



Together We Cope

Volume 51

August 2018

BRIDGING THE GAP

Pasta & Ponies 2018

WEDNESDAY | OCTOBER 17

Sponsored by Specialized Staffing Solutions Inc.

It's time for the all-you-can-eat pasta dinner and exciting horse races that make Pasta & Ponies a Together We Cope family favorite outing every autumn.

This year's event on Wednesday, Oct. 17 returns to Palos Country Club, which last year provided a sumptuous buffet and a lovely atmosphere for this annual TWC fundraiser. The evening begins with an appetizer buffet of chicken wings and pizza donated by local restaurants, and then moves on to the country club's buffet featuring a variety of pasta, salad, bread, meatballs, sausage and peppers, and the club's signature champagne chicken.



After sampling delectable desserts, including an ice cream sundae bar, guests can place bets with "fun money" on six videotaped horse races. Winning tickets provide many chances to win a wide variety of prizes and gift baskets.

Dinner begins at 6 p.m. on Oct. 17 and the races start at 7 p.m. Reservations are recommended. Tickets purchased in advance are \$35 per adult and \$10 per child. Cost at the door is \$45 per adult and \$15 per child. Tickets include one free glass of beer or wine for adults, and unlimited soda for all guests. There will be special menu items for children, along with children's games and prizes.

Sponsorships at several levels are available, including those for the event or a horse race or a horse. To make reservations or provide a sponsorship contact Kathy Rogge, fundraising manager, at 708-263-0302 ext. 6101 or krogge@togetherwecope.org.

Inside



TWC volunteer Thelma Douglas shows school supplies included in the boxed kits purchased for this year's Back to School program. See page 3.

Don't forget to use AmazonSmile when buying online this upcoming holiday season

What is Amazon Smile?

AmazonSmile is a website operated by Amazon with the same products, prices, and shopping features as Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charity of your choice. Make sure to select Together We Cope!



Client Service Center
17010 S. Oak Park Ave.
Tinley Park, IL 60477
708.633.5040
Web: togetherwecope.org

Nu2u Resale Shop
17010 S. Oak Park Ave.
Tinley Park, IL 60477
708.633.9180
Web: nu2uresale.org

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



We celebrate the giving season



This is the time of year that we savor the last of summer days and gear up for the busy times ahead. We, like your families, are sending children back to school, preparing for the coming cold weather, making plans for the holidays.

At Together We Cope we also welcome the traditional Giving Season that always illustrates the tremendous generosity of our neighbors. Hundreds of youngsters are going back to the classroom this fall with new backpacks and school supplies

because of our Back to School program donors. About 1,000 families will enjoy turkey dinners with all the trimmings because of so many Thanksgiving food drives to benefit our food pantry. So many children will receive toys, pajamas, scarves and mittens in December because so many people care and support our Santa's Workshop project.

In just one year we touch the lives of thousands, and do so because the south suburban community stands with us in our mission. We received about \$1.8 million of in-kind donations to keep our food pantry and resale shop up and running this past year. In the past fiscal year there were more than 14,000 families who sought assistance from our agency for a great variety of needs. Food valued at more than \$1.3 million was distributed to those in need, some of it donated and some of it purchased from the Greater Chicago Food Depository. Donations of gently used clothing and furniture valued at another \$150,000 were also given to our client families who shop with vouchers at Nu2u, our resale shop.

We are grateful for the many people who support us all through the year, giving to specific programs or just sending donations to be used as needed. If you'd like to be included in our donor community, please contact Karen Moran, director of development, at kmoran@togetherwecope.org.

We wish you all the best in the coming season.

—Kathryn Straniero, executive director

IN MEMORIAM

The Together We Cope family is mourning the loss of Dennis McKeown of Tinley Park, longtime case manager in our client services department. Before coming to Together We Cope, Dennis had a long career with the Social Security Administration. Kaitlin Aldworth, director of client services at TWC, said: "Dennis' passion for helping the community was a theme throughout both of his careers." Dennis died this summer after a brief illness.



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*

KATHRYN STRANIERO, *Executive Director*

We are saddened to learn of the death of **DON MERTIC**, *Director Emeritus*, who will be honored in our next newsletter.

August

TWC's Annual Back to School program

September

- 8th - Chicago Food Depository Annual Hunger Walk, Jackson Park

October

- 17th – TWC Pasta & Ponies, Palos Country Club
Contact Kathy Rogge at 708-263-0302 ext. 6101

November

- 22nd – Thanksgiving Day – TWC office, food pantry, resale shop CLOSED
- 23rd – Day after Thanksgiving – TWC office, food pantry, resale shop CLOSED
- 24th – Small Business Saturday – Nu2u resale shop - OPEN
- 28th – Giving Tuesday – National online giving campaign to help fund your favorite charity

Additional November Events:

Turkey Donations – Drop off at TWC food pantry, 17010 Oak Park Ave. Contact George Rumbaugh at 708-633-5040 ext. 7228

Accepting toy and pajama donations for our annual Santa's Workshop program. Contact Tina Kessens at 633-5040 ext. 7231

Additional Fall Event:

Deeply discounted special occasion and wedding dress sale (Date TBD)

December

- 1st - Village of Tinley Park, Toyland Parade – 175th Street to Zabrocki Plaza – All donated toys will benefit TWC
- 24th - Christmas Eve – TWC office, food pantry, resale shop CLOSED
- 25th - Christmas Day - TWC office, food pantry, resale shop CLOSED
- 31st – New Year's Eve – TWC office, food pantry, resale shop OPEN

Additional December Events:

Santa's Workshop for TWC client families (Date TBD)

Gifts from the Heart- children's craft project (Date TBD)

Together We Cope honors its volunteer workforce at annual summer luncheon

About 100 south suburban residents were honored recently for their volunteer work at Together We Cope. The honors were bestowed during an appreciation luncheon in June, and included special recognition for the longest serving volunteers.

Introduced by Kathryn Straniero, TWC's executive director, as "Together We Cope's elder statesman," Len Schaafsma of Oak Forest received a 30-year pin for his service in many capacities at the agency. His volunteer service includes previous membership on the agency's board of directors, and work as the board's treasurer for many years. Additionally, Schaafsma volunteers on a daily basis at the agency doing everything from maintenance to truck unloading. As he accepted his award at the luncheon, Schaafsma took the microphone to thank in turn the 100 assembled guests who volunteer in the agency's food pantry, resale shop, office and for special events and fundraising.

Frank Trombley of Country Club Hills, president of the board, was honored for 25 years in that volunteer role, as well as for his regular contribution of many hours managing TWC's IT division. Another special award was presented to Orland Park residents Bill and Mary Ann Baer, both of whom volunteered at the agency for 25 years in various capacities. Mary Ann Baer also was a longtime director of development for TWC as it grew substantially over the year.

TWC also announced its annual winners for most hours volunteered the previous year. In 2017, Jan Schweig of Tinley Park gave 1,403 hours. Len



Jan Schweig of Tinley Park was honored for most hours volunteered at Together We Cope in 2017.

Schaafsma of Oak Forest gave 1,148 hours, while Jerry Saletta of Tinley Park gave 1,047 hours.

Special recognition was given to volunteers and staff members celebrating special anniversaries with TWC in 2018. Maria Riha and Karen Roman were honored for 20 years of service, while Shirley Kurasz and Linda Macak received 15-year service pins. Ten-year award winners were Bernadette DeMunnick, Lynn Findley, Elaine Juskie, Tina Kessens, Sharon Marth, Dolores Morrow, Linda Pilcher, Marge Seltner, Joanne

Shear and Cathy Trongeau. Those marking five years of service were Ron Berkholtz, Emily Durante, Ralph Elget, Diane Krachey, Tita Mendoza, Justine Pavlock, Beth Robinson, Tom Siniawski, Philip Tracy and Susan Yadron.

Information on volunteer opportunities with Together We Cope is with Cathy Trongeau at ctrongeau@togetherwecope.org.



Len Schaafsma of Oak Forest (shown with his wife Carol) was honored for 30 years of service to Together We Cope. Len also was cited for giving the second most number of volunteer hours in 2017.



Three area residents were honored for 25 years of service to Together We Cope. From left are Frank Trombley of Country Club Hills, Mary Ann and Bill Baer of Orland Park.



Jerry Saletta of Tinley Park is a steady presence in TWC's food pantry, and was honored for giving the third most number of volunteer hours in 2017.

Celebrating a new school year at TWC

Together We Cope's annual Back to School program is a joyful event for staff, volunteers and hundreds of children who receive new backpacks and school supplies to start the academic year equipped for success.

Because of generous donations from the community, TWC is able to purchase the backpacks and school supply boxes for children of clients being served by our agency. Various hair salons in the community also provide gift cards for free haircuts to all of the children, and TWC distributes new children's books that have been donated.

Staff at Nu2u, TWC's resale shop, have decorated the window space at the store with a back to school theme, inviting parents to come in and browse the gently used clothing needed by youngsters returning to the classroom.



Nu2u staffer Candy Frostman prepares a mannequin for the Back to School window display at Together We Cope's resale shop.

Trina Arvetis, store manager, said donations of gently used children's clothing are always needed and can be brought to the back door of the store during business hours. The store also will accept used backpacks.

"It's a joy to see the excitement of the children as they receive their backpacks, supplies and books. It's such a positive way to start a new school year, and we are grateful for all in the community who make this possible each year," said Kathryn Straniero, executive director.

Further information on TWC's Back to School program is available from Tina Kessens at 708-633-5040 ext. 7231.



Sweet dreams on holiday pillowcases

Karen Persing was sitting in her home in Oak Forest one morning, quietly reflecting on how blessed she was when she realized she wanted to give back to her community. Using her gift of sewing, Karen creates beautifully handcrafted items such as purses, bags, wallets, aprons, home décor and more. This holiday season, Karen, with the help of volunteers, plans on donating 200 homemade holiday pillowcases to Together We Cope's Christmas Program.



See what led Karen to Together We Cope and how her pillowcases will help our neighborhood families for the holidays.

How long have you been sewing?

I have been sewing for over 20 years. Growing up, I would watch my mother sew which sparked my interest in the craft. When she passed away, she left me some money which I invested in my first sewing machine in her honor. The

more I sewed, the more I enjoyed it. I make all my Christmas presents for my family. I really love doing it, it keeps my mind healthy!

What made you think of Together We Cope?

A friend of mine donates food and various items to the resale shop. I drive past Nu2u all the time. I did my own research, saw how Together We Cope is helping everyone in my own community and thought this is the perfect place.

Tell us a little bit more about this holiday pillowcase project

Once I decided I was going to donate my time, I called Together We Cope and spoke to someone about coming up with ideas to help children through TWC's Christmas program. She suggested that the pillow cases I was planning to make would be a cute way to package pajamas that TWC gives to children at Christmas.

Do you need more volunteers or holiday fabric?

YES! The more volunteers I have and the more fabric donated means the more pillowcases I can donate. I am looking for people who can sew and help make the pillowcases. I already



have 12 boxes of fabric donated from a Facebook sewing community, where 18 ladies responded to my request for help. My husband Tim is cutting all the fabric, making each kit for me and the volunteers. The sewing community is very giving.

If you are interested in volunteering your time and your sewing talent to this project, please contact Karen Persing directly at kraftykaren@att.net.

To see more of Karen's handmade creations visit her shop at www.etsy.com/shop/HandKraftsbyKaren.



A CLIENT'S STORY

Dual medical emergencies trigger a family's crisis

Sudden illness and subsequent loss of income: it's a common story from many hardworking people who ask for assistance from Together We Cope. Even as the paychecks shrink, or disappear altogether, the medical bills begin arriving.

Such was the case for Evie, her husband and daughter. They were managing their finances and keeping up with their bills. Then Evie's husband became ill and needed surgery for a double hernia. With no health insurance, the medical event triggered a financial crisis in just a few weeks. Her husband was off work without pay for three weeks, and then another two weeks with just half pay. He was responsible for his medical bills, and they began rolling in as he

recovered from his surgery. He was given a payment plan from his healthcare providers.

No sooner had Evie's husband gotten back on his feet, when their daughter became very ill and eventually was diagnosed with a throat disorder. Surgery followed, as did a second stream of medical bills. Together, Evie and her husband tried to work their way through the crisis until a few months later when they fell behind one month on the rent and feared a potential eviction.

That's when they asked for help from Together We Cope. Working out a budget for the family, a TWC client services staffer realized the family could return to self-sufficiency if the past due rent could be

paid. They had enough money for current utility bills and the current month's rent, but the past due rent was too big a hurdle to clear given their medical payments.

TWC was able to help the family by paying the past due rent and providing groceries for their immediate needs. "Now, with Evie caught up on her rent, she can focus on the wellbeing of her husband and young daughter," said the TWC staffer.

Helping families deal with a temporary crisis, with an emphasis on preventing them from becoming homeless, is Together We Cope's mission. A full 92% of every dollar donated to the agency goes directly to client services, giving someone like Evie hope for her family's future.

Nu2u has a lot on the menu

From school clothes to tailgate parties to weddings gowns, Nu2u has a lot of ideas for shoppers this fall season.

Nu2u, Together We Cope's resale shop, offers gently used children's clothing for the back to school season. "It's a great opportunity to pick up some extra jeans or t-shirts for your active kids, especially as they head back to school at this time of year," said Trina Arvetis, manager of Nu2u. "Kids clothing is always in high demand, so we ask parents to consider donating clothes their children have outgrown," she added. Proceeds from all sales at the shop help fund programs to benefit clients at TWC.



Featured in the Nu2u store window this month is a promotion for fall football tailgate parties. Many items useful for that fall favorite activity can be found on the shelves of the resale shop, including some items remaining from the shop's recent housewares pop-up sale. That sale featured hundreds of items donated by vendors at the International Home and Housewares Show in March at McCormick Place in Chicago.

Together We Cope also is the beneficiary of hundreds of bridal and special occasion gowns donated by an area bridal shop. These are sample dresses in all sizes and colors, and include bridal, bridesmaid, prom, mother of the bride and groom, and special occasion party dresses. Several times a year TWC offers these dresses for sale at deeply discounted prices during a special event. "Watch our website for news



of the next dress sale planned in the coming months," Trina said.

Nu2u's holiday shop, which is open all year, currently offers some great gently used home decorations for the upcoming fall and winter holidays. Stop by and check it out!

Nu2u is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday. It is located at 17010 So. Oak Park Avenue in downtown Tinley Park. Manager Trina Arvetis can be reached at 708-633-9180. More information is at www.togetherwecope.org or www.nu2uresale.org.

Annual housewares sale gives TWC big revenue boost

It took hundreds of hours from Together We Cope staff and volunteers to pull it off, but the 2018 TWC housewares pop-up sale in June generated substantial income for agency programs that assist south suburban families in need.

"We are very grateful for the hard work of so many people that made this event possible," said Kathryn Straniero, executive director. "Our housewares sale has become a major fundraising tool for our agency."

The effort began in March, when staff and volunteers worked long hours at McCormick Place in Chicago packing up houseware items



Trina Arvetis, Nu2u resale store manager, sets up a display at TWC's housewares pop-up shop in Orland Park.

donated by vendors at the 2018 International Home and Housewares Show. For the second consecutive year, TWC was one of only five Chicago area charities chosen to receive exhibitor donations at the close of the housewares show. Some items donated to TWC were given directly to client families in need, some were used in various other fundraising events, and the bulk of the merchandise was sold to the public at deeply discounted prices to help generate funds for TWC's programs.

Several benefactors were instrumental in TWC's ability to prepare a pop-up shop in Orland Park for the giant sale on two weekends in June. One local company donated a semi-trailer truck which collected the many skids of donations while another donated the building space where the pop-up shop took place. Staff and volunteers worked for several days to clean the building, price the items and set up the merchandise displays. Items for sale included dishware, glassware, cookware, small appliances, furniture, knick-knacks, car cleaning supplies, pet supplies, dollar store items and all were new to store shelves this year.

"It takes a major effort to pull this event together," said Trina Arvetis, manager of TWC's Nu2u resale store, "but it's worth it when you see the excitement of the shoppers on sale days."

Does your company/organization offer a give back to your community day? If so, please consider helping TWC on March 5 for the 2019 Housewares Show. For information, please contact Kathryn Rogge at 708-263-0302 ext. 6101.

Got a group? Host a food drive.



It's an easy way for your business, school, church or civic group to make a big difference in the community.

TWC will drop off bins and pick them up when you're done.

Call Tony Roman, pantry services manager, at 708-633-5040, ext. 7228.

Items we need the most are:



Boxed cereal
(18 oz. or less)

Canned beans

Canned fruits

Canned meats
(chili, chicken, stew,
etc.)

Canned soup

Canned spaghetti
sauce

Canned vegetables

Jelly or jam

Macaroni and cheese

Oatmeal

Pasta

Peanut butter

Rice

Tomato sauce

Tuna

Together We Cope

17010 South Oak Park Avenue, Tinley Park, Illinois 60477