



Making a difference with your support

Every day is different at Together We Cope, from the donations we take in at the back door to the challenges our clients share when they come to us for help. We're fortunate—and grateful—to have wonderful community support because it truly takes many people, many talents and many gifts to help our neighbors stay in their homes when a temporary financial crisis hits.

Thanks to everyone who joined us for a great day at "Luau on the Links," our annual golf outing, and to generous donors who helped children through our yearly Back to School program. We're also grateful that Tinley Park residents helped us restock the pantry with 41,000 pounds of food through the annual letter carrier's drive. Many others walked, ran, biked or volunteered to help with the Hunger Walk and INTENT Tinley Park Duathlon, benefitting Together We Cope.

And there's more to come. We're excited to have set a date for Pasta Extravaganza and A Nite at the Races, where we can provide a fun evening for lots of families and friends. I hope to see you there on October 7!

And we are lucky to have such wonderful staff—some with advanced degrees, others in new positions—whose talents will take us far in the years ahead.

What amazing involvement and support we continue to see, all in the effort to help our neighbors in need. On behalf of our clients, my thanks to all of you. You truly are making a difference in this community!

—Kathryn Straniero, Executive Director

Staff changes bring new talent and fresh ideas to Together We Cope

From promotions to new hires, staff changes are bringing a fresh approach to Together We Cope. In addition to Kaitlin Aldworth being named client services



manager and Melanie Bagnola being named Families First coordinator (see "TWC has two MSWs"), Karen Roman (left) was promoted to director of operations, Cori Scanlan (center) was named interim manager of Nu2u, and Eva Spinks has joined the fundraising team.

Previously manager of operations, Karen joined TWC as a volunteer 16 years ago. "A friend who worked at Together We Cope recommended volunteering here as an antidote to empty nest syndrome," she said. When she retired from 25 years in the trucking industry—the last 15 as vice president and CFO of a trucking firm—in 2010, Karen joined the staff and brought her business skills to TWC. "From the food pantry to the resale store to client services, she makes everything run smoother on a daily basis," said Kathryn Straniero, executive director. "Everyone relies on her."

Cori joined Nu2u as a sales associate in 2012. "What I love about Nu2u is the incredible variety of donations," she said. "It makes the store a fun and interesting place. Every day is different. You never know what's going to come in the back door." She also has a knack for working with people, from staff to the store's many volunteers to those who shop there. "Cori brings great energy and enthusiasm to Nu2u," Kathy said. "People respond so well to her."

Eva joined the fundraising team in June, coming to TWC from Apps Communications in Orland Park. Her background in human resources includes time handling HR for Groupon as it exploded from 200 employees to more than 3,000. "I've always wanted to help people. That's really where my passion lies," Eva said. "I like connecting those in need with those who can help. Everyone at Together We Cope is like-minded in our mission to help the community," she said. "It's rewarding in a way I've never experienced in a job before. It doesn't even feel like work."



Hitting the road benefits TWC

From walking to biking to running, supporters at two events helped raise funds and awareness for Together We Cope this summer.

The Hunger Walk sponsored by the Greater Chicago Food Depository on June 20 drew three dozen supporters of TWC including clients Latasha and Dan Sandoval. "TWC has done a lot for us, and this was the least we could do in return," she said. For each participant, Together We Cope received \$12 credit we can use to buy extra food for pennies on the dollar from GCFD, where TWC is a member agency.

The INTENT Tinley Park Duathlon on June 28 drew hundreds of athletes who ran and biked to benefit TWC. The event was managed this year by INTENT Life Coaching & Training.

TWC fundraising coordinator Karen Moran thanked Mary Ann Sedor of INTENT for taking over the duathlon. "They did a great job, and we appreciate it!"

Postal workers carry the day

Thanks to the National Association of Letter Carriers at the Tinley Park Post Office, the annual "Stamp Out Hunger" initiative brought TWC an astounding 41,742 pounds of food donated by village residents in May. "We're grateful," said Kathryn Straniero, TWC's executive director. "This makes a real difference for the community."

TWC Board of Directors

- FRANK TROMBLEY, President
- KEVIN PATRICK, Vice President
- ROBERT SMITH, Treasurer
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- KATHRYN STRANIERO, Executive Director

Going Back to School in style

Nothing gets kids excited about heading back to school like fresh school supplies. Thanks to generous supporters of our Back to School program, more than 1,500 children are going to back to school in style, each of them with a new backpack filled with classroom necessities.

TWC was able to purchase pre-packed boxes of school supplies, ordered by grade level. The money also permitted the agency to buy new backpacks, supplementing the thoughtful donation of backpacks from individuals and groups willing to do their own shopping for the program.

"We really appreciate this support," said Tina Kessens, who coordinates client special programs at TWC. "It gets all these children off to a great start."

Donations are still needed to enable us to replenish school supplies during the holidays. Call Tina at 708.633.5040 or visit togetherwecope.org.

'Luau on the Links' was a hit!

Together We Cope's popular annual golf outing June 3 had a "Luau on the Links" 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 along the course. A delicious barbeque 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 and Bob Stack, Specialized Staffing Solutions; Action Sertoma; Jim Long, Molly Maid of Southwest Cook County; Edward Hassan, Edwards Realty; Edward Moran, Ameriprise Financial; MB Financial; and the Kusinski Family Foundation.

Hole sponsors were Avenue Animal Hospital, American Import Tiles, Bettenhausen Auto, Bremen Youth Services, Byline Bank, City of Oak Forest, C. J. Erickson Plumbing, Cloverleaf Farms, CNB Bank, Continental Honda, Cook County Commissioner Joan Patricia Murphy, Hayes Beer Distributing, Heide Wealth Management, House of Roland, Kevron Printing, NAIFA, Norman's Cleaners, Oak Lawn Bank & Trust, Peace Village, Silver Lake Family Dental, the Together We Cope Board of Directors, Tinley Park Sertoma, Walt's Food Centers, William Quinn & Sons, and Odyssey Country Club.

Our thanks to all of them for their generous and ongoing support of our golf outing.



Who volunteers at TWC?

Dianne Krachey of Orland Park spent 36 years in the commercial property business. When she retired about two years ago, she headed straight to TWC to volunteer. "I wanted to work with an organization that really helps people, and this place is wonderful," she said. An artist who paints on glass, she now spends two days a week at Nu2u. Currently, she cleans and prices jewelry. "I love it. There are pieces from all over the world—Asia, Africa, Mexico," she said. "I really look forward to coming in."

Anyone who has ever volunteered in the food pantry has probably received a helping hand at some point from Bob Centner. The Tinley Park resident has been volunteering two days a week for the past five years, making sure the shelves are stocked and helping to load and unload trucks. "It's good exercise, and you feel good helping somebody else," Bob said. Within a year of retiring from production management in the sewing industry, he came to TWC with his wife, Diane, who helps in the pantry and office. "We feel very fortunate that we don't have to work anymore," Bob said.



In Memoriam



We were sad to lose Betty Riley, longtime TWC volunteer, who was recognized in 2014 for 20 years of service. "She helped in so many ways

over the years, and always with a smile on her face," said executive director Kathryn Straniero. "No matter what the project was, she was here to help. Betty was a wonderful member of the TWC family, and we will miss her."

Return Service Requested

Client Service Center
17010 S. Oak Park Ave.
Tinley Park, IL 60477
708.633.5040

Administrative Center
17728 S. Oak Park Ave.
Tinley Park, IL 60477
708.263.0302

Nu2u Resale Shop:
17010 S. Oak Park Ave.
Tinley Park, IL 60477
708.633.9180

Website:
togetherwecope.org



A client's story

Help between jobs keeps a family in their home

Like a lot of single mothers, Sandy's three children are the center of her world, and she's always worked hard to support her family. Spring brought the excitement of her middle child's high school graduation and her oldest child's return from college. But she also lost her job at a local retailer, a change that threatened her family's stability as she realized her situation could easily spiral downward. What if the next step was losing their home?

Two months of looking for work finally paid off as she found a job with a technology firm. But by then, Sandy had fallen a month behind on her rent, and there were late fees to pay as well. Sandy's landlord was willing to work with her, telling her that if she could pay one month of back rent, he would forgive the second month's overdue rent. With this agreement in hand and a week to come up with the funds, she turned to Together We Cope.

When she came in for her appointment, she was dressed for an interview for a second job at a retail store—a meeting that led to a second interview. At Together We Cope, Sandy was relieved to learn the agency would provide the necessary funds—about \$800—that would help her and her family get back on their feet and on the right track financially.

Together We Cope also provided Sandy with groceries for her family, including items that would appeal to her youngest child during summer vacation from elementary school, and a list of additional food pantries in the area. She also received a clothing voucher for Nu2u, the resale store, to make it through a time when funds were tight.

"What a relief it was, knowing we could stay in our home," she told her caseworker. "This help has made all the difference."

We are looking for donations

We're looking for auction items for upcoming fundraising events, from sports memorabilia to items that can be included in gift baskets, such as gift certificates.

Donated items can be dropped off at the client service center, 17010 S. Oak Park Ave., or our administrative center, 17728 S. Oak Park Ave., Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 am to 3 pm. On Thursdays, our client service center is open from 2 to 7 pm, and the administrative center is open from 11 am to 5 pm.

Just mark the donation "Attention: fundraising auction item."

Thank you!

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



Family-friendly Pasta Extravaganza will be Oct. 7

Our popular "Pasta Extravaganza and A Nite at the Races" is set for Wednesday, October 7, 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 ages 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. It also gives diners lots of choices for their meal as they peruse the buffet.

Adding to the fun are the horse races featured in the 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 family-friendly event drew record attendance last year, proving to be one of Together We Cope's most popular fundraisers. "People love Pasta Extravaganza because there's something for everyone," said Karen Moran, TWC's fundraising coordinator. "Everybody has a good time."

For information or tickets, contact Karen at kmoran@togetherwecope.org or 708.263.0302, ext. 6106.

UW selects TWC for Safety Net Award



Together We Cope received the Safety Net Award from the United Way of Metropolitan Chicago in June. The honor, bestowed annually, recognizes our work in connecting with the community by fostering leadership from within and developing partnerships that support the food pantry, said Stephen Samuels, program coordinator for the United Way.

Executive Director Kathryn Straniero said TWC was deeply honored. "This recognition confirms our partnership in creating lasting change in communities," she said. "We are thrilled to have their support in playing a role in that change."

TWC has two MSWs

Two Families First case managers who are passionate about helping others became the first staff members at Together We Cope to earn their master's degrees in social work. Kaitlin Aldworth and Melanie Bagnola earned their MSW degrees from Governors State University in May.

Aldworth came to TWC as an intern working on her bachelor's degree in social work, which she received from GSU in 2011. She joined the staff at TWC afterward and worked part-time while studying for her MSW, then rejoined the staff full-time after graduating. "At Together We Cope, all kinds of people come in and ask for help. I grew up in Orland Park, and I was surprised at first to see the need hit so close to home," she said. "But I really feel we're helping our neighbors. And our neighbors also are the people who support us."



Aldworth has been named client services manager, taking over management duties from Tina Hennis, who will continue to serve clients four days a week. "With the challenges ahead, it's great for the agency to have someone with an MSW in that role," said Hennis. "And this gives me time to volunteer with animals, which I love."

Bagnola interned at TWC in August of 2013, drawn by the agency's mission. "With homelessness, it's very easy to turn your head and say it's not a problem, especially in towns like Tinley Park, Orland Park and Homewood." While she worked toward her MSW, she continued at TWC, joining the staff full-time after earning her graduate degree. "I like the idea of helping people stay in their homes," she said. Bagnola was named Families First coordinator.



Executive Director Kathryn Straniero said everyone at TWC was delighted to celebrate their achievement. "We are so proud of Kaitlin and Melanie, who have developed additional skills they can use in helping our clients," she said.