki, Mayor,
Village of Tinley Park

Our pantry shelves need filling

Together We Cope feeds more than 50 families each day with groceries we purchase at a discount from the Greater Chicago Food Depository, or that we receive from local food drives and individual donors. Under normal circumstances, this is enough food to meet the needs of south suburban residents who seek assistance from TWC. But these days are not the norm.

"I've never seen our food supply so low in all the years I've been here," said Carol Ettema, director of food pantry services for TWC. "It's a combination of greater demand for our services, and the current higher cost of food. We give our clients whatever we have on hand the day they come to us, but in recent weeks our shelves are nearly bare of the staple items that normally fill the grocery bags we give to local families in need." Ettema said there is special need for canned soup, peanut butter and jelly, pasta and cereal.

Ettema said there are three ways people can help: donate food, donate money to be used for food purchase, or donate time volunteering at the Greater Chicago Food Depository. Volunteer hours at the depository that are given in the name of TWC earn points that can be used to purchase food for our pantry.

Together We Cope links to other agencies in new Hub program

The Hub, the new referral system for the south and southwest suburbs, streamlines and expedites the process of connecting people with the services they need. Instead of handing clients a list of places where they might seek further help beyond what TWC can give them, we find precisely the right agency for their need and make the contact for them.

This new venture is made possible by the JP Morgan Chase Foundation. Along with partners Ford Heights Community Service Organization, Institute for Consumer Credit Education and United Way, TWC is building a large data base to better expand the reach of its services. "Now we can tap into many other regional sources to further serve our existing clients, as well as new clients who might find us via the Hub," said Ann Rodgers, Hub coordinator.



New Night!

Pasta Extravaganza

Dinner buffet, beer wine & pop included

Orland Chateau
14500 S. LaGrange Road
Orland Park

Wednesday
September 14, 2011
6:00 pm Dinner
7:00 pm Horse Races



That's right!

Place your bets on your favorite horse. We will have six photographed horse races for your entertainment.

Name your horse for \$50! Reservations are now being taken by Karen.

Example: **Bubble Gum**
Won't rise to occasion. Has tendency to stick to the rail.

Adults \$25
Children \$ 5
(ages 3 to 12)

Call Karen for tickets or to
name a horse. 708-633-5040

Volunteer
you should know!

Kerry Nolan



For 22-year-old Kerry Nolan of Oak Forest, it is easy to get passionate about her volunteer work at Together We Cope this summer.

"I like this work. It's easy to get invested here, because I can see so clearly how much Together We Cope can benefit the harder I work at my fundraising duties," she said.

Kerry is performing an unpaid internship at TWC as part of her college graduation requirements. She earned her degree in recreation management from Illinois State University this spring, and will receive her diploma at the completion of her 12-week internship. "I'm so excited about getting my degree in the mail, I just can't wait to see it," she said with a big smile. Kerry's internship is in the marketing and fundraising department of TWC. She has assisted with all fundraising efforts this summer, including TWC's major back-to-school program to equip youngsters with needed school supplies. "It's so cool to see people come in supporting events like this one, knowing as I do now what that money can do for TWC's work," she said.

With a degree that qualifies her to do recreation management or event planning, Kerry now is considering the possibility of a career with a nonprofit. "Majoring in fun" is how some students in the program describe the college work, and Kerry sees how that can apply to making fundraising fun for a community to do together. "It's easy to get passionate about my

work at Together We Cope. I like the link there is between planning fun events and earning money for a nonprofit to continue its work," she said.

Kerry has learned how to work with limited funds. "It certainly is a challenge to do this work on a tight budget, and that makes you work all the harder to accomplish something," she said.

A graduate of Andrew High School in Tinley Park, Kerry grew up in Orland Hills. Her mother, Mary, introduced her to Together We Cope, as mom has worked as a volunteer for several TWC fundraisers.

Our sincere sympathy

TWC lost one of its valued volunteers recently, Mary Wodziak. Mary, who volunteered at TWC over the last five years, was often the first one in, and regularly stayed late if there was still work to be done in the food pantry. Our condolences to her family.

She will be missed.



Mary Wodziak



Together We Cope Bridging the Gap

Together We Cope
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Editor
Mary Ann Baer

**11th Annual MetLife Race
Around the World
Duathlon a Great Success!**

The race was held on June 26, 2011 in Tinley Park. The event sold out at 650 participants, each completing a two mile run, an 11-mile bike ride and another two-mile run throughout Tinley Park.



Gil Hannon, the race's founder and director, has decided, once again, to donate the proceeds to Together We Cope. He expects the donation to be near \$20,000! More than 50 volunteers helped with registration, refreshments and guiding the racers along their path. Thanks to everyone.

Get the latest news

Together We Cope has been using a great e-marketing tool called **IContact**. Sometimes we are extremely low on a particular item in the food pantry or we have a special need for a specific family. Using IContact we can instantly alert everyone on our IContact list of our need. We have had immediate results the last few times. If you would like to be added to our list, please email your request to Karen Roman at kroman@togetherwecope.org.

Volunteer Picnic

The TWC picnic is scheduled for Sun. August 21st from Noon to 5pm at El Morro Park in Oak Forest.



Volunteers RSVP to Cate by Aug. 5th. Bring your chairs, blankets and enjoy games, brats, Italian sausage and hot dogs.

**Community Financial
Services Program**



This program provides the tools and education needed to guide each client to a more self-sufficient lifestyle. Partners in this program are Together We Cope, South Suburban PADS, National Able Network and Harris Bank.

After assessing each client's unique situation, the case manager, along with the client, sets goals and a plan of action. Weekly meetings with the case manager help in keeping the client on track. Clients are expected to attend all (3) Harris Bank Seminars addressing budgeting, managing credit and building assets.

The incentives go beyond peace of mind and the opportunity to find better employment. Clients completing all aspects of the program receive a \$5 gift card to Nu2u, TWC's resale shop, and after attending all three seminars, a \$20 gas card. Lastly, upon completion of the entire program, the client receives a \$20 K-Mart gift card.

**Meaghan Daugherty and
BreAnna Kenney
raise funds for
Together We Cope**



Meaghan Daugherty, BreAnna Kenney and Hanah Remes got up early Saturday, June 25th to raise money for Together We Cope by walking in the Greater Chicago Food Depository's 5K Hunger Walk.