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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



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Holiday hearts filled with joy

There were turkeys and hams, toys and pajamas, mittens and hats, new winter coats and even a few Christmas trees —some with hand-carved wooden ornaments. There were, literally, tons of donated groceries and many complete holiday dinners with all the trimmings. Just in case all of that was not enough, the response to our Annual Appeal brought in many monetary donations to address other concerns like rent, utilities or prescription medications.

It was Holiday Season 2016, and Together We Cope was blessed with an outpouring of donations as well as extra effort from dozens of volunteers who sorted and packed and distributed the holiday cheer. It's our annual effort to assist client families at the holidays, and this year the campaign seemed energized by so many generous people who wanted to reach out and help their neighbors.

Our food pantry was well stocked by local food drives, and was able to give clients the complete fixings for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. Our Adopt a Child program provided toys and pajamas to hundreds of children in need, and the annual winter coat drive met the needs of many clients without proper outerwear this season.

"Together, we made this holiday joyous for so many people who needed a helping hand. We are very grateful for the community that supports us in our mission," said Kathryn Straniero, executive director.



Volunteers Diane Centner (left) and Sue Leigh sort through pajama donations.

Celebrate!

TWC's 16th annual gala is March 3

"Celebrate! Together We Cope" is the theme of TWC's 16th annual dinner dance and auction March 3 at the Odyssey Country Club in Tinley Park. A sumptuous buffet dinner, open bar, and music by Chicago Keys dueling pianos will be enjoyed in the country club's newly renovated ballroom.

The community can support TWC's mission of assisting south suburban families in crisis in several ways. There are five levels of event sponsorship available, each with various benefits. Donations for the silent and live auctions also are welcome, as well as advertisers for the dinner program. Adding to the fun at this year's dinner is a wine pull. For a \$20 donation guests can choose a wine cork, match its number to a bottle of wine that is theirs to take home, and all corks then are put into a drawing for a fabulous wine gift basket.

The event's grand raffle features prizes of \$1,000 cash, a beautiful piece of jewelry and a Samsung 40-inch Smart TV. Due to U.S. Post Office regulations, we are unable to include raffle tickets in this newsletter as we have done in the past. Instead, tickets can be purchased at either of Together We Cope's offices, 17010 South Oak Park Avenue and the administrative center at 17728 South Oak Park Avenue.

Reservations are \$100 per person and must be paid in advance of the event. Contact Kathy Rogge at 708-263-0302, ext. 6101 or krogge@togetherwecope.org, or visit www.togetherwecope.com.

The personal touch

Many of Together We Cope's clients request a "personal care package" when they receive groceries from our food pantry each month. This package includes personal grooming staples such as bath soap, deodorant and toothpaste. While such items can be beyond a family's budget in times of crisis, they nevertheless are necessities in daily life.

Due to a shortage of such items in our food pantry at this time, we are unable to accommodate the requests for personal care packages. We are launching a campaign to collect adequate supplies of these products, and value our community's support.

Listed below are the most often requested items. Further information on the effort is with pantry manager George Rumbaugh at grumbaugh@togetherwecope.org or 708-633-5040 ext. 7228. Please consider this kind of donation for families who struggle with daily needs during a crisis in their lives that has disrupted their ability to fully support themselves. Our food pantry clients need these items:

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| baby shampoo | razors |
| adult shampoo | shaving cream |
| conditioner | Q-tips |
| bar soap | body lotion |
| body wash | hand lotion |
| male and female deodorant | baby wipes |
| baby & adult toothpaste | laundry detergent |
| feminine hygiene products | (liquid or powder) |
| toothbrushes | hair brushes and combs |
| mouthwash | (no bleach or fabric |
| dental floss | softener) |
| incontinence products | |



What a deal!

Read all about it – digitally!

We're now offering a digital option for our newsletter at Together We Cope, a move designed to increase efficiency and decrease printing and mailing costs for our agency.

If you'd like us to send our quarterly newsletter to your inbox instead of your mailbox, just email us at mseltzner@togetherwecope.org and let us know. The cost-saving measure will allow us to serve more families struggling with a temporary crisis in their lives. Thank you for considering the email option for our newsletter.



Celebrate! Together We Cope

Dedication
of our
Volunteers

Courage
of our
Families

Generosity
of our
Donors

Compassion
of our
Staff

Counting our blessings



We're taking a moment, after our hectic holiday season and just ahead of our 16th annual dinner dance, to feel deep gratitude for the many friends committed to our mission of helping families in crisis. We are privileged, especially at the holidays, to witness countless acts of kindness made by so many people in our community. From the children offering a pair of mittens to the elderly offering cans of soup, and everyone in between, the generosity was amazing.

Hundreds of toys, pajamas, and mittens flowed in from schools, churches, businesses and individuals to make our annual Adopt a Child program successful again this year. Turkeys and hams for clients were abundant during Thanksgiving and Christmas because local residents chose to provide holiday meals for families in need. There were many community food drives to keep our pantry well stocked in the winter months, and people were especially generous in our annual winter coat drive for client families.

In a salute to the wonderful people who donate to our agency throughout the year, we're introducing a new feature in this edition of our newsletter: The Donor Corner. We'll tell you the stories of some of our donors, big and small, and report what motivates them to help others.

You also can read about our new director of development, Linda Lopez, and the challenge she embraced during her first weeks here when she organized our Annual Appeal with much success. She's also behind some changes coming to our annual dinner dance March 3, this year titled Celebrate! Together We Cope.

Please know that your ongoing support has an immediate impact. Our families appreciate you so very much!

— Kathryn Straniero, executive director

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Technically, he's our man!

Tom Willette of Evergreen Park is volunteering at TWC's administration center two days a week and tackling a tedious job that sounds like Greek to most of us. He's assisting in implementing new software packages, and performing some data analysis that will result in a greatly improved TWC business process that will better target customers.

In terms that most of us can readily understand, he's merging our many donor/customer lists into one cohesive master list that will allow us to choose specific audiences, and hopefully provide more services where needed.

Tom is retired from Staples Business Advantage, and previously worked for IBM. Throughout his career, he has managed large accounts. Shortly after retirement, he sought something meaningful to do a few days a week and then bumped into an old elementary school friend, TWC's executive director Kathryn Straniero. "I told her I wanted to do something to help somewhere that uses my business



Tom Willette

skills, to seek ways to improve the way a business is run," he said. Kathy wasted no time in signing him up.

He is impressed with the wide range of services provided to the community at Together We Cope, and hopes to assist in reaching more people to support the agency. As for retirement? "It's going just fine," he says. "I work out, volunteer, golf in good weather, and attend a lot of kids' sports for the grandchildren."

Tom and his wife, Marilyn, have three grown children and 11 grandchildren.

Helping others always has been her passion, and now Cynthia Brister of Dolton is achieving that goal with an internship at Together We Cope.



Cynthia Brister

She graduates from Governors State University in May with a degree in social work, and will go immediately into the master's program there. Her career goal is to open transitional housing for domestic violence victims.

"I've always wanted to help people in need, and now I'm able to go to school and work toward that goal," she said. Cynthia went back to school later in life, and said she greatly values the opportunities open to her now. She is married to Adolph Coleman and is the mother of four adult children. She spent many years caring for a disabled son, and now takes her giving spirit out into the community.

Assisting those in crisis is a major career goal for Elizabet Lopez, and she's preparing for that career during an internship at Together We Cope. "I like the idea of giving back to the community, and especially helping individuals who are in crisis. I feel there is a great need for it now. Poverty is a big issue in our country," she said.



Elizabet Lopez

Now working toward her bachelor's degree at Governors State University, Elizabet then plans to continue her studies toward a master's degree in social work. She finds her work at TWC to be very helpful to her education, because of the very diverse population served by the agency. "Together We Cope has great outreach strategies, helping people in many ways," she observed. Elizabet and her husband, Nathan, live in Indiana and are expecting their first child in May.

Linda Lopez joins TWC team



Linda Lopez

A former TWC board member and longtime professional fundraiser, Linda Lopez joined the Together We Cope staff in November as director of development. She has served as executive director of the Lincoln-Way High School District 210 Foundation for the past 10 years. Prior to that, she directed fundraising efforts for the YMCA and the Crisis Center for South Suburbia.

Linda said she has been proud to support TWC for many years, both as a volunteer and as a donor. "Together We Cope has an incredibly compelling mission, and honors its donors by being fiscally responsible," she said. "Those who seek assistance at Together We Cope discover staff members and volunteers who treat all people with compassion and dignity. Individuals and businesses in our surrounding communities support TWC because of the wonderful people who work every day to help our neighbors in crisis."

Linda currently is at work with her team organizing TWC's annual dinner dance on March 3 at the Odyssey Country Club in Tinley Park, seeking sponsors and auction items for that event. She can be reached at llopez@togetherwecope.org.

PANTRY

How you can help

Together We Cope's food pantry feeds nearly 5,000 people every month. Our stock is leaner in the winter months after the holidays, and food donations are always very welcome. Below are the food staples most needed. Please consider making a food donation or hosting a food drive by contacting George Rumbaugh at 708-633-5040.

- baby food
- beans (all types)
- canned fruits
- canned vegetables
- cereal
- jelly
- pasta in 1 lb. packages
- peanut butter
- rice in 1 lb. packages
- soup
- tomato products
- tuna



Please make sure that donated items are in date.



The MillerCoors/Hayes Distributing Cope Christmas crew, from left: Dan Dorgan of MillerCoors, Mark White of MillerCoors, Jerry Misch of Hayes, Becky Bolton of MillerCoors, Jim Hayes of Hayes, and Chris Camelli of Hayes.

MillerCoors/Hayes Distributing: our special Christmas friends

Welcome to The Donor Corner! With this edition of the Together We Cope newsletter, we begin highlighting some of our generous donors (big and small) and the wonderful work they do in support of our mission.

MillerCoors Company and Hayes Beer Distributing Company in Alsip create a special occasion for TWC clients the week before Christmas each year. A MillerCoors truck delivers to TWC all the fixings for a complete Christmas dinner for 200 invited client families. Then, their company employees set up an assembly line in our food pantry on a Friday evening to greet our families while filling grocery bags with everything from turkeys to apple pies.

"God bless these folks," one elderly widow said during this year's event as she prepared to celebrate the holiday with an older sister. "Without this wonderful gift I don't know what we'd be eating for Christmas dinner." A mom handed a frozen turkey to her oldest child to carry, while another of her children struggled with a 10-pound bag of potatoes. "We always run short of food at the end of every month, and in December it's so much worse. With this, well, we'll have such a wonderful Christmas dinner," she said.

For Mark White of MillerCoors and Jim Hayes of Hayes Distributing, it's all about the personal touch. They and their colleagues work hard stocking our food pantry for this event, and they enjoy greeting the families they touch with their generosity. "Oh, no thanks necessary," said Hayes to one man. "It is our pleasure to be part of your holiday." Meanwhile, White always ends the evening with this pledge to TWC: "We'll see you again next year!"

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