



Together We Cope . Bridging the Gap

708-633-5040

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February 2011

We're celebrating our
30th anniversary
of service to the community
A Red Carpet Event

Friday, February 24, 2012
7:00 p.m.
Odyssey Country Club
Tinley Park

A diamond necklace, Disney World passes, a Florida condo vacation, airline tickets – these could be yours at Together We Cope's annual dinner dance and auction Friday, Feb. 24 at Odyssey Country Club in Tinley Park.

TWC celebrates its 30th anniversary this year and plans are under way for a special party. As always, there will be a fabulous buffet dinner, music and dancing. The Grand Raffle this year features a first prize of \$1,000, second prize of a diamond love knot pendant necklace, and third prize of a 32-inch HD TV. Tickets are five for \$20.

Another raffle this year lets guests purchase glass bead bracelets for \$20, which gives them a chance at a drawing for a diamond bracelet. The glass bead bracelets are made by residents of Trinity Services in Will County, and purchased by longtime volunteers John and Pat Slack for donation to TWC's dinner dance.

Many gift baskets and gift certificates will be featured in the silent auction during the evening. Live auction items include a week's stay in a Florida condominium, four "park hopper" passes to Disney World and two Southwest Airlines tickets for any city to which the airline flies.

Information on tickets, event sponsorships or program ads is available from Karen Moran at kmoran@togetherwecope.org or at www.togetherwecope.org.

Call Karen or Tina now! 708-633-5040
kmoran@togetherwecope.org

From the Director... Kathy

When heroes come forward



Witnessing the generosity of Americans toward strangers is a gratifying part of this work we do at Together We Cope. Residents of our local communities truly are our partners in all of our programs, from organizing food drives in their neighborhoods to buying tickets to our fundraisers.

America has been described time and again as the most generous country on earth, both in government aid and private giving. Americans respond with amazing generosity to disasters anywhere in the world. One French visitor to our country wrote an article about this. "Americans are incredibly generous, compassionate and considerate. This is the land of volunteerism, of fundraising and of giving to those who are less fortunate," the visitor said.

We certainly saw that spirit in action at Together We Cope during this past holiday season. Incredible numbers of people gave food and checks, or adopted children in our Christmas program. And all this happened in what is being depicted as the worst economy in decades.

So many heroes came forward this holiday, even to the point of families doing less for themselves at Christmas in order to reach out and help others. We met so many people who seemed to understand the pain endured by those who've lost their jobs, their homes, and their financial security. We saw a lot of old friends as they came into the office with donations, and we made some new friends.

Mark White of MillerCoors and Jim Hayes of Hayes Beer Distributing, for example, surprised us in December with the offer to provide groceries for a complete holiday meal for 200 of our client families. Mark and Jim, along with some of their employees, personally handed out nylon tote bags filled to the brim with fresh food one evening. The men were so kind, and treated people with such dignity and compassion, that we feel blessed to have these new friends.

Giving anonymously provides us with some satisfaction, but actually seeing the surprise and gratitude on the faces of those we help is a special experience. For all those who don't witness that moment, I offer you this glimpse of an elderly couple at the door of our food pantry one cold night in December. The grocery bags are pre-packed with nonperishables, but as our clients leave we offer to share with them some of the meat or poultry we have on hand on any given day. "Do you like lamb," our pantry worker asked the couple. "Lamb! Oh my goodness, we love lamb," said the wife. Then she put her arms around her husband and said, "We're going to have lamb this Christmas! Lamb! It's been so long since we've had that."

It's the little miracles that happen when heroes come forward.

TWC Events

TWC Board Meeting

March 12, 2012
May 14, 2012

Mardi Gras After Hours

Chamber Event at TWC
Tuesday, February 7, 2012

Visit our web site
www.togetherwecope.org

TWC Dinner/Silent Auction

“A Red Carpet Event”
Odyssey Country Club
Friday, February 24, 2012

TWC Annual Golf Outing

Wednesday, June 6, 2012
Odyssey Country Club

Comings and Goings

We welcome Robert Smith of Mokena, a new member of the Together We Cope board of directors, and look forward to working with him.

At the same time, we are deeply saddened by the departures of two loyal TWC volunteers who died recently. We extend our sympathy to the families of Earl DeVries of Tinley Park, and Mary Warchal of Burbank.

More than a bag of groceries

All she wanted was an address...

It was Christmas week when hospital employees noticed the car in the parking lot. It was there every night, and there were two little girls and an elderly disabled man in the back seat. A man and a woman dozed in the front seat. The car disappeared for periods of time during the day, but it always returned in the evening.

To this family, a hospital parking lot seemed like a safe place for the night. It was well lit, there were people coming and going, and there was the constant presence of a security force. And, since the hospital was somewhat of a public facility, they could slip inside to use the restrooms and then buy milk and doughnuts from the employee cafeteria for breakfast.

So the family of five, recently evicted from their home in a foreclosure action, began living in their car and pulled into the safe parking lot each night. They needed to care for their daughters, ages 2 and 5, and Mom's disabled father. Then the car battery died and they were no longer mobile. Dad worked one day a week in a seasonal job but now couldn't even get to that job. They were actually relieved when a security guard tapped on the window and began asking questions. Once they told their story, hospital officials contacted Together We Cope and another local organization. They were given a hot meal, and the youngsters were asked what they wanted for Christmas.

Surprisingly, the 5 year old replied: “I want an address.” Perhaps she'd seen her family turned down for assistance because they didn't have an address to put on an application form. The family was placed in a hotel for Christmas week, and Together We Cope provided immediate assistance with groceries, clothing and some employment resources. Just wrapping up its annual Adopt-a-Child Christmas gift program, TWC was able to put together toys and clothing for the little girls to brighten the holiday.

“There are several issues confronting this family,” said a TWC case manager. “We've seen this pattern often in this current economy, job loss leading to home loss and a family thrown into poverty. It takes time to get a family back to self-sufficiency.”

TWC continues to work with the family on employment and housing issues. Giving them an address is critical to the wellbeing of the children, as that will allow them to attend a local school and enjoy amenities like parks, library, and youth activities.

“That a 5-year-old should want an address for Christmas tells us something about what's going on in our society,” one TWC staffer commented.



Nu2u: The ultimate recycler

Together We Cope is the ultimate recycler, breathing new life into everything from used wedding gowns to a vintage wringer washing machine.

Proving the old adage that one man's refuse is another man's treasure, shoppers at TWC's Nu2u resale store find innovative uses for the used items donated to the agency. The bridal gowns are either worn at another wedding, or disassembled so lace and beads can be used by crafters. The vintage washing machine was purchased to be used as an ice chest in someone's basement bar.



Volunteer Pat Slack sorts through donations at the back door of the Nu2u resale shop.

“It's always an adventure sorting through the bags of donated items,” said store manager Pat Hosman. “People hang on to the most interesting things for many years, then maybe clean house one day and fill a pickup truck with their assorted treasures. But sometimes brand new things come in, especially after Christmas when people bring in gifts they don't need, and then we become re-gifters.”

Some of those “interesting things” to end up on Nu2u shelves include vintage clothing and handbags, collectible figurines, estate jewelry, handmade afghans and even an entire house full of furniture. “Sometimes, when grandparents pass on, the family cleans out the house and sends everything to us,” Hosman said. “You can find some nice antiques that way.”

Nu2u is open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; on Thursday from 2 to 7 p.m.; and on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Nu2u is a major source of revenue for Together We Cope, with money generated by the sale of donated goods used to support programs that benefit thousands of south suburban residents who find themselves in a temporary crisis.



Pat Hosman, Nu2u store manager, shifts some of the boxes of recent donations to the shop.

'Sharing' angels kept the shelves stocked

"In all my years here, I've never seen such generous giving by the people in this region," said Carol Ettema, food pantry director at Together We Cope as she made a report recently on pantry operations over the holiday season.

Leading off the list is a major supporter of our pantry, Project Share. This is a joint effort of the SouthtownStar newspaper and Walt's Foods. Each year at Christmas, Project Share provides groceries for a complete holiday meal for hundreds of our client families. This year Project Share followed up after Christmas with a generous donation of money that will keep our shelves stocked during January and February, traditionally difficult months for pantry operations.

Then there were high school clubs conducting food drives among the student body, office workers gathering groceries from their colleagues, churches collecting canned goods during weekend services –



even some residents knocking on doors in their neighborhoods asking for nonperishable food donations. A number of Scout troops organized neighborhood food drives to benefit TWC, and some children turned their birthday parties into food collections for our pantry.

In our last newsletter we enclosed an envelope for our "\$20 Stretch Campaign," explaining that TWC could make a \$20 bill stretch really far by using it to purchase food at a discount from the Greater Chicago Food Depository, of which TWC is a member. We received so many \$20 checks after that campaign that we are able to purchase extra food during this winter season.

And then there were the in-house angels, the many volunteers who show up each day to unload the trucks, stock the shelves and pack the grocery bags.

We are very grateful for the generosity of our neighbors in the south suburban region.

*It's a Mardi Gras party!
for local chambers*

Members of four area chambers of commerce will be our guests when Together We Cope and BMO Harris Bank host the annual Mardi Gras "Business After Hours" event at TWC on Tuesday, Feb. 7.



The business networking night is for local business people affiliated with the Tinley Park, Orland Park, Oak Forest-Crestwood and Oak Lawn chambers of commerce. The party is from 5 to 8 p.m. and features great food and music.

"This event celebrates our diverse partnerships with the south suburban business community," said Kathryn Straniero, executive director of TWC. Businesses interested in participating can contact their local chamber of commerce or Karen Moran at kmoran@togetherwecope.org.

*Volunteering brings
an economic lesson*

Mary Nolan

Mary Nolan is learning some interesting things about the U.S. economy in her volunteer job at Together We Cope.

"There are so many people who need help right now, so many people struggling," the Orland Hills resident observes. "At the same time, it's overwhelming to see how many people help out their neighbors in this bad economy, donating everything from food and clothes to sponsoring children for Christmas gifts."

She finds it amazing that people are so generous in such hard times. "I think people are starting to get jobs again, and maybe having lived through this bad economy has sort of shifted their focus. Some may have used Together We Cope's services in these hard times, or agencies like TWC, so now they appreciate giving more."



Mary, who plays a major role in managing TWC's Adopt-a-Child Christmas program, was touched especially by some families invited to receive gifts for their children that declined the offer. "Some said they didn't need the help this year, and wanted to give their spot to someone else who needed it more," she said. "I found that very interesting, the giving feeling all around."

Mary donated Christmas gifts in the Adopt-a-Child program for many years before coming to volunteer at TWC. "I always thought it was a good thing to teach my kids," she said. "I actually thought that program was all that TWC did, but then when I decided to do some volunteer work here I learned about all the other programs Together We Cope runs. I'm just amazed at the number of things TWC does, especially in such small square footage! And the people here are just awesome, the things they are capable of doing."

A former real estate appraiser for 15 years, Mary and her husband Sean are the parents of three children (Kaitlyn, 24, Kerry, 22, and Sean, 16), all of whom have done volunteer work for TWC. Sean has put in more than 100 hours, while Kerry did an internship with TWC before coming to work here in the fundraising and marketing department.

"I enjoy meeting our clients, and some of them make a real impression on me," Mary said. "Once, when we were distributing backpacks and school supplies to children, a little boy came up to me with his backpack and said, 'This is so perfect, it's like you know me!' That really touched me."

On another occasion, a woman picked up three bags of Christmas gifts being donated to her children by TWC, and Mary learned the woman was travelling by bus. "She smiled and said it was no problem, she was just so grateful for the help," Mary recalls.

"Making a difference in someone's life is a huge part of volunteering at Together We Cope," she said.

A volunteer you should know

Return Service Requested

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Editor
Margaret Selzner
Design
Mary Ann Baer

Mission

Together We Cope bridges the gap for Southland residents in temporary crisis by providing food, shelter, clothing and referrals, empowering them to return to self-sufficiency.

A great giving season

Together We Cope has just wrapped up an amazing holiday giving season, with unprecedented numbers of people stepping up to be our partners in various Christmas programs.

Nearly 1,300 youngsters received Christmas presents in our Adopt-a-Child program this year. Our many community sponsors lined up long before the holidays with generous hearts and fulfilled every child's wishes. For the first time we simply ran out of room to store the gifts in our office, and so we send a special thanks to Joe Esposito who generously provided us with extra storage space during this very busy season.

Many youngsters marched in the annual Tinley Park Toyland parade in December, each bearing a new toy they donated to our agency. Several local schools conducted pajama drives to benefit us, surprising us with hundreds of pajamas in all sizes and colors.



Gifts from the Heart

Both the toys and the pajamas helped us brighten the holidays for more children who came to our attention later in the season.

The story was the same in the food pantry, where many unexpected food drives by community residents kept our shelves fully stocked during this busiest of our seasons. MillerCoors and Hayes Beer Distributing Company added to this when they provided

groceries for a full holiday dinner to 200 of our clients.

Our partners Beta Beta Gamma, an educators service society, again conducted the "Gifts from the Heart" program at Zion Lutheran Church in Tinley Park. Dozens of children from our client families created homemade presents for their loved ones with the guidance and supplies provided by the teachers.

More than 150 of our wonderful volunteers were honored during our annual Volunteer Holiday Party, this year at Bartolini's Restaurant in Midlothian. The wisdom and experience they bring to our agency is priceless.

There were restaurants that reached out to us to offer free meals to our clients, churches and schools that collected food and money for us, and residents who simply put a check in the mail and trusted us to put it to good use.

Thanks to our many partners in our Southland communities, we enjoyed one of the happiest of holiday seasons this year.



Toyland Parade

Thank You