



# Together We Cope . Bridging the Gap

708-633-5040

Volume 32

August 2013

## **TWC** **Happenings**

*Back to School Distribution*  
August 6, 7 & 8, 2013

*TWC Volunteer Picnic*  
Sunday, August 25, 2013

*TWC & Nu2u Closed*  
Labor Day September 2, 2013

*Pasta Extravaganza*  
Orland Chateau  
Wednesday, September 18, 2013

*Alden Block Party*  
Saturday, September 28, 2013

*Oak Forest Awareness Fair*  
Saturday, October 19, 2013

*Midlothian Health Fair*  
October 5, 2013

*Orland Park Community Expo*  
Saturday, October 19, 2013

### **Save the Date!**

**TWC Dinner Dance**  
Friday, March 7, 2014

**TWC Golf Outing**  
Wednesday, June 4, 2014

*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 in style!*

The amazing generosity of Together We Cope supporters made this year's Back to School campaign a resounding success! More than 100 donors sent checks to us to finance the new approach we've made this year to the annual campaign.

As a result, we were able to purchase boxed sets of school supplies from an outside vendor for all of the children in our program this year. The boxes are packed with supplies appropriate for each grade level.

Now we are seeking donation of backpacks, so that each child in our program can receive a new backpack as well as the school supplies during distribution in August. TWC collection boxes, shaped like little yellow school buses, are out at 22 locations in the community now. Anyone interested in donating backpacks can do so at a collection box, or at our office located at 17010 South Oak Park Avenue in downtown Tinley Park. Donations also can be made at [www.togetherwecope.org](http://www.togetherwecope.org) or with Tina Kessens at 708-633-5040.



Standing in front of cartons of boxed school supplies for this year's Back to School campaign are Karen Roman (left), and Tina Kessens.

## *From the Director ... Kathy*

### **We celebrate a season of partners**



Summer is a very busy season for us at Together We Cope, taking advantage of sunny days to get lots of things done. It's also a season we celebrate partnerships with many wonderful people who work with us in our mission to help families in need.

You can read about some of our partners in this newsletter. For example, you can find a list of partners who sponsored our annual golf outing this year, making it a sell-out event on a gorgeous summer day at the Odyssey Country Club. And here's something exciting: Read about a bridal shop owner who donated to us hundreds of high-couture gowns, and another donor who let us use a vacant store in Tinley Park for a low-cost bridal gown sale that was a big success and will fund many of our client programs this season. One bride-to-be remarked: "I never thought that the money I spend on a bridal gown would then be used to buy food for families in need! I'll wear this dress very proudly." Another bride-to-be said

tearfully: "I never could have afforded such a beautiful wedding dress if it wasn't for Together We Cope."

Still more partners joined us in our annual Back to School campaign, helping us to outfit more than 1,300 children in need with brand new backpacks and school supplies for their return to the classroom this month. You'll also find an article about the partner who gave us a suite of offices to help us stretch our space a bit. Another sponsor paid for painting and new carpet at that new location. A duathlon was run to benefit us, a post office food drive brought in literally tons of food to our pantry.

It brings to mind the poet John Donne's wise words: No man is an island. We succeed in our work at Together We Cope because we join hands with our neighbors to lift up those in need. We are constantly amazed by the numbers of people who help us out, and the creative ways they find to support our client programs. Whenever we ask, they smile and say "yes."

Just as having a partner or a good friend is a wonderful way to go through life, having these partners is a terrific way to operate a nonprofit. We are so grateful for all of you!

# More than a bag of groceries

## Giving a mother the ultimate gift: time with her son

At 46, Marina has become the kind of health care professional who patients love. She has a skillful, compassionate touch that makes a huge difference to those who are sick or injured – people who are truly vulnerable. But one grateful patient accidentally cost Marina her job.

The patient gave Marina a thank-you card, a kind gesture. Although Marina didn't know it, the patient also had tucked \$50 inside the envelope. When the patient went to another appointment at the hospital that day, she mentioned the gift to one of the other employees. Soon Marina was out of a job for violating the hospital's ethics code, which prohibits staff from accepting gifts.

"She lost her job for being nice," said Tina Hennis, client services manager at Together We Cope.

Losing a job is always hard, but Marina faced an even tougher challenge at home. Her 29-year-old son had leukemia. Bedridden and very close to the end of his young life, he was spending his days on the sofa in the family's apartment. Marina was grateful that she had relatives across the hall willing to spend time with him and help out the best they could. So was her 23-year-old daughter who, despite the grief of having a brother with a fatal illness, was trying to find a job.

Unemployment brought Marina the chance to be with her son. But while she was grateful to have time with him, the household could not function without her income. Marina found part-time work through temporary staffing. She also filed for unemployment – money that would eventually enable her to pay her bills while spending as much time as possible with her son as he went into hospice.

To bridge the gap she turned to Together We Cope, which provided rent money to help Marina over the hurdle until unemployment funds came in. She also received groceries from the food pantry, reflecting TWC's belief that facing life's toughest challenges is more manageable when there's food in the kitchen and everyone has had a good meal.

The agency also reached out to Marina's daughter, providing an employment packet that includes lists of suitable jobs in the south suburban region and some resources to help write a solid resume. With a clothing voucher for TWC's resale shop, her daughter was able to add a professional touch to her wardrobe to make job hunting easier.

For Marina, TWC's help has enabled her to support her family in all the ways a mother is called upon to do: keeping a roof over their heads, supporting her daughter's job search and – most importantly – being there for her son at the end of his life.

"You are giving me the biggest gift," she told her TWC case worker. "At this point, there is nothing I want more than time with my son."



## Lucky brides find 'dream dresses' at TWC event

More than 100 brides-to-be found the wedding gowns of their dreams during Together We Cope's bridal event in July.

TWC received hundreds of bridal and bridesmaid dresses in a generous donation from Eva's Bridal in Oak Lawn, and offered 700 of the gowns for sale in a special event at a Tinley Park storefront donated by another generous patron. Bridal gowns were offered for \$75, and bridesmaid dresses for \$50. They were samples or never-worn gowns, and all were in excellent condition – some high-couture gowns featured lace handmade in Italy and France.

"I just can't believe I found the exact dress I imagined wearing on my wedding day," said one very happy bride-to-be. "And it's only \$75. I'll probably pay more money for my underwear that day!"

TWC plans a follow-up sale of these gowns at a later date.

## All aboard for a sell-out golf outing!



Our "Luau on the Links" golf outing set a record this year, with a maximum capacity 140 golfers coming out to the Odyssey Country Club June 5 to support Together We Cope. There were the usual fun and hijinks on the links, as well as a delicious buffet dinner to end the day. Together We Cope is grateful to all of the sponsors and golfers who made our event a big success.

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# Pasta Extravaganza

## Dinner buffet, beer, wine & pop included

**Orland Chateau**  
 14500 S. LaGrange Road  
 Orland Park



**That's right!**

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

**Wednesday**  
**September 18, 2013**  
**6:00 pm Dinner**  
**7:00 pm Horse Races**

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

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

### Name your horse!

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

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

## 'Stamp out Hunger' sets a record

Warm weather, kind hearts and many volunteers combined to set a new record for the annual "Stamp out Hunger" post office food drive in Tinley Park benefiting Together We Cope.

Bob Johnston, a U.S. Post Office letter carrier and member of food drive sponsor National Association of Letter Carriers, said a record 43,344 pounds of food was collected in Tinley Park in May by letter carriers and TWC volunteers who picked up the food items left by Tinley Park residents on their doorsteps for the drive.

TWC has received food from the "Stamp out Hunger" campaign since 1997. The first drive brought in 9,300 pounds of food. Sixteen years (and many tons of food) later, the drive remains a major donation to TWC.



Len Schaafsma (at right), TWC board member and volunteer, helps unload donations from the annual post office food drive

## Volunteer Spotlight

In this edition of our newsletter, we highlight five wonderful volunteers who lend their hands – and their hearts – to keep Together We Cope running smoothly day after day. They are Rich Faber, Jean Milligan, Valerie Chudy, Mary Hannon and Ed Hill. Thank you for your efforts!



**Rich Faber** of Tinley Park came to TWC four years ago with his son, Josh, who picked TWC for his community service hours at Andrew High School. "I volunteered with him in the food pantry, and then stayed on," said the retired U.S. Treasury manager for the IRS. His older son, Rich Jr., also has lent a hand. "Friends are astounded to learn the number of people we serve, and it's doubled since I've been here," Rich said. "I feel like I'm doing some small part to help."



**Valerie Chudy** of Orland Park and **Mary Hannon** of Tinley Park have a talent for turning donations into eye-catching gift baskets that raise much needed funds for TWC. "You start with a couple of donated margarita glasses, and the next thing you know, you have a theme," said Valerie, who began crafting baskets six years ago.

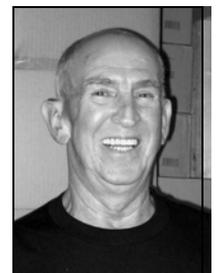
Mary joined her two years ago, and anyone who's attended TWC's annual dinner dance, golf outing or pasta dinner has seen their work, including the popular six-foot-tall candy tower decorated with tiny stuffed animals. "We love the creativity," Mary said. "We're always bouncing ideas off each other."



**Jean Milligan** of Posen has been sorting donated clothing at TWC for six years. She first came to TWC with a longtime friend who also volunteered. Jean is part of the team that helps keep the racks stocked with terrific donations – no small task at Nu2u, the popular resale shop. "I enjoy the people, and I enjoy the work," said Jean. "I get satisfaction out of the work I do because I know I'm helping an organization that helps so many people in so many different ways."



**Ed Hill** of Midlothian can be found at the food pantry nearly every day of the week. Retired from AT&T and a former member of IBEW Local 134, he keeps food moving: driving the trucks that pick up donations, filling pantry shelves, and even taking out-of-date produce to local farms to feed livestock. After four years of volunteering, Ed is still moved by TWC's mission. "I go home feeling proud that I helped feed 60 families that day," he said.





**Together We Cope Bridging the Gap**

17010 S. Oak Park Ave.  
Tinley Park, IL 60477

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**Tinley Duathlon again benefits TWC**

Together We Cope is grateful to the extended Hannon family for once again hosting the Race Around the World Duathlon in Tinley Park in June, and once again making a substantial donation to our agency from proceeds of the race.

The duathlon was started in 2001 and has grown bigger each year. The event has generated more than \$80,000 for TWC over the years, and the Hannon family was given special recognition honors earlier this year at TWC's annual dinner dance.

The duathlon consists of a two-mile run, 11-mile bike ride and another two-mile run all directed through scenic Tinley Park and the surrounding Forest Preserve area.



Karen Moran, TWC fundraising coordinator, takes the microphone from Gil Hannon to thank the Hannon family and all of the racers in this year's Race Around the World Duathlon.

**Are you feelin' lucky?**

The raffle tickets enclosed in our newsletter this issue could win you a 55-inch LCD HDTV! The tickets, priced at five for \$20 or \$5 apiece, should be returned in the enclosed envelope ahead of TWC's annual Pasta Extravaganza on Sept. 18. They also can be dropped off at TWC, 17010 South Oak Park Avenue in Tinley Park. The winning ticket will be drawn during the pasta dinner at the Orland Chateau in Orland Park.



**We're on the move!**

We are in the process of renovating a suite of offices donated to us recently by Raymond and Linda Busch. The offices, at 17728 Oak Park Avenue in Tinley Park, are located just seven blocks south of our main building. The new offices will house some of our administrative functions and, hopefully, free up more space at our main building for important client services such as the food pantry and resale shop.

Another generous patron of Together We Cope provided painting and new carpeting for these offices, giving us a fresh and updated environment at this second location. We expect to move into the new offices later this summer.

**Volunteer Picnic – rain or shine!**

The rain didn't dampen spirits at last summer's Volunteer Picnic, and it won't get in the way of this year's fun. Cate Dietz, volunteer coordinator, and Gordon Collins, food pantry manager, donned their rain jackets last year and carried on at the annual summer event that honors the nearly 200 area residents who donate their time and expertise to Together We Cope. This year's picnic is Sunday, Aug. 25 at El Morro Park in Oak Forest from noon to 4 p.m. by invitation. Further information is with Dietz at 708-633-5040.

