



## BRIDGING THE GAP



### ‘Treasures Create a Home’ June 2–3 at TWC’s housewares pop-up shop

One woman came to Together We Cope’s housewares pop-up shop last year with a list of things she wanted to purchase, but found the dazzling display of fresh new ideas in home furnishings to be so interesting that she ended up with a whole new agenda.

For those who had a similar experience last year, have we got a surprise for you: This year’s pop-up shop is triple the size of last year’s sale! We’ll offer hundreds of new items that were featured at the 2018 International Home and Housewares Show at McCormick Place, all at deeply discounted prices. Theme of this year’s sale is “Treasures Create a Home” and many little treasures can be found during this event.

The two-day sale is Saturday, June 2 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, June 3 from noon to 4 p.m. It will be at 8600 West 159th Street in Orland Park, in the Seville Plaza. The pop-up shop is in the former site of Orland Park Wine & Spirits, in the same plaza where Mayan Palace is located.

Together We Cope was honored to be designated again this year as one of only five charities to receive exhibitor donations at the close of the housewares show in March. This influx of material generates significant income for our agency to continue its mission of assisting families in crisis in the south suburban region. All proceeds of the sale are used to fund various client programs at TWC.

Items donated from show exhibitors include dishware, glassware, cookware, small appliances, furniture, knick-knacks, car cleaning supplies, pet supplies, dollar store items, and much more. Many different brands are offered, and all items are new to store shelves this year.

More information on this year’s sale is with Trina Arvetis, manager of Together We Cope’s resale shop Nu2u, at tarvetis@togetherwecope.org or 708-633-9180.

### ‘Luck on the Links’ golf outing June 6

Together We Cope’s annual golf outing, Luck on the Links, is Wednesday, June 6 at the beautiful Odyssey Country Club in Tinley Park. Registration begins at 10:30 a.m. with a light breakfast, and the shotgun start is 11:30 a.m.

“Join us for golf and make a difference for our neighbors in need,” suggests Kathy Rogge, TWC’s fundraising manager. “Your registration fee allows us to empower families in crisis, promote self-sufficiency, and alleviate hunger in the south suburbs.”

Registration for the full day’s activities is \$150 and includes 18 holes of golf, all on-course games, breakfast, lunch, and dinner at 5 p.m. Fee for golf-only is \$120 per person and includes all on-course games, breakfast and lunch. Price for dinner only is \$50 per person. This year, golfers with a hole in one can choose from a new car or \$10,000 as a prize.



There are still spots available for golfers, and many sponsorship opportunities are offered this year. The top tier of sponsorship includes golf and dinner for various size parties at funding levels of \$2,500, \$1,500 and \$1,000. Other levels of sponsorship include different benefits.

Local businesses are invited to advertise their companies by contributing 140 promotional items for golfers’ gift bags, items such as golf tees or snacks or pens. Further information is with Kathy Rogge at 708-263-0302 ext. 6101.



**We’re getting ready for our autumn school supply program - See Page 5**

## A statistic that brings real pain

About 15 million children in America – 21% of all our little ones – live in families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold. That means many children, including some right here in the south suburbs, often go to bed hungry. A good number of them can get free or reduced price breakfasts and lunches at school, but they're on their own for dinner and on the weekend. And in the summer, well, all bets are off. Their poverty status means they fall behind physically in their growing years due to lack of nutrition and medical care, and they can also lag academically in their school years because hunger gets in the way of learning. Worst of all, they often don't become the person they might have been in life. Together We Cope is proud to offer an avenue for caring people who want to do something about this, and that is to donate to our food pantry. Together, we work toward eradicating hunger one person at a time.



— Kathryn Straniero, executive director

## A CLIENT'S STORY

### A safety net for those who fall through the cracks

Jason is without a home, but otherwise has his life pretty well organized and his serious medical condition under control. Like so many Together We Cope clients who seek assistance when things go suddenly awry in life, Jason recently found himself in a temporary crisis when he was unable to recertify on time for his state medical benefits and his epilepsy medication ran out.

With no funds to purchase the drug, and temporarily without a medical card, Jason looked to TWC to bridge this gap in his medical care. A client service coordinator on our staff immediately went to work on the problem. She contacted Jason's pharmacy after ascertaining how many days of medication he'd need before his medical card was renewed. His cost without insurance benefits was \$343.89 for three days of this emergency medication need. Our staffer then contacted the Salvation Army, which has worked with TWC in the past to aid clients with a medical emergency.

Just a day or two after Jason asked for help, the Salvation Army delivered a \$300 check to his pharmacy and Together We Cope's office manager delivered the remaining \$43.89 to that drug store, bringing back the critical medication to Jason on the very day his pills ran out.

We like to work fast at Together We Cope, but even we were impressed with how quickly and smoothly this process worked for our client. We also provided Jason with emergency food in bags specifically packaged for those enduring homelessness, as well as a voucher to shop for needed shoes and clothing in Nu2u, our resale shop. Our food pantry also rounded up a number of personal care products to help Jason feel comfortable in the coming months as he seeks permanent housing.

"Things worked out well for Jason in this emergency," our client service coordinator reflected, "and we hope to continue working with him to resolve other issues."

As always, Together We Cope is grateful for the community support we receive in our work with families in temporary crisis.

### May 6

Thank you Tinley Park Fire Department 'Run for Your Life Safety 5k' with food drive for TWC

### May 12

Thank you National Letter Carriers' annual post office food drive benefiting TWC

### June 2-3

'Treasures Create a Home' —Together We Cope's annual housewares pop-up shop sale in Orland Park

### June 6

TWC's annual golf outing, Luck on the Links, at Odyssey Country Club

### June 10

TWC Volunteer Appreciation Day

### Mid-August

TWC's annual Back to School program

### September (dates to be announced)

- Nu2u wedding and special occasion dress sale
- Chicago Food Depository annual Hunger Walk

### Oct 17

TWC's annual Pasta & Ponies fundraising dinner

### December

Santa's Workshop for TWC client families

### Feb 15, 2019

TWC's annual dinner dance

## TWC Board of Directors

FRANK TROMBLEY, President  
 KEVIN PATRICK, Vice President  
 PATRICK McKERNAN, Secretary  
 ROB GALE, Sergeant-at-Arms  
 THOMAS FISHER, Director  
 VERNADEAN SWEAT, Director  
 DONALD MERTIC, Director, Emeritus  
 KATHRYN STRANIERO, Executive Director

## These Christmas lights sparkled brightly for Together We Cope

It started as a simple Christmas light display at the home of Dominic Kowalczyk of Tinley Park, but it quickly became a major neighborhood attraction and generator of funds for local charities.

Dominic eventually chose Together We Cope as beneficiary of the goodwill donations left in a collection box in front of his decorated home each holiday, as well as individual donations made by family and friends he invites to a Christmas party at his home in December. And he's gone one step further, becoming a member of TWC's Ambassadors group to raise our agency's profile in the community. Dominic and his wife, Alyssa, also have become major supporters of TWC's fundraising events throughout the year. This year the business that he started after college graduation in 2007, Construction Concepts of Illinois, became a presenting sponsor for TWC's annual dinner dance.

"I've been putting up Christmas decorations since 1996," Dominic explains. "I've always loved this holiday and I go all out. Over the years it grew to be a bigger and bigger project, and eventually resulted in thousands of dollars in contributions generated from the lights display and the holiday party at my home. It started off small, and got bigger over the years."

Several years ago Dominic chose TWC as beneficiary of the lights display, and he's been a major supporter of our agency ever since.

"I love Together We Cope because it does something really local," he said. "It's based out of Tinley Park and helps that community as well as neighboring communities. I remember the first year I donated proceeds of the lights project to TWC, how everyone there was super happy and super appreciative of the donation. I like the people at Together We Cope, and I've stuck with them ever since."

Dominic and Alyssa do not have any children yet to enjoy the spectacular lights display at the Kowalczyk home, but he quips: "If I had children, I probably wouldn't have the time to do this kind of thing!"



*Dominic and Alyssa Kowalczyk at this year's dinner dance.*

## Spring Cleaning? Think Nu2u

Together We Cope's resale shop Nu2u takes on a new look every day in the spring as our generous neighbors clean out their closets and cupboards at home and bring gently used clothing and housewares to us for sale to the community.

Our shop is the place to find that unexpected little gem, or that secondhand furniture you want for your rec room at home or apartment at college. And the stock changes every day as new donations come in, so many shoppers drop in a few times a week to see what's new.

According to Trina Arvetis, Nu2u manager, this is a particularly good time to check out our resale shop as new merchandise is coming in as donations from stores like Toys R Us and Five Below. "There are interesting new things coming into the store now as local businesses clean out their stock and prepare for a new season, so come in and check us out," she said.

Donations from the community keep the resale shop up and running, generating income for TWC client programs and filling a need in the community for affordable clothing and housewares. The shop is always in need of children's clothing, and larger size clothing for men and women. Families being assisted by Together We Cope during times of temporary crisis are given vouchers to shop for clothing at no cost to them.

Nu2u is located at 17010 So. Oak Park Avenue in downtown Tinley Park. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday. Information is at 708-633-9180 or [www.nu2uresale.org](http://www.nu2uresale.org).

## Ambassadors spread the word for a good cause

Together We Cope's Ambassadors group is spreading the message of our agency's mission throughout the south suburban community. They use their contacts and influence in the region to raise the profile of Together We Cope, drawing both those who need help and those who want to be of help to their neighbors.

Karen Moran, TWC's director of development, said the group is looking for new members and this is a good time to join

these enthusiastic supporters of our work in the community.

"We are looking for new members of the Ambassadors, as well as for ways to involve new people in our work," Karen said. "We're interested in creating a Young Professionals group, or perhaps some kind of women's event that illustrates the empowerment of women in our communities."

Karen said that ideal candidates for the Ambassadors are ones who have time

that they'd like to invest in a nonprofit, and a willingness to promote TWC in the community through their family and friends. Ambassadors also attend some fundraising events for Together We Cope, as well as monthly meetings of the Ambassadors.

Further information about the TWC Ambassadors group is with Karen Moran at [kmoran@togetherwecope.org](mailto:kmoran@togetherwecope.org) or 708-263-0302 ext. 6104.

## Stocking up for a summer food pantry

The food needs for TWC's client families change in the summer when children are home from school and don't have access to the free and reduced breakfast and lunch program.

Together We Cope's food pantry gears up for this annual need by seeking donations of lunchtime staples for distribution to families in our program. Items most appreciated at this time of year include cereal, oatmeal, soup, crackers, mac and cheese, peanut butter and jelly, tuna fish, and canned fruits and vegetables.

Monetary donations are especially appreciated because Together We Cope can purchase groceries from the Greater Chicago Food Depository at greatly



reduced prices, stretching food dollars even further. Community food drives, however, remain a staple of TWC's pantry program and our agency is fortunate to have this kind of citizen support throughout the year.

George Rumbaugh, pantry manager, said personal care items also are needed all through the year. Donations of bar soap, deodorant, shampoo, shaving cream, razors, toothpaste and toothbrushes, mouthwash, hand lotion and diapers are greatly appreciated.

Further information on the food pantry is with George Rumbaugh at 708-633-5040 ext. 7228. He can help community groups organize food drives and arrange for pickup of the donated items.

## A passion for giving back brings Vernadean Sweat to TWC board

A Tinley Park resident for 17 years, Vernadean Sweat believes that "knowing you can help someone is one of the most rewarding experiences in life."

Fortunately for Together We Cope, she has been helping people through our agency since 2013 and now has been named a member of TWC's board of directors.

Originally from Chicago's south side, Vernadean had a very successful career in facilities management first with Quaker Oats, then PepsiCo, for 34 years. Upon retirement, she "relaxed a bit at first, did some projects around the house, and then started looking for something worthwhile to do" in her community, she said.

"I used to drive by Together We Cope and was curious about the people lined up there seeking assistance, and I asked around about the agency. Then, someone recommended TWC as a good place for me to volunteer if I wanted to be involved in my community," she recalled.

Vernadean was placed in our agency's fundraising department, working with

staffer Karen Moran on many events. "It quickly became a passion for me, especially because Together We Cope truly gives back to the community in so many ways," she said.

Vernadean already was serving with TWC's Ambassadors (see a story about that group on page 3) when she was tapped for the board position. "I'm getting a lot from serving on the board of directors so far," she said. "It's a privilege to be able to help someone in need and make a difference in their life. And I feel very good about being part of something that is so meaningful."

In her retirement Vernadean has enjoyed spending more time with her son and grandson, and also is active with Zion Lutheran Church in Tinley Park.



**Vernadean Sweat**

## Their smiles greet visitors on Monday and Wednesday

Visitors to Together We Cope on Monday and Wednesday are greeted with the warm and friendly smiles of volunteers Jane Ryan (Monday) and Judy Pocius (Wednesday). These two veterans can handle any matter that crosses the reception desk.

Jane, a longtime resident of the south suburbs, has volunteered at TWC for 10 years. "The time has just flown by," she said of her work. Jane began in the food pantry but was quickly moved to the reception desk. She said after her retirement from the corporate world, she was grateful for all she had in life and felt it was time to give back.



**Jane Ryan**



**Judy Pocius**

"I like being at TWC because I'm able to see the tremendous need in today's world, the people who lose jobs, then housing, and are unable to buy food or pay their bills. It is gratifying to see an agency like TWC step in and help them out," Jane said. "I receive so much more back personally than I give through Together We Cope. But the camaraderie among the volunteers is the real bonus. I work with so many wonderful people."

Jane held several administrative posts with large corporations before her retirement, and before that owned and managed a small retail business in the south suburbs.

Judy, a Tinley Park resident, has volunteered for TWC the past 11 years, mostly at the front desk greeting clients and answering their questions. "It's interesting being at the front desk," she said. "I hear the clients' stories and I've learned to appreciate the issues in their lives. You start to understand that others don't have as much in life as we might have. And it's a wonderful feeling when people tell you how much they appreciate all that Together We Cope does for them."

Asked about memorable clients she has served over the years, Judy said it is those struggling with homelessness that have had the greatest impact on her. "They are very grateful for our help, and they are very gracious people. I enjoy working with them and hearing their stories," she said.

Judy is retired from Summit Hill School in Frankfort where she taught sixth grade for 26 years. Before that, she taught for 12 years in Catholic schools on Chicago's south side.

## TWC gears up for annual school send-off

It's been a tradition for many years for Together We Cope to send youngsters off to a new school year each fall equipped with new backpacks and school supplies, a fresh haircut, new socks and underwear, and some incidentals like paper towels, facial tissues and hand sanitizers.

Through tremendous community support every year, TWC's Back to School program provides these little necessities to more than 1,000 children each August. For a \$50 donation, a benefactor can equip one child for a successful start to a new school year. TWC purchases new backpacks for all of the children in the program, as well as boxed sets of school supplies packaged by grade level, and some of the classroom incidentals that teachers request every family contribute. Local hair salons donate coupons for free

haircuts for each child, and another drive seeks to collect new socks and underwear.

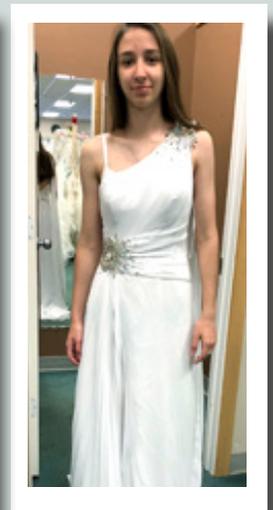
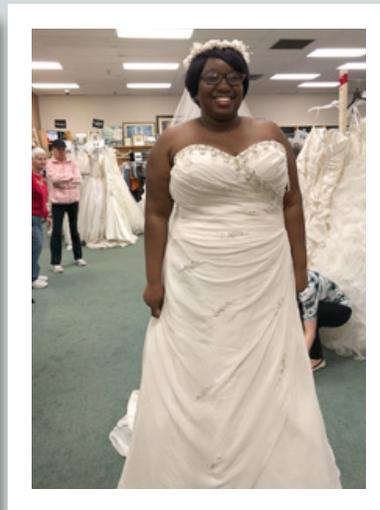
Kathryn Straniero, TWC executive director, said the annual Back to School campaign is one of her favorite initiatives. "We've found that all children are eager to start a new school year, especially when they are equipped to enter the classroom on an equal footing with their peers. Having that little boost of confidence with new backpacks and supplies contributes to their success with academics."

For many families, equipping their children for the return to school is a financial burden – one that can be especially difficult to meet when the family is facing a crisis such as loss of a job or grandparents trying to raise their grandchildren.

Further information on this year's Back to School campaign is with Tina Kessens at



tkessens@togetherwecope.org or at 708-633-5040 ext. 7231. Donations can be made by cash, check, or credit card through our website at [www.togetherwecope.org](http://www.togetherwecope.org). Checks can be sent to Together We Cope, 17010 So. Oak Park Avenue, Tinley Park, IL 60477.



## Special dress sale a big success, another event planned for the fall

Nu2u, Together We Cope's resale shop, was awash in silk, satin and lace during a two-day sale of special occasion dresses donated to our agency by local bridal shops. Hundreds of sample dresses for the bride and bridesmaid, as well as prom and other dressy occasions, were available in all sizes for this special sale.

"Since the sale, we've received even more dresses from our generous business supporters in the community," said Trina Arvetis,

Nu2u manager. "Right now we're planning another dress sale in the fall, on a date to be announced." The fall sale event will feature a wide assortment of bridal gowns for spring and summer.

Trina said the selection was amazing, including some designer names that retail from \$2,000 to \$3,000. Prices at the recent sale ranged from \$35 to \$75 per dress, allowing many women of all ages to afford a fabulous dress for their special occasion.

Revenue generated by sales at Nu2u, including from the special dress sales, is used to support client programs offered by our agency to south suburban families in temporary crisis. Without the support of the community, Together We Cope could not continue in its mission to assist our neighbors in need. "We are grateful to the local businesses who continue to support us each year in all of our endeavors," Trina said.