



# Together We Cope . Bridging the Gap

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## *From the Director... Kathy*

### A lot of help from our friends

When you're the sort of person who wants to lend a hand, doesn't it feel good to know you're not alone? There's something about discovering there are lots of other people pitching in, too, that can make you feel lighter and a lot more hopeful about the future.



the resale shop, where it's "all hands on deck" every day to generate revenue that helps us sustain our programs. Because our volunteers are so dedicated, we're able to serve hundreds of families every week, helping them take the right steps to get back on

That's how it felt at Together We Cope one morning in December when Chuck and Donna Freiberg, owners of C.D.E. Collision Centers, let us know they wanted to sponsor our annual **Red Carpet Event** dinner dance and auction on Friday, March 7, at Odyssey Country Club. What a generous offer!

And it got everyone here really excited about this year's event as we started to make our plans. Then, C.J. Erickson Plumbing Company in Alsip signed on to become the VIP sponsor for Red Carpet Event. Since this is our major fundraiser, these are gifts that generate a lot of momentum and make people happy to help plan the party and excited to be part of Together We Cope. Most importantly, this support allows us to serve even more people in need.

Gifts like these are really a testimony to everyone who's part of the TWC family. It acknowledges all the hard work and different contributions so many others have made over the years, from writing checks to sharing their time and talents, to hosting food drives.

TWC is powered by our incredibly kind and generous volunteers, people who are moved to do what they can to help their neighbors. Every month, our volunteers put in hundreds of hours, whether it's in the food pantry, where they make sure hungry families get nutritious food, or in

their feet.

Bridging the gap for so many grateful clients takes time, energy, commitment – and money. Those of you who've been writing checks know your support enables us to do this important work. As the number of clients continues to grow, more help is needed. Fortunately, the TWC family responds – and thankfully, it's growing. You can read more about our dinner dance inside this newsletter.

We can't wait to see you at this year's event! Our entire organization is working on all the details to create a really fun and festive evening, from a silent auction with great gifts to a live auction with luxury items. We'll also have raffles for cash and jewelry, as well as the ever-popular Star mystery prizes. It's a wonderful chance to get dressed up and enjoy an evening of dining and dancing with your friends and to make some new friends, too, who support Together We Cope. We love having a chance to roll out the red carpet and shine the spotlight on everyone who supports us. It's truly your night, and I



hope I can greet each of you personally and let you know how much your kindness means to everyone at TWC.

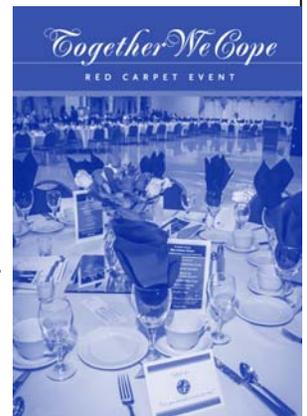
On behalf of our clients, thank you so much for lending a hand and doing all you do for

## Walk the Red Carpet with us!

**Friday, March 7, 2014  
7:00 p.m.  
Odyssey Country Club**

Our annual Red Carpet Event dinner dance is March 7, and this year some wonderful sponsors have stepped forward to make the evening extra special. **Chuck and Donna Freiberg's C.D.E. Collision Centers** is our one and only Red Carpet sponsor. Their generous gift assures that this fundraiser will be a big success. **C.J. Erickson Plumbing Company** in Alsip is the VIP sponsor for this year's dinner.

This year's fun includes some new amenities. The sumptuous buffet at the Odyssey Country Club will be offered at both ends of the dining room, with all dishes featured at both locations. Additionally, online and mobile phone bidding for silent auction items will be offered for the first time this year.



**New this year!**

**Online and mobile bidding on silent auction items! Check our website in coming weeks for details.**

Auction items include pro sports event tickets and sports memorabilia; a vacation package and four park hopper passes to Disney World. Dozens of gift baskets are part of the silent auction, and other raffles are for cash awards, diamond earrings, a 55-inch LCD TV and a Polaroid 10-inch tablet.

Sponsorship opportunities are still available that offer amenities such as free

dinner tickets and advertising. Further information on sponsorships is with Karen Moran at [kmoran@togetherwecope.org](mailto:kmoran@togetherwecope.org) or 708-633-5040, Ext. 7226. Tickets to this year's dinner dance are \$100 per person, or \$950 for a table of ten. They can be purchased online at [www.togetherwecope.org](http://www.togetherwecope.org) or by contacting Karen Moran.

Red Carpet Event is a wonderful night out with family and friends at the Odyssey Country Club in Tinley Park, There is music and dancing all evening to the popular band **Connexion**. Come out and have some fun with us on March 7!

# More than a bag of groceries

## Helping those who have helped others – until it hurts

### TWC Events

**TWC Board Meeting**  
March 10, 2014  
May 12, 2014

**Mardi Gras After Hours**  
Chamber Event at TWC  
Tuesday, February 11, 2014

**TWC Dinner/Silent Auction**  
“A Red Carpet Event”  
Odyssey Country Club  
Friday, March 7, 2014

**TWC Annual Golf Outing**  
Wednesday, June 4, 2014  
Odyssey Country Club

Like a lot of people who support Together We Cope, Bill and Doty felt compelled to help those in need. But for this elderly couple, having a generous heart was one of the reasons they found themselves in serious financial need last fall when they turned to TWC for help.

Bill, 80, and his 79-year-old wife, Doty, had managed to live on a modest fixed income in the south suburbs for years, renting an apartment not just for themselves but also a disabled granddaughter and a son with mental health issues. Last October, hoping to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary, they put down a \$1,000 deposit at a banquet hall. When they realized they couldn't afford it, they cancelled the event but lost the deposit.

Then Doty became ill and needed to see her doctor. But his office wasn't located on a bus line and the couple began renting a car so she could make her appointments, an expense that steadily piled up. When various scam artists targeted the couple, their financial trouble ballooned, and soon they were behind in rent by more than \$1,000.

Fortunately, they turned to TWC. “They were really in a bind,” said case manager Dennis McKeown. “Their problem is that they keep giving money to people who need help.”

Unfortunately their kind-heartedness had also drawn the attention of those who target the elderly with false business deals and like many others, Bill and Doty fell prey to them. When the couple's landlord came to the TWC office to pick up the check that covered back rent, McKeown said, “he told us they had been scammed out of thousands of dollars.”

While sad to learn they'd been victimized, Bill and Doty are not bitter. Instead, they are grateful for the assistance that TWC has provided. “When I told Doty we were going to help them with the rent, I could hear her tearing up,” McKeown said. The couple also signed up for monthly help from the food pantry, which brought even more relief. “Their budget is real close, real tight, but they can make it,” he said.

When an infestation of bed bugs hit in November, they lost much of their furniture right before family members were planning a Thanksgiving visit. Bill and Doty turned to TWC one more time, receiving a new sofa and chair the day before the holiday.

“To us, family is the most important thing, and we couldn't have been home for the holidays without this help,” Doty said. “I can't begin to tell you what a difference Together We Cope has made for us.”

## Help us restock the pantry

### Most needed items:

Peanut butter, jelly, tuna, cereal, spaghetti sauce, beef stew, canned soup, canned spaghetti, rice, pasta, Ramen noodles, canned fruit, condiments, shampoo, hair conditioner, toothpaste, tooth brushes, deodorant, soap, shaving gel, dish detergent, laundry detergent, diapers, pull-ups, baby wipes, gift cards.



## Spring cleaning? Think spring shopping

Thinking of doing your spring cleaning and donating clothing and household items to Together We Cope? As the days grow longer, our **Nu2u Resale Shop** is looking for the same items you'll soon find on the racks and shelves at your favorite store: spring and summer goods.

Now is a great time to pass along shorts, spring jackets, lightweight dresses, capri pants, sandals and even swimsuits in good condition. “That's what people will be looking for here,” said Pat Hosman, manager of the resale store. All women's sizes are welcome, particularly women's plus sizes and juniors. Warm-weather men's wear is popular, too, including men's shoes.

Shoppers also will have an eye out for Easter dresses for girls, not to mention the beautiful dress shoes that complete the outfit. “They outgrow those shoes faster than they can wear them out,” she added.

When it comes to housewares, anything with shamrocks or four-leaf clovers “will fly off the shelves. So will spring-themed platters, dishes, and knick-knacks,” she said.

Your spring cleaning likely will turn up a whole host of items that can benefit TWC and help us support our programs. At the resale store, we get something of value out of every item donated. So when in doubt, don't throw it out – donate it to Together We Cope!



## Sprucing up a new TWC office

Staff and volunteers spent hundreds of hours this fall and winter sprucing up new administrative offices for Together We Cope, a suite of offices donated to our agency that is located about seven blocks south of TWC's main building on Oak Park Avenue in Tinley Park.

Board President Frank Trombley, in particular, has worked countless hours helping to get the new offices ready for occupancy. “It's well worth the effort,” he said. “This is a tremendous opportunity for us to move administrative staff out of our main office, where we are increasingly pressed for space in our pantry, shop and client service divisions.”

Trombley was joined in his work by two other TWC board members, Len Schaafsma and Kevin Patrick, and several volunteers and staff members. Over several months they repaired dry wall, painted the entire space, installed wiring for phones and computers, replaced ceiling tiles and light fixtures and removed old carpeting. Then they delivered and set up office furniture.

“We were so fortunate to have this space donated to us, and then have such hard working board members, volunteers and staff members prepare it for occupancy,” said Kathryn Straniero, executive director. “We also are grateful for the donation of carpeting, furniture and ceiling tiles to greatly defray our costs for these new offices.”



**TWC Board President Frank Trombley paints at the agency's new office.**

## Holiday pot luck is a hit with volunteers

Since the holiday season is a time for sharing, the only thing TWC volunteers love as much as a pot luck celebration is the chance to share recipes afterward. The December holiday luncheon at TWC's office drew plenty of people and lots of great food.

"It's great to sample all these different dishes," said Marie McDermott, noting that the popular event in 2012 led to the publication of TWC's volunteer cook book last summer. Judy Sepic echoed the thought, saying she made sure to cook up a couple of recipes she had submitted to the cook book.

Volunteers agreed they preferred the do-it-yourself approach to having TWC treat them all to lunch. "We didn't need it," said Lynne Findlay. "That's not what we're here for." Clearly, the proof was in the pudding!

## Best wishes for a good friend

Together We Cope wishes all the best to board member Linda Lopez, who resigned recently to tend to other obligations in her life. She has served TWC with great enthusiasm for five years and brought a high level of professionalism to every task she undertook on our agency's behalf. "Linda will be greatly missed. We are grateful for all her years of effort to further our mission in the south suburban region," said Kathryn Straniero, executive director.



## Culinary students cook up 100 recipes

What's for dinner if you're a food pantry client at TWC?

How about chicken tetrazzini? Or gumbo? Or fried ravioli? Those dishes will be easy to make, thanks to the creativity of 28 culinary students from Robert Morris University. Students created nearly 100 recipes at the inaugural Food Pantry Challenge on Nov. 23. They picked up meat, produce and staples at TWC, then had 24 hours to come up with recipes and four hours to cook the food for a panel of judges to sample at the university's Orland Park campus.

The winning menu included 14 dishes ranging from sausage/Ramen stroganoff, which includes a novel use for Ramen noodles, to a pork-and-bean dish featuring braised pig's feet, an item that many cooks might find difficult to use.

"You've made so many wonderful dishes using our food," said executive director Kathryn Straniero said before announcing the winners. "Your creativity is just amazing, and we are so grateful."

Judges were Nicholas Kapellas, managing partner at Bonefish Grill in Orland Park; Donna Lorent-Migliorese, local store marketer at Texas Roadhouse in Tinley Park; and José Torres, executive chef at Rock Bottom Brewery in Orland Park. Additionally, longtime TWC volunteers John and Pat Slack awarded a separate Good Home Cooking award.

Robert Morris University chef instructor Mark Wroczynski was proud of the way the students rose to the challenge. "They were really thinking way outside the box," he said.

Recipes will be distributed to clients and also available soon on [www.togetherwecope.org](http://www.togetherwecope.org).



Robert Morris University students cook up recipes using TWC food pantry items.

## Volunteer Spotlight



A little more than five years ago, **Barbara Harris** was praying for the recovery of her husband. "I told God if he gets well, I'll volunteer at Together We Cope," she said. Her husband beat his illness and the Oak Forest woman made good on her promise, joining the ranks of those who sort donations for Nu2u. Barbara was volunteering the day several people came in because their apartment building had caught fire and they had lost everything. "They came into the store and got whatever they wanted," she recalled of TWC's efforts to aid the families. Barbara enjoys being part of the family of volunteers. "It makes me feel good," she said.



When it comes to packing a vehicle, some people have a knack for using every square inch of space. Fortunately for TWC, **Vic Vaca** is one of them. The Orland Park resident, retired from Metra after 25 years, works four days a week on the truck that heads to area stores to pick up groceries for the food pantry, and he can usually shift things around to get just a little more in on each trip. In his Metra job, Vic had worked with a business contact who later became a pantry volunteer, Gordon Collins (one sold parts, the other bought them) and he was happy to join the ranks of TWC volunteers. "We've got a pretty good group of people," Vic said. "And I'm a people person."



TWC can thank the internet for **Tom Siniawski**. After the Tinley Park resident retired from 41 years working for Indiana Harbor Belt railway, he Googled "volunteering in Tinley Park" and Together We Cope came up at the top of the list. He's been volunteering every Friday since the end of last summer, going out in the truck that picks up food for the pantry from local restaurants and stores. What does Tom like about volunteering at TWC? "Knowing that you make a difference," he said.

## It's a Mardi party!

Together We Cope once again hosts a Mardi Gras themed "Business after Hours" event for members of four local chambers of commerce on Tuesday, Feb. 11 at our offices in Tinley Park. The New Orleans style celebration features cocktails, food, music and other entertainment during the free networking event for hundreds of local business people.

**BMO Harris Bank** is sponsor of the multi-chamber of commerce event. Business professionals interested in attending should contact any of the following chambers: Tinley Park, Oak Forest-Crestwood, Orland Park or Oak Lawn.

"This event gives local business professionals time to meet and greet in a casual and relaxed atmosphere, while at the same time learning more about how Together We Cope assists people in need from 22 south suburban communities," said Karen Moran, TWC fundraising coordinator. "We look forward to celebrating with our business neighbors again this year."





**Together We Cope Bridging the Gap**  
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## 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.*

## Sights of the season

Together We Cope received many generous donations this past holiday season. There was a record amount of food donations, many cash gifts, hundreds of dinners for our client families, and even some new carpeting for our administrative offices. Some ladies knitted dozens of hats and scarves for children, and many people donated toys and pajamas for our Christmas program. We are very grateful to all of the people who remembered us and our clients this holiday season, and offer our sincere thanks to these ardent supporters of our mission to aid families in crisis. Here's a peek at some of the holiday fun at our agency this year.

Kathryn Straniero, executive director, was surrounded by media as she accepted a \$10,000 donation from **TJ Maxx** officials upon the grand opening of their new store at Brookside Marketplace in Tinley Park, site of the former Lane Bryant store. Later, mall owner **DDR Corporation** matched the grant with another \$10,000 donation.



**Texas Roadhouse** restaurant staff and their families volunteered their time on Thanksgiving Day to serve free holiday dinners to dozens of TWC clients, and they were all smiles as they greeted guests at the popular Tinley Park restaurant. The restaurant has provided this special event clients for several years.

**MillerCoors and Hayes Beer Distributing** were among several local businesses that provided all the fixings for a holiday dinner to hundreds of our clients this past season. Here **Jim Hayes** hands out pies during a special evening program at TWC's pantry that provided groceries for a full Christmas meal to 200 client families. Clients were grateful. "This means a lot to my family. Otherwise, we wouldn't have a Christmas meal," said one mother of three. Having survived breast cancer twice, she said, "I'm still trying to get out from under the medical bills."



**Jennie Freed** of Tinley Park helps youngsters make bracelets to give their loved ones at Christmas during the annual Gifts from the Heart program. Area educators provide craft projects and all the supplies for children of client families to create up to a dozen gifts to give their families and friends, teaching them that Christmas is for giving as well as receiving.

## Santa's Workshop grants wishes

More than 1,500 children found just what they wanted under the tree on Christmas morning, thanks to a new Santa's Workshop that made it even easier for people to take part in TWC's popular Adopt a Child program. Rather than adopting a specific child and shopping to fulfill that specific "wish list," donors had the chance to buy whatever toys they wanted – or make cash donations – to stock our new Santa's Workshop. Our expert team of volunteer elves shopped there and chose just the very thing that was on each child's list.

"With Santa's Workshop, we were able to make a lot of Christmas wishes come true," said Tina Kessens, project coordinator. "Plus, our 'elves' had a lot of fun."

Each child received two gifts along with warm pajamas, winter hats and gloves, and even extra school supplies at a total value of \$80 per child. "Donors said they enjoyed stocking the workshop, and a lot of them seemed to have a knack for picking out the toys that turned up on a lot of lists," Kessens said. Donations enabled TWC to distribute toys, clothing and gift cards worth \$123,000 through Santa's Workshop.

TWC executive director Kathryn Straniero was moved by the outpouring of support. "The holidays are stressful for clients, particularly those who have children," she said. "It's so gratifying to see the community come forward with so much heart and such generosity at Christmastime. It makes a huge difference for a lot of families."



**Volunteer Mary Nolan leads a band of merry elves who operated TWC's Santa's Workshop .**