**Together We Cope  Bridging the Gap**
17010 S. Oak Park Ave.
Tinley Park, IL  60477

**Return Service Requested**

Non - Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
So. Suburban, IL
Permit #205

**Board of Directors**

| | |
|---|---|
| Kathryn Straniero | Executive Director |
| Frank Trombley | President |
| Kevin Patrick | Vice President |
| Robert Smith | Treasurer |
| Patrick McKernan | Secretary |
| Rob Gale | Sergeant-at-Arms |
| Michael Chinino | Director |
| William Hinz | Director |
| Donald Mertic | Director |
| Leonard Schaafsma | Director |
| Edward Workman | Director |

**Editor**
Margaret Seltzner
**Design**
Mary Ann Baer

**Reporter**
Patty Houlihan

## Nu2u china sparkled at artists' eco-friendly wedding


Michelle Gordon and Jim Bertrand

The bride creates colorful abstract paintings that celebrate the beauty of nature. The groom designs and builds residential landscapes that turn back yards into works of art. So when it came to planning their wedding, Michelle Gordon and Jim Bertrand had no trouble dreaming up plenty of nontraditional ideas for celebrating the union that reflects their love of nature, art and each other.

With two celebrations – one on July 3 at the groom's parents' house in Frankfort, another the next day at their own home nestled in the Indiana Dunes, they expected 150--200 guests. Local restaurants catered the events. But instead of using disposable plates, glasses and silverware, Gordon and Bertrand opted to buy everything from Nu2u. Fortunately for them, TWC had just received a donation of dishware from Mimi's Restaurant after it closed its doors.

On their June 24 shopping spree, they bought dozens of plates, glassware and even silverware. "It's more cost effective, and it's really eclectic and fun. We've got some snowman plates and one with a Thomas Kincaid painting that goes on an easel," he said. "It's a lot more elegant to eat on real china. It's also healthier and more ecologically friendly. We'll let our guests keep whatever they want. Whatever is left, we'll donate back to Nu2u because we want to support Together We Cope."

"There hasn't been one stressful day in planning this wedding," said the groom, who owns Bertrand Landscape Design in Monee. "It's been a lot of fun."

## New shelving brings more light and space to pantry

Anyone who's ever remodeled a kitchen knows it's a huge job. But what if you had to replace 1,260 square feet of shelving, all of it piled high with canned goods and other groceries?

In July 2013, Tinley Park Fire Department inspectors required Together We Cope to replace wooden shelving in the pantry store room, pointing out that water from overhead sprinklers could never get through them, should a fire start. "They gave us a year to change them," said Gordon Collins, pantry manager. "For months, it hung over our heads."

Collins and Len Schaafsma, a TWC board member, began searching for metal racks to use as replacement shelving. After seven months of phone calls, they acquired $5,000 worth of material from multiple donors at no cost; all TWC spent was $130 for nuts, bolts and welding supplies.

They mapped out the project on graph paper, considered suggestions from pantry volunteers and got to work. Over three Thursday mornings and one evening with the help of volunteers, they replaced all the shelving and discovered several advantages. "We got more room, more storage space, and it's lighter, so you can see what's on the shelves because you can see through them," Collins said. "And we had fun doing it."

## Volunteerism celebrated at September picnic

Together We Cope's volunteers will be honored during the agency's annual Volunteer Picnic on Sunday, Sept. 14 from noon to 3 p.m. at El Morro Park in Oak Forest. Nearly 200 south suburban residents donate their time and expertise to the food pantry, resale shop, office, fundraising and special events departments throughout the year and this annual party is designed to say "thank you" for all their efforts.

Volunteers will receive invitations in the mail. Many will be honored with service pins for their years of work with Together We Cope. Volunteers can make arrangements with Cate Dietz, TWC volunteer coordinator, to bring family members to the picnic. Food and beverages will be provided by Together We Cope, and there will be games and prizes throughout the day. El Morro Park features covered picnic pavilions, a concession stand, restrooms and miniature golf course.




# Together We Cope . Bridging the Gap

708-633-5040  Volume 35  August 2014

# *Going back to school in style!*



Nearly 1,500 youngsters in need will enter the classroom in style this fall due to a helping hand from Together We Cope. Our annual Back to School program again will equip children from client families with new backpacks, school supplies, free haircut coupons from local salons, and gift certificates for clothing from TWC's resale shop.

Thousands of dollars in donations have been received by TWC this summer to help finance the program. The money will be used to purchase pre-packed boxes of school supplies, ordered by grade level. Donations are needed to purchase backpacks.

"We are very grateful for the financial support we have received for this program from so many generous people in the region," said Tina Kessens, who coordinates client special programs at TWC. "It will make a difference in the lives of the children enrolled in this program."

TWC believes a good education is key to a child's success in life, and works with families to support their children's school experience. The Back to School program has been a staple at Together We Cope for many years. Further information on the program is with Tina Kessens at tkessens@togetherwecope.org.

## TWC Happenings

***Board Meeting***
Monday, September 8

***Back to School Distribution***
August 5, 6, 7

***TWC & Nu2u Closed***
Labor Day September 1

***TWC Volunteer Picnic***
Sunday, September 14
El Morro Park in Oak Forest

***Alden Fishing Festival***
Saturday, September 20

***Pasta Extravaganza & Night at the Races***
Wednesday, October 1
Orland Chateau, Orland Park

***Oak Forest Awareness Fair***
Saturday, October 18

***Orland Park Community Expo***
Saturday, October 18

***Annual Coat Drive***
New & gently used winter gear collection.  Drop off anytime at Nu2u back door

**Save the Date!**
**TWC Dinner Dance**
**Friday, March 6, 2015**
**Odyssey Country Club**

## Think ahead: Donate a winter coat

It's warm now, but remember last winter? Lots of people have vowed to be ready for the cold and snow this year, but not everyone can plan ahead. To keep Together We Cope clients from being left out in the cold, mark your calendar for our annual Coat Drive.

TWC will need about 500 winter coats, gently used or brand new, to distribute to needy clients this winter, said Cory Scanlan, assistant manager at the resale shop, Nu2u. "From size six months to 5X, we need them all," she said. "They never go to waste."

Donations of other winter gear such as hats, mittens, gloves and boots are welcome, as are cash donations that will help TWC purchase additional coats for clients.  To drop off a coat or other much-needed winter gear, stop by the back door of Nu2u between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.  Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday; between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Thursday; from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday.




## *From the Director … Kathy*



We have backpacks, pasta and winter coats on our minds these days at Together We Cope!

Those are some things on our agenda this time of year, as summer wanes and the winter season looms. We are excited about the backpacks on our list. They represent our annual Back to School program in which we equip up to 1,500 youngsters in need with new backpacks and boxes of school supplies as they prepare to return to the classroom. We love seeing the children's excitement as they try on their new backpacks and examine the supplies. We know how important a good education is for young people today, and we are happy to support families in this annual return to school.

We're also happy about the return of our Pasta

## Gearing up for the fall season

Extravaganza event this fall. It's a major effort at Together We Cope in which dozens of area restaurants each donate a specialty dish for a great family buffet dinner Oct. 1 at Orland Chateau in Orland Park. The evening also includes a fun "Night at the Races" component that families can enjoy together. You can read more about this event elsewhere in this newsletter.

Even though our temperatures are still steamy, we're looking ahead at the winter coat needs of many of the families we are currently serving. An article in this newsletter describes how this program works.

As the season changes over the coming weeks, families will begin their preparations for fall and winter at their homes. We are here to support those families who find themselves in a crisis this year and need a helping hand. Everyone needs a little help from time to time in their lives, and Together We Cope is proud to make it possible for neighbor to help neighbor through any of our programs.

# A busy season for fundraising

**Together We Cope benefited from some major fundraising this spring and summer, events that drew hundreds of people from the south suburbs to show their support for our work in the region. We are grateful for the generosity of our neighbors in our mission to assist families in crisis, and we thank all who participated in these events.**




## Postal workers to the rescue

The National Association of Letter Carriers at the Tinley Park Post Office conducts an annual food drive in the village, part of the national organization's Stamp out Hunger campaign. Letter carriers collect bags of groceries that generous residents leave outside their doors every year. Locally, the carriers are assisted by dozens of TWC volunteers who help collect the food and deliver it to the post office for weighing, then bring it to our food pantry for sorting and storing.

Together We Cope received 10,000 pounds of food from this effort in May. With nearly 80 families per day, five days a week, receiving groceries from our food pantry we rely heavily on area food drives to keep our pantry going. We appreciate the letter carriers at our local post office making Together We Cope the beneficiary of this major food drive.

## Margaritas on the links

Together We Cope's popular annual golf outing June 4 had a "Margaritaville" theme this year, and as always the event was sold out well in advance. Golfers enjoyed the beautiful 18-hole course at Odyssey Country Club in Tinley Park, as well as entertainment and cocktails at various points on the course. A delicious barbecue buffet dinner topped off the day, along with prizes and raffles.

Major sponsors this year were Chuck and Donna Freiberg, C.D.E. Collision Centers; Bob Smith, Country Financial; Idania Stack, Specialized Staffing; Action Sertoma; Edward Hassan, Edwards Realty; Edward Moran, Ameriprise Financial. Our thanks to them for their generous and ongoing support of our golf outing.



A little morning rain didn't dampen the spirts of these enthusiastic golfers, Bob Haustein and Bill Hinz, at TWC's annual golf outing.

## Racing around Tinley

More than 600 people ran and biked in the 12th annual Race Around the World Duathlon June 22 in downtown Tinley Park. Proceeds of the race have benefited Together We Cope for several years, generating thousands of dollars each year to support our programs.

The Hannon Family of Tinley Park organizes the race each year. Dozens of Together We Cope staff and volunteers pitch in each year to make the day a big success. Without their efforts in the pre-race preparations and the post-race refreshment area, the race would not be such a major community event in Tinley Park.



## A Rock Bottom party

Longtime supporters of Together We Cope, Rock Bottom Restaurant and Brewery in Orland Park hosted another evening fundraiser in July to benefit our agency. Rock Bottom tapped a new beer for the occasion, and donated a portion of food and beer sales to TWC. We are thankful to have a partner like Rock Bottom, which also hosts many of our client families to a free Easter breakfast each spring.

## Orland Park clothing drive

The advisory board at Alden Estates of Orland Park spearheaded a major clothing drive in that community this summer to benefit Together We Cope's resale shop, Nu2u. Dozens of bags of new and gently used clothing were retrieved from 21 collection points set up in the village for residents to bring their donations. We are very grateful to the generous people of Orland Park who participated in this effort to refresh the stock at our Nu2u shop.

## Golf Hole Sponsors

American Import Tiles
Archer Bank
Avenue Animal Hospital
Bettenhausen Automotive
Brady Gill Funeral Home
City of Oak Forest
CJ Erickson Plumbing
Cloverleaf Farms
CNB Bank
Continental Honda
Cook County Commissioner
Joan Patricia Murphy
COTG
CWS Services
The Filosa Family
Heide Wealth Management
House of Roland
Kevron Printing
Walt's Food Center
Wingate by Wyndham
The Kusinski Family
Foundation
Mama Vesuvio's
MB Financial
Molly Maid of Southwest
Cook County
NAIFA Chicagoland Metro
Oak Lawn Bank & Trust
Odyssey Country Club
Peace Village
POW-R Sertoma
Silver Lake Family Dental
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Sopato
Southwest Sertoma
Steve Hogan,
Stumm Insurance,
Tinley Park Sertoma Club
Village of Tinley Park

# More than a bag of groceries

## Helping a family move into a home of their own

Charlene is the kind of mother people openly admire. Of her six children, all of them polite and well behaved, she has two sets of identical twins whose birthdays fall so closely on the calendar that they will all enter eighth grade this fall. This summer, Charlene and her children are settling in to their new house, thanks to Together We Cope.

The children's father, a steady presence, had promised marriage for years. But he evaded the issue and was abusive to Charlene as well. When she was diagnosed with cervical cancer, she left him, taking the children with her and moving in with her elderly mother. It was a tight fit, but it enabled her to focus on her health.

After two years, Charlene was diagnosed as cancer-free. Beating cancer provided an incredible boost, and she was ready to get her life – and her children's lives – back on track. She knew her family needed a home of their own, and she was ready to work for it. Charlene found housing and successfully applied for a five-year FHA "rent to own" program that would put her on track for home ownership. The program requires her to take classes on personal financial management and to set goals toward becoming financially stable.

Charlene also managed to set aside $600 toward a security deposit but needed a full $1,600. Catholic Charities directed her to TWC for help. "She came in, ready to change her life," said Tina Hennis, client services manager.

At TWC, she was grateful to learn the agency would provide the balance. But she was truly taken aback to discover all the other help available. "We gave her food from the food pantry, clothing vouchers to Nu2u for the family, furniture for her new house, and even signed up the kids for our Back to School program," Hennis said. "It brought tears to her eyes, she was so thankful. She said, 'I feel like this is a dream.' "



# Pasta Extravaganza is back!

## Dinner buffet, beer, wine & pop included

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

**Wednesday**
**October 1**
**6:00 pm Dinner**
**7:00 pm Horse Races**

Our popular "Pasta Extravaganza and Nite at the Races" event returns this year to Together We Cope's fundraising schedule.

The pasta dinner is set for Wednesday, Oct. 1 from 6 to 9 p.m. at Orland Chateau, 14500 S. LaGrange Road in Orland Park. Tickets are $25 for adults and $5 for children age 3 to 12. The dinner features a wide variety of delicious food donated by dozens of south suburban restaurants that support TWC's work in the region, and gives diners lots of choices for their meal as they peruse the buffet.

Adding to the fun are the horse races featured in this event. Videotaped horse races are shown during the evening, giving diners the chance to place wagers with "fun money" they purchase at the door. Winnings are paid in tickets that diners can drop into baskets for drawings on many prizes to be given away that night. The annual fundraising event was not on last year's schedule because the date conflicted with two other special fundraisers conducted by two local restaurants having grand openings that benefitted Together We Cope. "We had a wonderful time at the restaurant grand openings, and were grateful for those generous donations," said Karen Moran, TWC's fundraising coordinator. "At the same time, many of our longtime supporters missed the pasta dinner and so we're happy to bring this event back."

Further information on the dinner and ticket purchase is with Karen Moran at kmoran@togetherwecope.org or 708-633-5040.



Diners line up at the buffet during Together We Cope's annual Pasta Extravaganza.

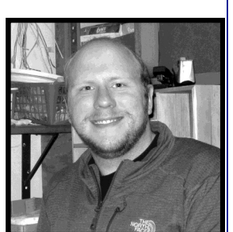
# Volunteer Spotlight



**Donna King** of Tinley Park has been a familiar face in the food pantry for nearly three years, where she packs bags and answers the door for clients. But anyone who was at the Race Around the World Duathlon in Tinley Park on June 22 might have spotted her there, too. It was her first time taking part in the event, which generates funds that help support TWC. The popular duathlon involves a two-mile run, an 11-mile bike ride and another two-mile run. "I've done a half-marathon, but I decided to challenge myself to do more than one sport," she said. Donna is a walker, not a runner, but she picked up enough speed during the bike segment that she overtook other racers. "I did not finish last," she said with a laugh. "I really pushed it on the bike." Most importantly, she said, "I had fun. And of course, it was for a good cause." In addition, her 21-year-old daughter participated this year, winning third place in her age group.



**Margie Walker** of Tinley Park was all smiles as she helped take inventory at Nu2u on July 1. A new volunteer, she has been coming to the resale shop two days a week to straighten shelves and refresh merchandise for a few months now. She retired two years ago as an executive assistant at the University of California, San Diego; before that, Margie had held the position at a charter school and also at IBM, where she worked for 22 years. "When I came in to Together We Cope, I said I'd help any way I could, and that I'd do anything as long as I didn't have to sit behind a desk," she said. Happily retired in Tinley Park, where her children live, Margie dropped off donations for Nu2u over the winter and decided to come back as a volunteer. She enjoys the hands-on work at the shop. "I wanted to give back at some place that was local," she said. "I'm making new friends, too."



For **Corey Gallai** of Palos Heights, Mondays and Wednesdays mean spending the morning at Together We Cope's food pantry, where he helps keep the shelves stocked for those who pack grocery bags. He also gladly goes out with other pantry volunteers in the van to pick up food. Mondays they stop at Walmart, Chick-fil-a, Trader Joe's, Olive Garden, Chipotle, GFS, Eurofresh Market, Starbucks and Pizza Hut. On Wednesdays, they swing by Costco, Chipotle, Starbucks and Walmart. His time volunteering is entirely different from the way he spends his other days: A music education student at Northeastern Illinois University, he specializes in percussion, but he's required to learn to play every instrument in a band or orchestra. He's happy to be at TWC. "People are friendly here," he said. "And I like helping people in need."