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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
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Website
togetherwecope.org



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Light up the holidays for a local family in need

Families struggling to make ends meet know the holidays bring a special challenge: how to celebrate the season on budgets already stretched thin.

Together We Cope offers holiday support to south suburban families experiencing a crisis. We can do it because of the tremendous generosity of the people and organizations in our region. From toys and pajamas to turkeys and winter coats, it is neighbor helping neighbor that brightens the holidays for thousands of residents.

Our Santa's Workshop Christmas program collects toys and winter pajamas for up to 1,000 youngsters who might not otherwise have a happy holiday. Donors can support the effort with a check (suggested cost below) and let our helper elves do the shopping, or they can shop for toys and pajamas themselves and bring them to our workshop where we make wishes come true.

Another initiative at this time of year is providing holiday meals to families in need at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Our goal is to give families all the fixings for a festive meal. Many organizations and businesses donate turkeys and hams, and others conduct food drives to collect all the necessary ingredients for a full holiday meal. Still others contribute funding for this program (suggested cost below).

Winter coats are a special need at this time of year, especially for families whose children outgrow their coats each year. We seek new or gently used outerwear for this program (suggested cost below), and also accept hats, scarves, mittens and socks. Our clients are given vouchers to shop for coats at no cost in our Nu2u resale shop.

Other emergencies can arise at any time of the year, but are especially pressing in the winter months. These include utility bills in arrears, missed rent or mortgage payments, and sudden medical costs for seniors on fixed incomes. Donations to our general fund will be used to meet these needs.

Together We Cope can help spread holiday cheer to residents of 27 south suburbs. Every year, our communities support us with great generosity. We are thankful for these partners in our work.



A client's story

With only \$2.14 left in bank, single mom finds help at TWC

Anna lost her job and had only \$2.14 left in her checking account, she and her 12-year-old son were sleeping in the car, she'd had knee surgery only a few months earlier, and then her car was totaled in an accident.

It was a long run of bad luck. She lost her job in March and was evicted from her apartment in April, the same month she had surgery. She and her son were allowed to stay with her parents only until she healed in May, as there was no room for them. They went to a friend's home briefly, but then the auto accident happened in July. She received an income tax return check but had to use it immediately to buy a used car. By mid-summer she and her boy were sleeping in that car. They had some SNAP food benefits, some child support, and a little emergency cash assistance from a state program that she'll receive for a full year. She came to TWC in August, where she got emergency food and clothing the

same day. Then, at last, things started looking up for this little family.

Our first priority was to get housing for Anna and her son. She'd managed to keep him in the same school he'd always attended, despite all of the crises in their lives. Driving him to school one day she saw a two-bedroom apartment for rent nearby, and told us about it. That same week she interviewed for a job and was hired, but had no funds for a security deposit and first month's rent on the apartment. TWC was able to pay those costs for Anna, and she began retrieving her possessions from friends' garages to set up her new home. TWC added some household goods, then outfitted Anna for her new job. Her son received school clothes from our resale shop, and a new backpack stuffed with school supplies in our Back to School program.

Anna has a new home, a new job, a balanced budget, a mended knee, and some new friends at Together We Cope who continue to look out for her and her child. Life is good again, she reflected recently, and she is working hard to keep it that way!

Black Friday. Cyber Monday.

#GIVINGTUESDAY™

November 28, 2017

Giving Tuesday unites us

In its sixth year, the Giving Tuesday movement has inspired people around the world to help one another with end-of-year giving to local causes. Celebrated on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving in the U.S., Giving Tuesday comes on the heels of the widely recognized shopping events of Black Friday and Cyber Monday. This year's Giving Tuesday date is Nov. 28.

Many nonprofits, including Together We Cope, receive a large share of their annual monetary donations in the last quarter of the year, as people celebrate the holidays with good cheer and take one last opportunity to make tax-deductible charitable donations.

Donations can be made to support specific Together We Cope programs as outlined on page one of this newsletter, or to support our agency in general. Donations can be made online at www.togetherwecope.org or by mailing or visiting our agency at 17010 So. Oak Park Avenue, Tinley Park, IL 60477. Further information is at 708-633-5040.

Neighbor helping neighbor



Tina Kessens of TWC collects toy donations at the Tinley Toy Parade.

- \$30 can provide a new winter coat for a child, \$50 for an adult
- \$50 (two toys and a pair of pajamas) sponsors one child at Christmas
- \$75 gives one family a holiday meal package
- \$100 could cover an unexpected family emergency
- \$150 can turn the heat back on in someone's home

Contact Marge Seltzner at mseltzner@togetherwecope.org or Tina Kessens at tkessens@togetherwecope.org to join the effort and learn about the specific needs of our clients.

Save the date!

TWC dinner dance is Feb. 9

Together We Cope's annual dinner dance and auction, the agency's major fundraiser of the year, is scheduled for Friday, Feb. 9 at the beautiful Odyssey Country Club in Tinley Park. As always, there will be a sumptuous buffet and a well-stocked bar, with dancing to live music all evening.

A live auction will offer diners a chance to get some unusual prizes, and dozens of gift baskets and other items from local businesses are featured in a silent auction with bidding done by cellphone or tablet right from your table.

Several levels of sponsorship are available and come with free dinner tickets and publicity for your business or organization. Tax-deductible donations of auction items are welcome any time leading up to the event.

More information on the dinner dance and auction is with Kathy Rogge at krogge@togetherwecope.org or at 708-263-0302 ext. 6101.



Sudden crisis brings immediate needs

The images of catastrophic destruction in American cities and elsewhere after this summer's hurricane season and earthquakes were a stark reminder to us at Together We Cope of how quickly a crisis can develop, how one's life can be turned upside down in an instant, and how immediate is the need for assistance.

Thankfully, we are not called to cope with disasters the size of what Irma, Harvey and Maria brought to parts of the world the past few months. We assist south suburban families with more personal crises like loss of a job or a home, death of a spouse, or unexpected custody of grandchildren. Those events, however, can feel like disasters when they present suddenly and uproot you from a comfortable and stable life. We always keep in mind that families in crisis need efficient assistance quickly, and they always need to be treated with respect because often they've been affected by circumstances beyond their control.

We are equipped to meet many of the immediate needs: diapers for the baby, groceries for the week, filling an emergency drug prescription, getting the heat turned back on. It's the next step in a family's recovery process that can be trickier, such as finding a new job or another place to live, and we can kick start that process with immediate referrals. Ultimately, keeping a family together in their own home and in their own neighborhood is what's most important for everyone's wellbeing.

We are fortunate to have many partners in our mission to assist families in crisis. There are those who fund us with their dollars, those who provide materials like food and clothing, and the many who give us their time to keep our operation up and running. With their help we can pay a month's rent or mortgage, provide winter coats for the children, even make the holidays brighter with special meals and Christmas presents. It always comes down to neighbor helping neighbor. For more on how you can become involved in this process, see our Page 1 article on lighting up the holiday season for a neighbor in need. And, as always, we thank you sincerely for your help.

— Kathryn Straniero, executive director

DONOR CORNER

Among most loyal donors, a special group

A few of them write a check every month to support our food pantry, others might underwrite the cost of helping one family in need with a specific problem. Some buy tickets to every fundraiser and raffle hosted by Together We Cope, and some send periodic checks with a note to "use as needed." A number of them buy toys and pajamas for our children's Christmas program every year, and some of them even knits scarves and hats for children in need.

They are among the more than 150 community residents who already give us their time and talents as volunteers in many areas of our operation, some of them often working as many hours as an employee. Because they see firsthand the need among the families in crisis who seek assistance from Together We Cope, some of our volunteers also make regular monetary or material contributions to the agency.

Just about all of them shy away from any publicity about their good deeds. "It's

something I do because I can afford it, and keeping it private makes it more special," one of them told us. Another insisted her ongoing monetary support was "just a little bit to help out."

One lady volunteering in the food pantry buys small toys for clients' children having a birthday that week. Another pantry volunteer often bought a big cake to add to groceries for clients with big families. There are many stories like this about our volunteers doing just a little bit more to make someone's life just a little bit easier.

The gift of their time, and considerable talents, is a major contribution to our mission of assisting our neighbors through a family crisis. But the commitment of our volunteers to go beyond that and fund our agency so we can continue our work is a truly special gesture. We are so grateful to all of you!

Welcome back, Karen Moran!

Karen Moran has returned to Together We Cope in the role of director of development.

Karen retired in 2016 as fundraising manager after working with TWC since 2007. In her new role Karen will be building relationships with businesses and foundations as she seeks to increase the agency's grant funding.

"It's good to be back," Karen said of her return to TWC and the taking on of new challenges. She can be reached at kmoran@togetherwecope.org or at 708-263-0302 ext. 6104.

Kathryn Straniero, executive director, said it is gratifying to have a former employee who worked so hard for the agency now return in a new capacity. "We are excited to have Karen back with us. She knows our operation so well, and brings such deep experience to the table," she said.



Special silk show to benefit TWC

Here's a great opportunity to buy unique handcrafted items for the Christmas giving season, and support Together We Cope at the same time!

Silk for all Seasons, a group of Chicago area silk artists, will host a show on Nov. 12 in Palos Park and donate 10% of all sales to Together We Cope. The organization also encourages visitors to the show to bring nonperishable food items for TWC's food pantry.

The artists previously have been part of Randolph Street Market and College of DuPage shows, and the Palos Park event is their first independent show. The event is Sunday, Nov. 12 from 1 to 4 p.m. at McCord Gallery, 9602 W. Creek Road in Palos Park. In addition to silk art items like scarves, wraps, sarongs and kimonos, handcrafted jewelry from other artisans also will be available. More information on the silk artists is at www.silkforallseasons.com.



Pasta event has a new look

More than 200 people enjoyed Together We Cope's annual Pasta & Ponies event Oct. 4 at a new venue, Palos Country Club in Orland Park, which provided a wonderful buffet of pasta and other delectable items.

As in previous years, a number of local restaurants donated their specialty items and this year those were presented in special appetizer and dessert tables. We give our thanks to Beggar's Pizza, Smallcakes, Durbin's, Hooters, Buffalo Wild Wings, Plush Horse, Ed & Joe's and Berkots.

Specialized Staffing Solutions was this year's event sponsor and owner Idania Stack was honored for her ongoing support of our agency.

Wednesday crew makes Nu2u shopping fun



The friendly faces of the Wednesday register crew at Nu2u, TWC's resale shop, are from left: Paula Leach, Delynn Flannery, Sharon Marth, Dorothy Senick and Cheryl Ryniak.

For shoppers visiting Together We Cope's Nu2u resale shop on Wednesdays, the checkout experience is all the more special because of five great volunteers who bring lifetimes of experience to the job.

Delynn Flannery and Dorothy Senick, both of Tinley Park, join Sharon Marth of Orland Park, Cheryl Ryniak of Palos Heights and Paula Leach of Homer Glen in assisting customers and checking them out at the register every Wednesday.

Delynn was a police officer for 23 years, the last 17 as a patrol officer with the Tinley Park Police Department. She began volunteering at TWC in April and assisted in the major effort to pack up donated houseware items after the 2017 International Housewares Show at McCormick Place. She stayed on to help TWC sell those donated items during a special housewares sale in Tinley Park. "I had a good time during the housewares project, and just stayed on," Delynn said. "I think TWC is meeting the community's needs and I enjoy being here."

Dorothy began volunteering at TWC in October 2016, and also helped out during the housewares show project. "It was a lot of work," she recalls, "but it was worth it." Dorothy worked for 35 years at a company that makes train locomotives, and even had the thrill of operating a locomotive on a test track. After retiring, she looked

for some fulfilling work in a volunteer role. "Together We Cope does a terrific job helping people here in our community, and I'm enjoying this job," she said.

Sharon is winner of the 2016 Theodore Reimer Award for her outstanding volunteer work at TWC over the past nine years. In addition to her role at the Nu2u shop, she works one day a week at our administration building tabulating donation statistics for our records. She is retired after a 23-year career teaching home economics, specializing in child care and guidance. "Volunteering at Nu2u during my retirement is very gratifying," she said. "I have bonded friendships with other volunteers, staff, customers and clients that will be everlasting."

Cheryl has volunteered at TWC for more than 10 years. She came to us after a career as a children's librarian. "This is a wonderful organization to work for as it assists those in need from our local communities. I enjoy meeting and talking to all of our customers," she said. Cheryl added that the people she works with "make it a joy to come to work. There is nothing I would rather do with my leisure hours!"

Paula Leach was unavailable for an interview at the time this newsletter was published, but her colleagues agree she is bubbly, energetic and provides excellent customer service.

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