



# Together We Cope

Volume 52

January 2019

## BRIDGING THE GAP



### Have you seen the Queen of Hearts?

For the past 13 weeks, Together We Cope has hosted its Queen of Hearts Raffle every Thursday at Bailey's Bar and Grill in Tinley Park. Friends, family and supporters of Together We Cope: Come out and enjoy the festive atmosphere in anticipation of the card reveal.

You may be wondering, what is the Queen of Hearts Raffle? It is a game consisting of a deck of 52 shuffled playing cards, plus two jokers. Each card is placed onto a sealed game board, numbered from one to 54 and displayed during event hours. To play, one must purchase a set of raffle tickets (\$5 for six tickets), write their name, phone number and the number on the playing board where they think the Queen of Hearts is hiding. Each week, a ticket is drawn randomly from a large bin, and the card that corresponds with the number on that ticket is revealed. If it is the Queen of Hearts, the

ticket holder wins the grand prize (60% of pot if present, 50% if not). If there is no grand prize winner, the game rolls over with whatever cards are remaining. In addition to the Queen of Hearts, additional winning payouts include: any other Queen or Ace: \$100 if present, \$20 if not present and Joker: \$250 if present, \$20 if not present.



At print time, the jackpot was over \$9,000. Tickets can be purchased at Bailey's Bar & Grill in Tinley Park, TWC offices and Nu2u Resale Shop during normal business hours.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Mandi Williams at 708-263-0302, ext 6106 or [mwilliams@togetherwecope.org](mailto:mwilliams@togetherwecope.org).

### Carnivale presented by 3 sponsors

Through the wonderful generosity of three presenting sponsors, Together We Cope celebrates its annual dinner dance on Friday, Feb. 15 at Odyssey Country Club in Tinley Park. Returning as continuing sponsors are Chuck and Donna Freiberg of C.D.E. Collision Centers, and Dominic and Alyssa Kowalczyk of Construction Concepts of Illinois. New presenting sponsors this year are Nives and Joe Rizza.

This year's event, dubbed Carnivale, promises to be a special occasion with some Brazilian food items on the buffet menu, Five Guys Named Moe returning to play classic rock and roll guaranteed to get all onto the dance floor, and other fun games and entertainment. New this year is a pop-up shop from designer Kendra Scott where guests can design their own jewelry pieces for purchase the same evening, with 20% of sales donated back to Together We Cope.

As always, many great items are available for bidding through live and silent auctions. This year's selections include a catering package from Meatheads in Frankfort, a birthday party at Synergy Dance Studio, theater tickets and more. "If you can't make it to the event, but would like to see all of our auction items, log on to the official Carnivale website at: <https://e.givesmart.com/s/iE5TIm/e/bVk/m>, which will go live Monday, Feb. 4," said Mandi Williams, marketing manager.

During the evening, guests can take their chances on the grand raffle featuring an Apple watch, Nespresso Citiz Chrome Coffee/Espresso Maker and a \$100 Visa Gift Card. Raffle tickets can be purchased prior to the event for \$5 each or \$25 for six tickets.

Tickets for the dinner dance are \$100 per person, with advance registration required, and include a Brazilian themed buffet dinner and open bar for four hours. Reservations are available through Feb. 13 with Mandi at [mwilliams@togetherwecope.org](mailto:mwilliams@togetherwecope.org) or 708-263-0302, ext. 6106. Sponsorship and ad book opportunities are still available through Karen Moran at [kmoran@togetherwecope.org](mailto:kmoran@togetherwecope.org).

**Client Service Center**  
17010 S. Oak Park Ave.  
Tinley Park, IL 60477  
708.633.5040  
Web: [togetherwecope.org](http://togetherwecope.org)

**Nu2u Resale Shop**  
17010 S. Oak Park Ave.  
Tinley Park, IL 60477  
708.633.9180  
Web: [nu2uresale.org](http://nu2uresale.org)

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





## We wish you joy and good fortune in 2019

This is a time for looking ahead and making new plans. Whether you call it New Year's Resolutions or just a new direction in life, it's the time of year to reflect on what went before and what lies ahead.

For Together We Cope, it's always about meeting the needs of our neighbors in need. What we hope for in a new year is the continued friendship of our longtime

supporters, and the making of new friends to aid us in our mission.

It's also time to gear up for our big fundraising season, beginning with our annual dinner dance on Friday, Feb. 15 at the Odyssey Country Club. Very soon after that we launch our annual giant housewares sale with material donated to us by exhibitors at the International Home and Housewares Show at McCormick Place. In the meantime, our Queen of Hearts raffle continues each week as we await the lucky person who will win it all! This year we also added a January Bridal Fair. We need your support in all of our endeavors!

At the start of this new year, we resolve to keep our focus on our core mission: assisting south suburban families in temporary crisis as they struggle to become self-sufficient. With the help of staff, volunteers and friends, we'll continue in our 37-year tradition of service to our neighbors.

—Kathryn Straniero, executive director

## We have lost a good friend

Together We Cope lost a good friend in June when board member Donald Mertic of Palos Heights died at age 84. Throughout his life, Don was very active in the south suburban community and brought a lifetime of experience to his role as a board member for TWC.

"We surely will miss Don's kindness and generosity, as well as his unwavering support for our agency's mission," said Kathryn Straniero, TWC's executive director. "He faithfully supported all of our fundraising events and also donated items to our resale shop on a regular basis."

Don graduated from Harrison High School in Chicago and went on to earn a degree in education from Northern Illinois University. He then served during the Korean Conflict before beginning his teaching career at Washington High School in Chicago. Don served in many roles to help people. He was an active member of Kiwanis, volunteered at the Worth Food Pantry and Palos Community Hospital, and the boards of directors for Chicago Memorial Association and Palos Heights Parks and Recreation.

He is survived by three children and six grandchildren. His wife, Jura, died in 2016.



## TWC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**FRANK TROMBLEY**, *President*

**KEVIN PATRICK**, *Vice President*

**PATRICK McKERNAN**, *Secretary*

**ROB GALE**, *Sergeant-at-Arms*

**MAGGIE CROTTY**, *Director*

**THOMAS FISHER**, *Director*

**DON SCHUPEK**, *Director*

**VERNADEAN SWEAT**, *Director*

**KATHRYN STRANIERO**, *Executive Director*

## 'This is what I need to do in my life!'



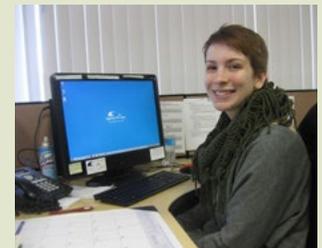
Souheir Rahman brings many years of community service experience to her position in the client services department at Together We Cope. With a varied background in social work, and skill in the Arabic language, Souheir has become invaluable to TWC in communicating with clients.

Souheir lives in Frankfort with her husband. They are the parents of four children, ages 10 to 28. She received her bachelor's degree in social work in Jerusalem, and has spent her career helping people in need. Before joining the TWC staff, Souheir owned her own business through which she assisted English speaking Arabic children to learn Arabic language.

It is that proficiency in the Arabic language that allows her to communicate effectively with many clients. "When writing, Arabic is one language. But in speaking, there are many different dialects of the language depending on the country of origin," she explained. Luckily, Souheir can communicate efficiently in all of the dialects.

"I love working at Together We Cope! This is my passion, this is what I need to do in my life," she says of her work.

## Hannah Ryan joins client services



Social work often is about doing the greatest good for the greatest number of people, but sometimes it's the impact on one individual that is most rewarding. That's why Hannah Ryan entered the field.

"I chose this work because I wanted to help people and make a difference in their lives," Hannah said. "I feel like in social work you strive to make change for the most number of people, but I'm sort of on the side of the individual. I like to see the impact we can make on one person who needs our help."

Hannah received her bachelor's degree in social work from Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais, and worked at a homeless shelter before coming to Together We Cope in September where she now works in client services. She recalls the case of a family of three with an adult daughter who was the only one with an income. "They were so grateful for the assistance we could give them, and that is a good feeling to help someone out," she said.

## Feeding the people is their common goal

When George Rumbaugh retired as Together We Cope's food pantry manager this fall and Tony Roman took on the job, it soon became apparent the two men shared a common goal.

"In general, I've always wanted to give as much food as we can to the families who come to us for help each day," George said as he reflected on his six years with the pantry. "I've tried to make it fun, networking with other agencies or farmers to get a lot of different kinds of food into our pantry. And people are very appreciative of what they can receive here at Cope, they tell us that all the time."

Tony expressed the same sentiment shortly after taking over as pantry manager. "Sometimes pantry workers ask me where to store the food coming in, and I tell them to distribute as much as possible to the hungry at our door that day. Feed the people, man!" he says of his approach.

George and Tony have a number of other things in common. They are both Tinley Park residents, and both volunteered at TWC before coming on staff. Both also have experience in the food handling business. George retired after 42 years at Jewel Foods, including a long time as store director of the Frankfort Jewel. Tony was warehouse manager at Eat Enterprises, which delivers meals to schools. He also



Tony Roman (left) gets some advice from George Rumbaugh on running TWC's food pantry as George retired this fall.

has had several restaurant serving jobs.

"In this job I see the reality of what a lot of people are dealing with in our economy today," Tony said. "And I get to know our clients, that's nice. They tell you their stories and you understand what they are facing. I find that to be much more powerful than helping out in other ways. I believe that feeding people is the most important thing you can do."

George agrees. "It's a shame in this country that we have to feed so many, especially when Americans throw away so much food. I notice how committed our volunteers are to their specific roles in the pantry, how hard they work to help our clients, so I know they are feeling that too.

## 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.

We are an impressive operation here at Together We Cope."

In his retirement, George plans to spend more time with his wife Cathy, six children and nine grandchildren. "I'd like to see what life is like when you are not working," he quipped.

Further information on the food pantry, such as how to conduct a food drive in your neighborhood, is available from Tony Roman at 708-633-5040 ext. 7228.

## VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

### Jerry Saletta named Reimer winner



Together We Cope is grateful for the efforts of its volunteers, but this year's Theodore H. Reimer Volunteer of the Year winner is actually grateful for Together We Cope.

Jerry Saletta, who works with vigor and good cheer in the food pantry, tells a story that sums up the reason for his labors. "I was at a party the day after Christmas, sitting at a table with three other retired gentlemen, and they were

describing how they had trouble sleeping at night. They said they were bored in their retirement, and feeling miserable from health problems or inactivity. I suddenly realized how lucky I am to be volunteering at Together We Cope, how fortunate to have this opportunity. I am thankful that I'm healthy enough to work hard, and to do something so important to help others."

Jerry finds another reason to spend so much time at TWC. "Absolutely, it's the camaraderie with the other people here that makes this work fun. It's a very important aspect of volunteering here. There are so many good people I meet and talk with every day."

Tony Roman, food pantry manager, refers to Jerry as part of "the backbone of the pantry operation" because he works so

hard and cheerfully fills any need on any given day. He handles the rigorous task of managing the bread racks four days a week, as well as helping with the truck when necessary. "We couldn't do it without him," Tony said.

Jerry also was honored this spring during the 2018 Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon for the 1,047 hours of volunteer work he gave to our agency the previous year. "It is always a pleasure to see his smiling face as I pass through the pantry," said Kathryn Straniero, executive director, "and I'm sure that our clients also appreciate his demeanor."

Our Volunteer of the Year will be honored at the annual dinner dance on Friday, Feb. 15 at the Odyssey Country Club in Tinley Park.

## Thanks to all of our workshop elves!

Together We Cope's annual Santa's Workshop program once again was a big success in December, with hundreds of area youngsters and teens receiving toys, games, gift cards, pajamas, hats, scarves and mittens through the generosity of south suburban residents who faithfully support this program.

"This is a favorite program among our donors and supporters," said Kathryn Straniero, executive director. "Each year they get into the holiday spirit and support this campaign in so many ways. Some give money, some shop for toys and pajamas to donate, some volunteer at our office to organize the program and distribute gifts to our client families. This year, one lady even made holiday pillow cases to wrap the pajamas we gave to each child."

Together We Cope is grateful for the many people, churches, clubs, organizations and civic groups who support this special program every December. Their loyalty, and creativity in making the holidays bright, is very much appreciated.



## Kusinski Family Foundation always ready to help TWC

Ray Kusinski's commitment to Together We Cope is short and to the point: Call me when you need anything.

Since 2005 he has answered the call each time, whether it's to purchase children's backpacks for our Back to School program, turkeys and hams for our holiday food program, or sponsorship of any of our fundraising events. He is generous and reliable in his support of our mission.

Ray lives in Mokena with his wife, Heather, and daughter, Catherine. They support several causes, including Together We Cope, through the Kusinski Family Foundation. "What I like about Together We Cope is that they help people out when they're at their worst and need assistance right now," he said. "Anyone can fall down quickly, and I love it that Together We Cope will help immediately then follow up with other services later."

Together We Cope's low administrative costs also appeal to Ray, as well as its purely local mission. "It's good for a donor to know that money goes right back into the community, to the south suburban families most in need," he said. Fully 92 cents of every dollar donated to TWC goes directly to client services.

Karen Moran, director of development for TWC, said the support of the Kusinski Family Foundation is important to the agency's operation. "Ray and his family stand ready to help at a moment's notice for whatever need arises. It is friends like this that make it possible for us to continue fulfilling our mission to assist families in temporary crisis."



## A CLIENT'S STORY

### No car or no home, which would you choose?

That's the question Cheryl, a single mother with two children, has been asking herself for the past month. Cheryl uses her car to get back and forth from work which, just like the rest of us, allows her to pay the rent and other monthly expenses. For the past two months, Cheryl's car has been unreliable, forcing her to miss days of work and resulting in less pay. She is constantly worrying about making it to work and staying in her home. The anxiety and fear

is overwhelming. Cheryl needed help and needed help fast.

This is when Together We Cope stepped in. Cheryl heard about TWC through a co-worker who informed her that Together We Cope helps those in temporary crisis just like her. She came to the TWC offices and spoke with a client services rep who assessed her situation. After their conversation, TWC was able to assist Cheryl financially and help her stay in her home. She will no longer have to worry about affording her car repair versus paying her rent. She will be able to pay her monthly expenses on time and she will no longer have to worry about potentially being without a roof over her head.





Wedding Dress  
&  
Accessories Sale

Saturday, January 19

10am - 7pm

Nuzu Resale Shop  
17010 Oak Park Ave  
Tinley Park, IL

A unique opportunity to buy beautiful bridal shop sample gowns at discounted prices. Gowns valued between \$2,000 - \$3,500.

For more information,  
please call 708-633-9180.

## Longtime Posen mayor joins TWC board



Don Schupek is a man who likes to be busy. He had a career in administration, and also served his community of Posen for 17 years as mayor. "While in office, I made myself visible in the community and the region in order to be effective," he recalls, describing many events he attended over the years in order to advocate for his village.

Don has lived his entire life in Posen, as did his family, and now resides in a home he built on his grandfather's property.

Even today as a retiree he is busy, working with the Posen Seniors and Midlothian Chamber of Commerce. Now he's joined the Together We Cope board of directors, where he hopes to contribute his experience and wisdom in helping the agency to achieve its objectives.

Don made many connections in the region while he served as mayor of Posen, and those contacts now will benefit Together We Cope. In fact, he met TWC board member Pat McKernan and TWC executive director Kathryn Straniero

through his community involvement and that is how he became aware of TWC.

"I was aware of Together We Cope, but learned more about it through my work as mayor," he said. "I knew you served a lot of families in the region, and now that I know more about the agency I am amazed at the number of volunteers who work with you. It's next to impossible to get volunteers today."

Don said he knows that funding is a major issue for all nonprofits, and hopes that he can help in that regard. "I think there's more people today who really need help, and I'd like to work toward increasing Together We Cope's funding so we can meet those needs."

## Welcome, Maggie!



Together We Cope is proud to welcome longtime friend and supporter M. Maggie Crotty to our board of directors. Throughout her long career in public service, Maggie has advocated on behalf of our agency in many ways.

She served the south suburban community in a great number of roles throughout her career. She currently serves as the elected Bremen Township Supervisor, and previously served in the Illinois House and Senate. Among her various assignments in the Senate was the key role of assistant majority leader. Locally, Maggie worked hard for 16 years as president of the Arbor Park District 145 school board, as well as with numerous community and civic organizations.

In all of those roles, she found ways to support Together We Cope and further its mission in the 27 communities served by our agency. Kathryn Straniero, TWC executive director, said: "Maggie is always there for us, whether it was advancing legislation in Springfield to promote nonprofit funding or attending our many fundraising events over the years. She has been loyal to us, and we are very fortunate to have her serving on our board of directors now."

## VOLUNTEERING

### Housewares show – your help is needed!

Together We Cope is honored to once again be selected as one of five charities to benefit from the International Home and Housewares Show at McCormick Place in Chicago. We are in need of help to assist in the collection and packaging of the hundreds of donations exhibitors give us on the last day of the show.

We are looking for 100 volunteers to help us with this task. TWC will provide round-trip transportation by bus from our office at 17010 S. Oak Park Ave, to McCormick Place. The "packing-up" event is

from noon to about 8 p.m. Volunteers can work part or all of the day. Transportation will be provided only for those working the full day.

The show features over 2,200 exhibitors from around the world. Items given to Together We Cope will be distributed to families in need as well as sold in Nu2u (TWC's resale shop) to help generate revenue for our services.

If you are interested, please contact Cathy Trongeau, volunteer coordinator, no later than Feb. 4. **Cathy can be reached at 708-633-5040 ext. 7221 or [ctrongeau@togetherwecope.org](mailto:ctrongeau@togetherwecope.org).**

international  
**home +**  
**housewares**  
**show** | IT'S SMART

**mccormick place, chicago**

# 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. Pre-made bin labels are available.

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

## Items we need 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

To donate online click the 'Donate Now' button at [togetherwecope.org](http://togetherwecope.org)

# Together We Cope

17010 South Oak Park Avenue, Tinley Park, Illinois 60477