



BRIDGING THE GAP



Summer brings lots of ways to get outside and support TWC

For our friends and supporters, there are a lot of ways you can get outdoors and support Together We Cope this summer. Whether you like to walk, run, bike or swing a golf club, we hope to see you!

Golf outing is June 3 at Odyssey Country Club

Hit the links with Together We Cope on June 3 at Odyssey Country Club in Tinley Park for the most popular golf outing in the south suburbs. "People always tell us they have a lot of fun at our golf outing," said Karen Moran, fundraising coordinator. "It's a chance to join us for a great day and support a great cause."

Participants can enjoy lunch, 18 holes of golf and dinner for \$125 per person. Golf only is \$95, and dinner only is \$45. Golf registration begins at 10:30 am, and the shotgun start will be at 11:30 am. Attendees can win cash, airline tickets and sports memorabilia, among other items.

To purchase tickets or get information about sponsorship opportunities, go to togetherwecope.org or contact Karen at kmoran@togetherwecope.org or 708.263.0302, x 6106.

Walk the lakefront and support TWC

Enjoy a 3.1-mile walk along Chicago's lakefront on a beautiful summer morning while you raise funds for Together We Cope! Join us June 20 for the Greater Chicago Food Depository's 30th annual Hunger Walk at Soldier Field. TWC will provide free bus transportation, leaving from our food pantry at 17010 S. Oak Park Ave. at 6:30 am and returning at approximately 1 pm.

We'll receive funds for each participant who selects our agency when registering online at chicagosfoodbank.org/hungerwalk, so be sure to invite your friends and family to join you. It's also a chance to reach out for additional donations, and there are details on the event website.

Questions? Contact Patty Houlihan at phoulihan@togetherwecope.org or 708.263.0302, x 6116.

Duathlon—new name, same goal

The duathlon launched by the Hannon family and formerly known as the Race Around the World has a new name and new management, but the same goal: to support TWC.

On Sunday, June 28, hundreds of participants will run two miles, bike 11 miles and run another two miles on a scenic course through local forest preserves in the INTENT Tinley Park Duathlon.

The race will be organized by INTENT Life Coaching & Training. "We're so honored to be connected to this event," said Mary Ann Sedor, founder and head coach. "TWC is such a great organization, and the Hannons have worked so hard on it."

Kathryn Straniero, TWC executive director, applauded the Hannons. "They've done such a wonderful job and we are so grateful," she said. "We're excited to work with INTENT, and we look forward to all the ideas and energy they bring to this event."

Register at tinleyparkduathlon.com. To volunteer, contact Sedor at maryann@intentlife.com.

Donor chooses TWC for \$20,000 gift

A business owner donated \$20,000 to Together We Cope in April after learning how the agency had helped a family friend.

"God provided our business with a profit, so we decided to share the wealth with a worthy cause," said the owner, who wishes to remain anonymous. The owner's mother recommended TWC. "A friend who was battling cancer struggled to get her basic needs met. At TWC, she was treated with respect and dignity and always greeted with a smile."

When the owner learned that TWC passes along 93 percent of donated funds to clients, "that sealed the deal for us."

Executive director Kathryn Straniero said, "This gift touches us deeply because it shows that we are part of a community that cares—people like this generous donor, who are willing to reach out and help."



Support makes for brighter days at TWC

Isn't it wonderful to see spring arrive? The warmer weather and longer days make it a joy to be outside, and there's an energy that makes you eager to look ahead.

This issue of our newsletter brings much good news. We received an unsolicited donation of \$20,000. We welcome a new board member, Justin Murphy. Our pantry is moving to a paperless system for client intake at no cost to us in June, thanks to the Greater

Chicago Food Depository. Our Red Carpet dinner dance was the most successful one ever, thanks to our generous guests.

All of this support is important because our client need continues to grow. Our clients come first, and we are here to help. But we could not do it without you!

For our friends and supporters, there are a lot of ways you can get outdoors and support Together We Cope this summer. Our popular golf outing will be June 3 at Odyssey Country Club, a chance to play one of the area's finest courses and have a lot of fun. We're eager for volunteers to join TWC for the Hunger Walk on June 20, a way to raise funds for us while walking along Chicago's lakefront. And we'll be happy to see runners and bike riders at the INTENT Tinley Park Duathlon (formerly known as the Race Around the World) on June 28.

As always, my warmest thanks for all you do for us. We hope to see you this summer!

Kathryn Straniero, *Executive Director*



Jan Schweig wins Reimer Award

Volunteers bring a range of talents and interests when they walk in the door at Together We Cope, and the agency is glad to help them find their niche. For Jan Schweig, there have been lots of different niches, and she's been happy with each one.

A Tinley Park resident, she said our Nu2u resale store initially got her attention. When she learned TWC also had a food pantry, she struck a deal with a local grocery store and began donating meat. In 2012, she began volunteering. Jan is now a familiar face in the food pantry, where she sorts donated produce three days each week to make sure clients get fresh food. She also is on hand at every special event to make sure it runs smoothly, from the volunteer picnic each summer, where she serves food, to the 2014 Pasta Extravaganza, where she headed up the kitchen staff to coordinate donations from 35 restaurants to feed more than 300 guests at Orland Chateau.

She was named winner of the 2015 Theodore H. Reimer Award, which goes to the volunteer who demonstrates the care and compassion that are the spirit of Together We Cope. "We're lucky to have her," said Kathryn Straniero, executive director.

What keeps her volunteering at TWC? "It's the people I work with," Jan said. "It's teamwork. You can do anything if you have help." Among those who pitch in regularly are her sisters, Tina Pavlock of Tinley Park and Janet Salcik of Chicago, both of whom joined her for kitchen duty at the pasta dinner in October, among many other projects. "I'm really proud of my sisters," Jan said.

We're planning for Back to School

One school year ends and another begins at Together We Cope, with planning already underway for this year's Back to School Program.

A donation of \$20 will send one child back to school with a new backpack full of fresh supplies in August. Last year, Together We Cope sent 1,500 students back to the classroom prepared with these basic necessities, and demand continues to grow said Kathryn Straniero, executive director. "This program means so much to our clients, especially the very youngest of them," she said. "We're fortunate that it resonates with the community because these children truly need our support."

Donate online at togetherwecope.org or mail a check to TWC at 17010 S. Oak Park Ave., Tinley Park IL 60477. For more information, contact Tina Kessens at tkessens@togetherwecope.org or 708.633.5040.

Red Carpet event sets new records

Thanks to enormous community support, our Red Carpet dinner dance on March 6 at Odyssey Country Club in Tinley Park was a huge success, raising more money than ever before and drawing a record number of guests—more than 350.

Fabulous photos from the popular event are available for TWC guests at no charge, courtesy of photographer Jorge Norrick. Find images and information on our website at togetherwecope.org.

In memoriam

We were sad to lose Ron Shear, longtime TWC volunteer, who with his wife Joann handled the substantial paperwork for monthly food reports. "Ron was such a nice man and so handy," said Kathryn Straniero, executive director. "Everywhere you look at our 17010 building, you can see something he built or fixed. We will miss him."

Pantry goes paperless

Clients found a new look in our pantry this spring as TWC made room for two staff members to handle a new paperless processing system.



The Greater Chicago Food Depository, where TWC is a member, is providing a computer system complete with tablets to record client signatures, replacing "signature sheets" that the USDA requires for its emergency food

program. The fast and easy intake process will allow clients to "sign" on a computer tablet, eliminating the need for paper signature sheets.

The food depository will send staff to train TWC employees in June. "This will be a great improvement, making the process easier for clients who come to our pantry," said executive director Kathryn Straniero. "We appreciate the food depository's generosity and hard work to bring us this system, which will be a vast improvement for keeping track of important paperwork at TWC."

More golf for a good cause

Sign up for the 7th annual Golf Classic Celebration for South-Southwest United Way on May 30 at Glenwoodie Golf Club in Glenwood. Proceeds support Together We Cope among other local agencies. For information, go to uw-mc.org/ssw/golf-classic/.



TWC Board of Directors

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Board leadership changes announced

Together We Cope's Board of Directors welcomed a new member and also sadly accepted the retirement of two longstanding members in March. Justin Murphy (pictured) was unanimously elected to the board at its March 23 meeting, and Edward Workman and Leonard Schaafsma stepped down.

Murphy, an Orland Park resident who has been the branch manager at MB Financial in Tinley Park for 14 years, was delighted to join

the board. "I've always had a lot of respect and admiration for Together We Cope," he said.

Workman, who served for 15 years, cited increasing career and personal obligations. He said he "was fortunate to serve in a meaningful way. Thanks to the energy and dedication of our volunteers, staff and the direction of the board, we have experienced years of growth and success in serving our clients."

Schaafsma, who spent 15 years on the board, said he was retiring the post to make room for new board members with fresh ideas. "He's still volunteering, putting in as much time as ever," said Frank Trombley, board president, noting that Schaafsma had performed substantial work in remodeling the food pantry in March.

Trombley said he valued the expertise and experience that Workman and Schaafsma brought to the board but feels confident with the addition of Murphy. "We're constantly looking ahead because the need for our services continues to grow," he said. "Our board members play a key role in determining how we can best use our resources to serve our clients—both now and in the future."

New staff welcomed

Together We Cope welcomed Roxanne Roosey as case manager for client services and Mike Racila as maintenance associate, and also named Patty Houlihan communications manager.

Roxanne, of Tinley Park was drawn to TWC as a student working on her bachelor's degree in applied behavioral science at National Louis University; she is now studying for a master's degree in public policy at NLU. "A lot of people who come for help don't know about everything available to them, and I love that we have an abundance of resources that we can help them access," she said. "I came to Together We Cope as a volunteer and I fell in love with the place."

Mike, an Oak Forest resident, has long been aware of the agency. "I'd always heard it was a good organization that helped a lot of people." As a staff member, he shares a variety of skills that help the



agency run smoothly, often going out into the community to pick up donations of food and furniture. "People are always happy to see us because they hold the agency in high regard," he said.

Patty, who joined the staff in July to handle marketing efforts for TWC, replaces former communications manager Marge Seltzner, who retired after five years in the position. "The community is so supportive, always finding interesting ways to help," Patty said. "It's a lot of fun to spread the word about Together We Cope."



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Charity Navigator granted Together We Cope a four-star rating for the fourth year in a row, commending TWC for sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency.

A client's story

Supporting those who serve—a veteran's story

Veterans give so much and often ask for little in return. George, a 44-year-old navy veteran who served in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, was living with a roommate. He discovered she wasn't paying the rent when they were evicted; he became homeless around Thanksgiving, then lost his job. On Christmas Eve, he was hospitalized after a mild heart attack. George moved in temporarily with family members so he could get back on his feet, but by January, the stress of the living situation had escalated, and he knew it was "best for everyone that he get out as quickly as possible."

George was prepared to move into a homeless shelter when he turned to Together We Cope. He already had lined up a new job with a towing company and was working to get his commercial driver's license. The agency provided food for him while he worked and even furnished a bicycle, enabling him to

get to his new job. George saved his money to get an apartment as quickly as possible.

When he found a place, he contacted the agency; Together We Cope provided the security deposit and first month's rent. He also was invited to choose some furniture and a few basic household items at Nu2u, the resale store.

On March 1, George picked up his lease and the key to his new apartment, which is within biking distance of his new job. His next step is to save money for a car, making it easier to get home safely at 3 am. "He was literally beaming, he was so happy," said Ann Rogers, who worked with him. "Every time he came in, he had done so much for himself. It was so easy to help him get back on track."

George was grateful for Together We Cope's help. He told Rogers, "You don't know what this means to me to have an address again."

Support TWC in the Art Van Charity Challenge

Together We Cope will compete in the Art Van Charity Challenge May 18 to June 22, an online fundraiser that will enable us to win prizes, from \$7,500 to \$75,000. The more you donate, the more TWC receives! Watch your email for details or visit us at togetherwecope.org.

Of every dollar donated to TWC, 93 cents goes to client programs and services.

We appreciate your support!