



Together We Cope . Bridging the Gap

708-633-5040

Volume 31

May 2013

TWC Happenings

Next TWC Board Meetings
Mon. May 13, 2013
Mon. July 8, 2013

U.S. Post Office Food Drive Benefiting TWC
Sat. May 11, 2013

TWC Ninth Golf Outing
Odyssey Country Club
Shot Gun Start 11:30 am
Wed. June 5, 2013

Greater Chicago Food Depository Hunger Walk
Soldier Field
Sat. June 29, 2013

Race Around the World Duathlon
Proceeds benefit TWC
Sun. June 23, 2013

OPAMA Caribbean Block Party Pluck a Duck Fundraiser
Sun. July 21, 2013

TWC Volunteer Picnic
El Morro Park
Sun. August 25, 2013

Pasta Dinner & Night at the Races
Wed. September 18
Orland Chateau

From the Director ... Kathy



They'd rather be working

There's no doubt in my mind that the families we help at Together We Cope would rather not be in crisis mode.

They'd rather be working than trying to stretch hopelessly thin unemployment compensation checks to cover

their bills. They'd rather be back in their own homes instead of living with relatives or, worse, in their cars. They'd rather be healthy than trying to pay for costly prescription medicines. They'd rather take their families out to dinner at a nice restaurant than heat up the leftovers of yesterday's paltry meal. They'd rather buy new shoes for their children than accept donation of used ones.

That's what comes to my mind as I watch the ongoing battle in our Congress about tax hikes versus spending cuts. Some days it seems like the argument boils down to protests about taxing those who have, in order to give to those who have not. I believe that is too simplistic an explanation for what is really happening in our south suburbs during this soft economy.

They'd rather be working. That is what we hear over and over again. As Together We Cope's client services manager, Tina Hennis, explains in the "Many faces of need" article in

this edition of our newsletter, "The great majority of problems are due to unemployment and underemployment."

I don't believe we've seen many clients who'd rather be on assistance than working for a living. Simply put, working pays better than any form of assistance.

The client featured in this edition's "More than a bag of groceries" column describes loss of a paycheck: "The job, any job, means everything. Without that, I just have nothing, nothing. I just have no way to get started again."

The experts tell us that our national unemployment count does not include people who have just stopped looking for work. They are discouraged and without hope. Their dreams have been dashed. It's very probable that you've been served your hamburger at the fast food restaurant at least once by someone with a master's degree. It's likely the coffee you pick up at the drive-thru window was made by a former teacher or accountant or newspaper reporter.

They'd rather be working, so they take any job available just to keep going. They don't want a handout, they want a job. They want some hope that things will get better. Unfortunately, Congress can't legislate for hope.

At Together We Cope we deal with the immediate crisis, and then we try to give our neighbors in need some of that hope. We know they'd rather be working.

Young Professional Board gets rolling

Together We Cope's Young Professional Board has been formed and a group of eager young people is working on plans to augment the agency's marketing and fund-raising efforts.

Kerry Nolan of TWC's fundraising staff is meeting regularly with the new board, and reports that membership is growing gradually as the word gets out about this initiative. "The group we've assembled is excited about some potential summer fundraising events



the members would like to launch this year," Kerry said. Young professional people age approximately 21 to 40 who would like to embrace Together We Cope's mission of assisting families in crisis are encouraged to attend a

board meeting and learn more about the new group's plans. Karen Moran, fundraising coordinator for Together We Cope, said she values the input provided by a younger generation that has its own ideas about raising money for a good cause while having a good time doing it.

Further information on the Young Professional Board is with Kerry Nolan at 708-633-5040 or knolan@togetherwecope.org.

A new look for the Back to School campaign

As Together We Cope gears up for this year's Back to School program, a new funding format is being implemented to finance the annual effort to equip about 1,500 children in need with backpacks and school supplies.

The goal is to purchase, from an outside vendor, pre-packed boxes of school supplies appropriate to each grade level. TWC supplements this with a backpack. A \$20 donation will give one child a box of school supplies and a backpack. Many donors to previous TWC programs have been contacted and asked to consider such a donation by June 1.

TWC believes it is essential for youngsters to be prepared to succeed in the classroom. Equipping them with the right supplies puts them on an equal footing with their peers and boosts their confidence.

Further information on this campaign is with Tina Kessens at 708-633-5040 or tkessens@togetherwecope.org.



These are the pre-packed boxes of school supplies that Together We Cope hopes to provide for 1,500 children in need this fall.

Rock Bottom hosts 2 benefits for TWC

This little one celebrated her first Easter at Rock Bottom Brewery and Restaurant in Orland Park in March, when the establishment hosted client families of Together We Cope to the annual "Spring Gathering" brunch and party. Each year Rock Bottom serves a free Easter breakfast to many of our clients and provides Easter baskets for the little ones. About 100 TWC clients enjoyed this year's event.

Rock Bottom supports Together We Cope the year around, and is hosting a fundraiser sometime in May to benefit our agency. The "tapping party" will introduce customers to a new Vienna Lager beer in a \$5 TWC glass to take home, and a percentage of the restaurant's proceeds from the evening will be donated to TWC. A silent auction also will be featured.

Further information on the event is with Karen Moran at 708-633-5040



The best-ever Red Carpet Event!

Together We Cope greeted a record 462 guests at its Red Carpet Event annual dinner dance March 1 at the Odyssey Country Club in Tinley Park.

"Our party was a huge success this year," said Karen Moran, TWC fundraising coordinator. "We were so fortunate to have more sponsors and ads than ever before, and we also featured some unique auction items for bidding that eve-

ning. Once again, it was just a real fun evening and our guests really enjoyed the delicious buffet and great music."

The Hannon family of Tinley Park was honored for its support of Together We Cope over the years through proceeds from the family's annual Race Around the World Duathlon in Tinley Park. Volunteers Ron and Joanne Shear were presented with the 2013 Reimer Volunteer Award for their work with TWC since 2007. Raymond and Linda Busch were recognized for their donation to TWC of a suite of offices on Oak Park Avenue that will allow TWC to expand its operation. Appreciation was expressed to Edward Hassan and Phillip Riley for their generosity in furthering the work of Together We Cope in the south suburban community.

The Red Carpet Event is Together We Cope's major fundraiser each year, and proceeds from the dinner dance and auction support the many agency programs to assist families in temporary crisis from 22 south suburban communities.



These two ladies were delighted to win the "Tower of Toys" items in the silent auction at Together We Cope's annual dinner dance.

More than a bag of groceries

Patching together a new life with some new friends

Chris was only 25, but it seemed like his whole life suddenly derailed.

As with many stories like this, it starts with job loss and falling behind on rent. He missed an eviction court date in December and then was taken by surprise when the police, with guns drawn he said, knocked on the door of the house he rented with two roommates. They were being evicted – immediately.

Chris is single with no children, and his two dogs and two cats are his whole family. Now he was forced to return the rescued dog and cat to the Animal Welfare League, leave a cat in his car and slip a dog into a bedroom he was offered temporarily at a friend's home. He couldn't feed himself let alone the dog and cat, so he boarded his beloved dog at a local animal care facility and his cat with a cousin. All of his possessions were housed in a storage facility. He didn't know where to turn. "The job, any job, means everything. Without that, I just have nothing, nothing," he realized. "I just have no way to get started again."

A friend told Chris about Together We Cope, and he came in to discuss his dismal situation not knowing what, if anything, could be done to put him back on track in life.

"Everyone gets food" is a sort of mantra at TWC, born of a belief that life's problems seem a little less threatening when one has a good meal

under his belt. Chris received several bags of groceries from our food pantry and a bag of personal care products. He was especially touched upon opening the bags back in his room to discover we'd added dog food and cat food to sustain his little friends once he reclaimed them.

While we explored other ways to help Chris, he was out exploring ways to help himself. He found first one, then another, part-time job and coordinated their schedules so he could work both. Then he found a small apartment he could afford, and turned to TWC for help with the security deposit and first month's rent. We were able to assure the landlord that financial help for Chris was on its way, and the landlord allowed Chris to move into the apartment immediately. While he collected his belongings from the storage facility with his first paycheck, TWC found the funding for the security deposit and rent.

Now it was time to bring his dog and cat home. TWC worked with the boarding facility, which ultimately reduced its boarding fees for the dog. Chris's second paycheck went toward bringing his little friends to their new home.

"I wouldn't recommend starting over to anyone, because it's the hardest thing I've ever done," he reflected. "But it's good to know there are wonderful people out there who will walk that path with you if you must start over."

Win \$10,000 CASH - Win a Seven-Day Cruise for Two

Win a Set of Golf Clubs - Win a \$500 Golf Shop Credit

Calling all Golfers

**Wed. June 5, 2013
Odyssey Country Club
Tinley Park**

**10:30 am registration
11:30 am Shot Gun Start**



Together We Cope's golf outing is the place to be! Is it your turn to get a hole-in-one and win a fabulous prize?

Join us for a fun day and support a worthy cause. Lunch, golf, dinner and prizes are \$125 per person. Golf only is \$95 and dinner only for \$45.

**We're looking for
sponsors and golfers!**

Call Karen Moran Ext. 7226

(This is the last in a three-part series on Together We Cope's agency operations. In this edition of our newsletter we discuss client services. Previous editions highlighted the food pantry and the resale shop. To find those articles on our website www.togetherwecope.org, go to About Us and choose Newsletters.)

One man has a toothache, but no money for a dentist. The next man can't get to work because he has no money for gas. An elderly woman sits in a corner, sobbing quietly as she worries about how she will pay for her husband's heart medicine. A young woman tries to corral her three rambunctious little ones and wonders what in the world she will feed them today.

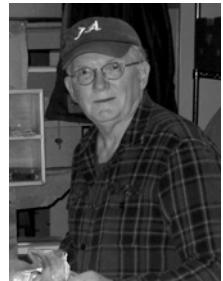
It is a typical day in the waiting room of Together We Cope's office in Tinley Park. The people waiting to see a client services staffer are from any of 22 south suburban communities served by the agency, and of differing ethnicities and backgrounds. What they have in common on this day is need, pure and simple. The need could be something as easy as a pair of pants to wear to a job interview, or something as complicated as heading off a home foreclosure.

Tina Hennis, client services manager at

Volunteer Spotlight

In this edition of our newsletter we put the spotlight on three loyal volunteers as they do various tasks to keep Together We Cope up and running each day. They are John Liechty, Kenneth Humpf and Marie Miller. Thanks for your efforts!

John Liechty of Orland Park gives his time and talent to our food pantry four days a week and has volunteered with TWC for one year. Retired after many years working for a mental health facility in Indiana, John said that helping our clients get back on their feet is a very satisfying way to enjoy his retirement.



Marie Miller of Tinley Park recently celebrated her second anniversary as a TWC volunteer. She works in the sorting room of the resale shop three days a week. Marie previously worked as a receptionist for a real estate company. She enjoys her volunteer role at TWC because she likes helping people in her own community.



Kenneth Humpf of Oak Forest is retired after 29 years with Bank of America and has volunteered with TWC since 2011. He works in the food pantry and on our delivery truck. Kenneth said he heard about the good work our agency does in the community, and decided to spend two days a week being part of that effort.

Many faces of need

TWC, has many stories about need. "Once, we had an elderly woman come in so distressed because her dog ate her dentures," she recalls. "Then there was the man who needed an electric wheelchair. There was a teacher laid off from a \$60,000 a year job, and now was a part-time fast food restaurant worker who couldn't make ends meet. It's amazing the kinds of problems that pop up in our lives."

Together We Cope exists to bridge the financial gap faced by families experiencing all manner of temporary crisis. "Everyone gets food" is the general rule, and then case-workers go to work screening clients on their finances and finding fixes for the many problems that confront people in their lifetimes. If the fix is not immediately available at TWC's office, staffers link up with other resources and agencies to connect a client with someone who can help as soon as possible. The man with the toothache, for example, was sent to a dentist who volunteers time to help those in need. The man needing to get to work got a



Client Services Manager
Tina Hennis interviews a client
about a family emergency.

gas card someone donated to us. We helped another register for food stamps, and interceded with a utility company to resolve someone's overdue heating bill. It is about neighbor helping neighbor, and doing so with whatever resources one has to give.

"The great majority of problems are due to unemployment and under-employment," Tina said. "So many people just don't have enough income in this current economy. On one recent day we helped 82 families - in just one day! Some were just picking up food, but others had more complex problems that really challenged us."

Much of what clients receive is donated by the community. Help comes from the Scouts who run food drives, churches that collect baby clothes and diapers, parents who donate shoes and clothes their children outgrow, local businesses that collect funds from their employees and customers.

"What touches me most is when people we've helped, want to help back," Tina said. "Sometimes they have so little, but they want to help someone else out."

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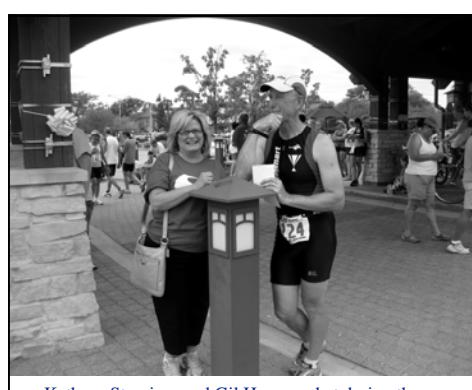
Tinley duathlon again benefits TWC

The extended Hannon family once again hosts the Race Around the World Duathlon in Tinley Park on Sunday, June 23 and once again proceeds will be donated to Together We Cope in support of the agency's many programs.

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. It can accommodate 650 participants (individually or in teams of two) and always sells out well in advance. Information on the race is at www.tinleyparkduathlon.com. Race organizers said volunteers are always needed for this day, and area residents interested in helping out can contact Jennifer Hannon through the contact form on the race website.

"This is both a fun day and an important fundraiser for Together We Cope," said Kathryn Straniero, executive director of TWC. "We are grateful for the Hannon family's support of our work with south suburban families in crisis, and we always enjoy participating in this wonderful community event they have created in Tinley Park."



Kathryn Straniero and Gil Hannon chat during the 2012 Race Around the World Duathlon in Tinley Park.

Volunteers needed for annual Hunger Walk

What if you could help Together We Cope by taking a leisurely walk with your friends along Chicago's beautiful lakefront on a sunny day in June?

Earning credits for TWC's food pantry purchases at the Greater Chicago Food Depository is just

as easy as that! TWC receives \$15 in food credits for each person registered to walk in our name on Saturday, June 29 at the depository's annual Hunger Walk. The 5k walk (which translates to about 3.2 miles) takes place outside Soldier Field on the lakefront. To make matters even easier, TWC offers its walkers a free bus from the agency's Tinley Park headquarters to Soldier Field and back home again.

"This was a really fun day last year," said Kerry Nolan, TWC's walk coordinator. It was a beautiful day with a nice breeze off the lake, and our team all wore TWC T-shirts to promote our agency. Our bus left TWC about 7 a.m., the walk steps off about 8:30 a.m., and we were back home again by noon."

Those interested in walking with TWC's team this year can contact Kerry Nolan at 708-633-5040 or knolan@togetherwecope.org.



The Together We Cope team at last year's Hunger Walk passes by Soldier Field on the 5k walk that raises food credits for use at the Greater Chicago Food Depository.