

Community Action News

Community Action...helping people, changing lives.

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“Families In Transition” event serves at-risk families

Will County Center for Community Concerns, in partnership with the Will County Regional Office of Education, hosted the second annual “Families in Transition” event on Saturday, April 27. More than 311 families with school-aged children were invited to the event, held at the Joliet Township High School West Campus, to access services available to them through local social service agencies.

Twenty local organizations were on hand to guide families through the event. Families were encouraged to make connections with agencies like WCCCC to help them obtain stable housing, repair their credit, and access other programs and services that would benefit their household. WCCCC is a HUD-certified Housing Counseling agency, and had housing counselors on hand to answer questions about home ownership, financial literacy, and foreclosures. Other staff assisted families search for affordable housing through www.willfindhousing.org, a web site that allows landlords to post information on available housing units, and is searchable by cost, location, school district and other parameters.



Every family was also provided with a pre-packed hygiene kit containing items donated by local businesses, schools, churches and individuals. Donations of gently used clothing were arranged for families to “shop”. Children were welcomed in the book room hosted by the National Hood Up of Black Women, who helped the youngsters select up to three books each. Other services available included vision screenings provided by the Joliet and Bolingbrook Lion’s Clubs, haircuts provided by local barbers, and dental screenings provided by the Will County Health Department Mobile Dental Lab.

The Northern Illinois Food Bank’s Mobile Pantry was onsite, offering fresh meats, vegetables and other nutritious foods to 164 families. WCCCC staff and volunteers assisted each family as they “shopped” the pantry. Printed information on local food pantries was also made available to help stretch the budgets of these low-income households.



WCCCC wishes to thank each of the organizations, businesses, and individuals who contributed to the 2013 “Families in Transition” event, especially Ron O’Connor, Will County Regional Office of Education; Joliet Township High School West Campus for providing space for the event, Presence St. Joseph Medical Center for providing 375 box lunches, Homecut Donuts, and special thanks to the high school students who generously donated their time and energy on a Saturday morning.

From the Director

Will County Center for Community Concerns has experienced phenomenal growth over the last 25 years as a community action agency, and we are an integral part of the network of social service agencies that serve Will County. We have developed excellent relationships with local municipal offices, senior residences, social service agencies, and other organizations to ensure that we can link families in need with all the services that would benefit them.

Some of the partnerships we have forged are highlighted in this issue of our newsletter. Our partnership with the Will County ROE office resulted in more than 300 families having access to services and goods at the “Families in Transition” event. We have administered ComEd’s Special Residential Hardship Program since 2007, resulting in 3,073 applications being approved. As a result of our relationship with the City of Joliet, we offered two homebuyer seminars earlier this year. Other partnerships, with foundations and businesses, have resulted in ongoing financial support for our Home Repair Program; without their financial support many homeowners could end up evicted from their homes.

I would like to thank our Board of Directors for their ongoing commitment to the people we serve, our elected officials for their support, and to each of our partners who support our work in the community. As always, we remain dedicated to our mission and to the continued development of great community partnerships.

Kris

2013 VITA Program

Will County Center for Community Concerns again provided income-eligible Will County households with no-cost tax filing services. Our agency began accepting appointments for free tax preparation services on January 30 and continued the program through April 15, 2013.

WCCCC is a member of LITAC, the Low Income Tax Assistance Coalition, whose goal is to provide no-cost tax filing services to low and moderate income households. By utilizing the services of a VITA site, taxpayers can save the cost of professional tax preparation. VITA volunteers are also trained to help taxpayers determine if they are eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Through the efforts of our staff and volunteers, WCCCC prepared 94 federal and 97 state returns. Director Kris White and Site Coordinator Todd Fuller wish to extend their thanks to volunteers Yadira Esparza and Donna Popek for donating their time and expertise.

Old Plank Trail Community Bank

WCCCC is pleased to have received a \$1,000 grant from Old Plank Trail Community Bank in support of the Home Repair Program.

“The Home Repair Program was created in 2003 to address a need in our community. We were concerned about families being displaced from the homes due to code violations caused by repairs left undone. The program gives us the flexibility to address violations and make repairs that are not allowed under other grants”, said Director White. “I am very thankful to Old Plank Trail for their ongoing support of the Home Repair Program”.



Mary Ann Murphy & Noreen Cook present check from Old Plank Trail Bank for Home Repair Program

WCCCC Staff present Homebuyer Seminars

In February 2013 Will County Center for Community Concerns partnered with the City of Joliet, Unity CDC, and Realty Executives to present a series of homebuyer seminars to educate potential homeowners about the city’s Neighborhood Stabilization Program. The City of Joliet offered five properties, three of which were new construction.



WCCCC’s Patricia Venziano spoke to a group of interested residents at First Presbyterian Church of Joliet on February 7, offering tips on navigating through the home-buying process and clarifying the process of securing a mortgage. A similar session was also offered at Unity CDC’s office at 1 Doris Avenue.

WCCCC provides pre-purchase housing counseling to participants in both the City of Joliet and Will County’s NSP programs.



Patricia Venziano; Alfredo Melessio, City of Joliet; Jeff Gregory, Realty Executives

ComEd Residential Hardship Program

On Tuesday, April 23 representatives from Commonwealth Edison joined Director Kris White and County Executive Larry Walsh to encourage eligible Will County residents to apply for utility bill assistance through the ComEd Residential Special Hardship Program.

The ComEd Residential Special Hardship Program is a supplement to the LIHEAP Program, also administered by WCCCC. ComEd customers who have experience a financial hardship (e.g. loss of employment, military deployment, disability, medical expenses) may apply for a grant of up to \$1,500 towards their electric bill. Applicants must provide documentation of the hardship at the time of application.

ComEd representative Jeff Hettrick explained that ComEd has pledged to provide \$50 million in financial support over the next five years to support customers who are in need of help staying current with their electric bills. In addition to the Residential Hardship Program administered by WCCCC and other LIHEAP agencies, veterans may be eligible for assistance through the CHAMP (ComEd Helps Active Military Personnel) Program.

WCCCC has administered the ComEd Special Hardship Program since 2007. To date more than 3,073 applications for assistance have been approved for a total benefit of \$1,492,323.

Congressman Foster visits WCCCC



Congressman Bill Foster, representative from Illinois' 11th Congressional District, recently visited Will County Center for Community Concerns to share his concerns for the residents of his district, and to learn more about community action.

“Will County is fortunate to have elected leaders who are well-versed in the needs of the people they represent. I was glad to have an opportunity to share our concerns about how funding levels could impact our capacity to serve our customers” said Director Kris White.



Congressman Foster shared his concerns for the low-income population of our area, and his desire to see positive, measurable outcomes as they work to regain their self-sufficiency.

Many thanks to Congressman Foster for his work on behalf of community action and the people in Illinois District 11.

Grant Award from IHDA

WCCCC has been awarded a second round of funding from the Illinois Housing Development Authority to administer the Foreclosure Prevention Program. This grant enables the agency to continue to provide foreclosure prevention counseling services to individuals and groups.

Will County Center for Community Concerns is part of the Illinois Foreclosure Prevention Network, and has participated in community outreach events in Burr Ridge and in Joliet.



May 27:
Closed in observance of Memorial Day

June 1:
*Plainfield Abilities Fair
Plainfield Central High School
Field House*

August 1:
*Back to School Fair
USF Campus*

August 7:
*Senior Resource Expo
Richland School*

September 2:
Closed in observance of Labor Day

October 19:
*Healthy Homes/Healthy Families Expo
Joliet Park District / Inwood*

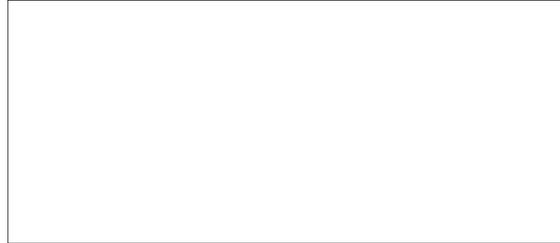
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The Promise of Community Action

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community and are dedicated to helping people help themselves...and each other.

Caesar's Foundation/Harrah's Casino contributes to Home Repair Program

The Caesar's Foundation, recently made a generous contribution to support WCCCC's Home Repair Program.

On April 29, Darren VanDover presented Kris White with a check for \$15,000. The funds will be used to make repairs and correct code violations that could render a residence uninhabitable.

"Harrah's Joliet and the Caesar's Foundation have contributed \$40,000 to our Home Repair Program since 2008. Their generous support of our work, and their commitment to our community is outstanding. We are very grateful for all they do to improve the lives of families in need", said Director Kris White.

Since 2008, more than 68 homes have been repaired through the Home Repair Program, ensuring that the residents have a safe, stable place to live. This program is funded entirely through the generous support of individuals, businesses, and foundations.

WCCCC wishes to thank Mr. VanDover and the staff at Harrah's Casino Joliet for their hospitality and support, and the Caesar's Foundation for their generous gift.



L to R: Josh San Salvador, Melinda Mackey, Scott Jones, Kris White, Maureen Pool, Kim Kubaitis, Darren VanDover, & Dawn Sula