

Community Action News

Community Action...helping people, changing lives.

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WCCCC Housing Counseling Services

Will County Center for Community Concerns, as the community action agency serving the low and moderate income households of Will County, continually strives to identify and meet the changing needs of our community.

Since the beginning of the housing crisis in 2008, WCCCC has seen an evolution in the services most in demand. Many homeowners suffered a loss or reduction in employment, fell behind in their mortgage payments and ended up in foreclosure. Other families were at risk of homelessness when their landlords lost their properties due to foreclosure. According to RealtyTrac, Will County had the highest foreclosure rate in the state in December 2013.

WCCCC, in partnership with Will County and the City of Joliet, has been awarded a \$3 million dollar National Foreclosure Settlement grant through the Illinois Attorney General's office to address the foreclosure crisis in targeted areas by

providing homebuyer counseling, foreclosure prevention services, emergency housing assistance, and the acquisition, rehab and resale of blighted properties. We look forward to beginning implementation of this three year grant in the spring of 2014.

In addition to providing individual and group counseling services at our office on Scott Street in Joliet, our housing counselors also are available at the Will County Foreclosure Mediation Court three days each week to speak with homeowners who have been served with a foreclosure filing. We find that most homeowners do not seek out housing counseling services until they find themselves in court. Our counselors work with them to either modify their mortgage or, if necessary, work through the foreclosure process.

Our agency also sends housing counselors to the Kankakee County Foreclosure Mediation Court one day each month to provide these services onsite to Kankakee County homeowners.

Inside this issue:

<i>From the Director</i>	2
<i>2013 Holiday Baskets</i>	2
<i>2013 Donors and Volunteers</i>	3
<i>Calendar of Events</i>	3
<i>VITA Program</i>	4

Illinois Home Weather Assistance Program

WCCCC has administered the Weatherization Program since 1987. The program is designed to increase the energy efficiency of residential dwellings, ensure the safe operation of the heating system, and reduce utility expenses. Typical measures include the inspection and repair or replacement of the heating system, insulation of the attic and sidewalls, and sealing of bypasses to eliminate the loss of heated or cooled air.

Homeowners who meet the income guideline of 150% of the federal poverty level are eligible for this program. An inspection of the structure is completed by one of WCCCC's certified assessors, and a work order is created and assigned to a contractor. After the work is completed a final inspection is conducted to ensure that the work has been done properly.

According to Marla Ramos, Housing Programs Director, families who have had their homes weatherized are grateful for the increased comfort and safety of their homes, and the energy savings.

This program year WCCCC anticipates weatherizing 200 homes. Applications for assistance may be made at our office in Joliet, or at outreach sites around the county. For more information please call (815) 722-0722 ext 227 or visit www.wcccc.net.



From the Director

As I reflect back on 2013, I am overwhelmed at the support Will County Center for Community Concerns has received from our community. I am so very grateful for the ongoing financial support provided by individual donors, municipalities, foundations and businesses, as well as for the time and energy our volunteers brought to our 2013 events.

I want to extend special thanks to the Grainger Foundation, Walmart Store 4529, and Enbridge Energy, each of whom made very generous monetary contributions to our program. Through their donations we were able provide two warm fleece blankets for each of the 152 families we served, and toys for every one of the 390 children on our list.

I also want to thank First Midwest Bank, who not only made a donation to our program, but also came down and helped at our event on December 18. Cornell Lurry, VP of Community Investment Relationships, and senior loan officers Mike Van Tassel and

Steve Staniszewski were on hand to load our family's cars with their boxes and packages. Many of our families expressed their gratitude for the kindness and good humor of these gentlemen.

Once again Will County employees and the Daughters of the American Revolution collected new hats, gloves, mittens and scarves for our program. The county is to be commended for the thoughtfulness and good will of their staff!

One of our families wrote to express their thanks, saying "Thank you for keeping my children warm during this harsh winter. We are going through the most difficult time of our lives and you have lifted some of our struggle to survive".

On behalf of our Board of Directors and staff, I want to extend my gratitude to each of you who have been so generous in your support of our agency's work in the community. We wish you all a happy and healthy new year!

Kris



Pictured L to R: Lona Jakaitis, B Johnson, Larry Walsh, Tempest & Fantasia, Kris White, and Cyndi Valencia



Pictured L to R: Nick Palmer, Todd Fuller, Larry Walsh, and Brian Malloy



L to R: Board members Frank Fleischer and Linda Pote, Kris White, Larry Walsh, and Jennifer Smith.

2013 Holiday Basket Program

WCCCC begins taking applications as early as October, and each year we see an ever increasing need for our Holiday Basket Program. The program is designed to provide a supply of nutritious food and warm outerwear for low income households with children aged 16 or younger. This year we assessed and approved a record 152 families, including 390 children. By mid-November WCCCC staff and volunteers began shopping for toys and coats for each of the children in those families, and the conference room became a staging area for collecting and sorting toys and jackets.

Each year we include toys, hats, mittens, a holiday meal and other food staples in the holiday baskets. This year, through the generosity of our donors, we were also able to provide two new holiday fleece blankets for our families.

Once again Will County employees collected new hats, gloves, and scarves to ensure that every child is warm during the harsh winter weather. The Will County chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, in an effort spearheaded by Will County's Lona Jakaitis, also contributed to this collection. Through these efforts more than 100 sets of hats and gloves were collected for our families.

On December 18, WCCCC's staff and volunteers prepared for Santa's arrival and were on hand to help families carry out boxes filled with toys and food. Families were treated to special refreshments provided by Fleckenstein's Bakery, Milano Bakery, and Homecut Donuts, and then had the opportunity to have their pictures taken with Santa as a memento of a very special evening. Will County Chief Executive Larry Walsh and Chief of Staff Nick Palmer came by to wish our families a happy holiday and jumped in to help load food boxes into their waiting cars, working side by side with First Midwest Bank representatives and WCCCC staff.

WCCCC enjoyed a tremendous response to our appeal for community support for the 2013 program, including a \$5,000 donation from the Grainger Foundation, \$3,000 from Walmart Store 4529, and \$3,000 from Enbridge Energy. Ms. Jennifer Smith, Enbridge's Public Affairs Advisor, personally delivered the funds earmarked to provide a gift for each child in the program.

Many thanks to each and every one of the donors and volunteers that helped make our 2013 Holiday Basket Program a very successful event!

Thank you to all 2013 Donors and Volunteers!



2013 Donors

3 Rivers Association of Realtors
 Absolutely Dry Restoration
 Aileen S. Andrew Foundation
 Alex W. Nielsen Foundation
 Jackie & Von Ray Barnes
 Berlinsky Scrap Corporation
 Block, Klukas & Manzella
 Bob Martin Auto Sales
 Paul Boetto
 Veronica Bollero
 BPO Elks #296
 Brightmore Physical Therapy
 Tim Brophy
 Caesars Foundation
 Caring Hands by Kris
 Caterpillar Foundation
 City of Crest Hill
 Lloyd & Nadine Collins
 CPX Sports
 Cutting Edge Catering
 D'Arcy Motors
 Alan Darr
 Daughters of the American
 Revolution/Will County
 Ecolab
 Edward Batis & Associates
 Ryan Eggert
 Elite Children's Academy
 Enbridge Energy
 First Federal Bank
 First Midwest Bank
 Fleckenstein's Bakery
 Nancy & Fabio Franchi
 Elizabeth Franklin
 Full Circle Foundation
 Gilbane Building Company
 Grainger Foundation
 John & Michelle Greuling
 Hammel Law Offices
 Hansen Services

Michael Hansen
 Harrah's Joliet Hotel & Casino
 Michael & Antoinette Hatfield
 Homecut Donuts
 Howard Wright/State Farm
 J.L. Adler Roofing
 Jackson Township
 Sheryl & Ed Jaquays
 Joliet Jewish Welfare Chest
 Joliet Junior Woman's Club
 Joliet Kiwanis Club
 Joliet Sam's Club #8298
 Joliet Tent Company
 Joliet/Will Project Pride
 JPMorgan Chase Foundation
 John Kilday
 Scott & Kim Libersher
 Lockport Woman's Club
 McDonald's
 Michael's Pizza
 Milano Bakery
 Monee Township
 Terry Morris
 NICOR
 NuMark Credit Union
 OAKK Construction
 Old Fashioned Pancake House
 Old Plank Trail
 Community Bank
 Papineau Wittman Group
 Peotone Township
 Plainfield Township
 Plasti-Pak Packaging
 Linda & Walter Pote
 Presence St. Joseph
 Medical Center
 Priority Staffing
 Pro-Town Properties
 Quality Quick Print
 Ragusa's Promo Advertising
 Rathbun, Scervenyak
 & Kosol
 Reich, Jumbeck
 & Associates
 Ray & Vicki Soloman
 Karen Sorbero
 Star Inn
 The Home Depot Foundation
 Tony DeRosa Foundation

TownePlace Suites by Marriott
 Jacqueline Traynere
 John Trynere
 Mr. & Mrs. Mark Turk
 Turk Furniture
 Ultra Foods
 United Way of Will County
 Walmart Store #2956
 Walmart Store #4529
 Wermer, Rogers, Doran
 & Ruzon
 A.J. Wilhelmi
 Will County Employees
 Will Township
 James & Rita Zelko

2013 Volunteers

Anthony Bailey
 Jackie Barnes
 Luis Cantu
 Zeke Gallardo
 Alexis Hester
 Chris Lukanich
 Cornell Lurry
 Matthew Rees
 Max Staniszewski
 Steve Staniszewski
 Dave Stutsman
 Mike Van Tassel
 Les White



February 12:
 Closed in observance of
 Lincoln's Birthday

February 12:
 Community Resource Fair
 Romeo Recreation Center

February 17:
 Closed in observance of
 President's Day

February 20:
 Catholic Charities
 Resource Fair

February 21-22:
 Joliet Region Chamber of
 Commerce Expo
 Westfield Mall

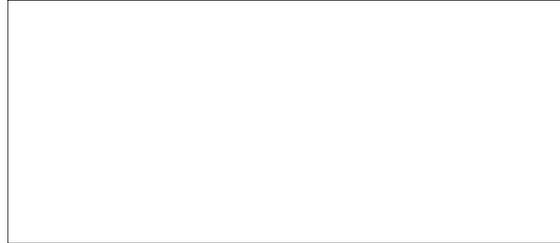
April 18:
 Closed in observance of
 Good Friday





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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.



WCCCC to Begin Third Year of Income Tax Assistance

In January 2014 Will County Center for Community Concerns will again provide low to moderate income individuals and families with free tax preparation services. WCCCC is a member of Will County LITAC (Low Income Tax Assistance Coalition). This is the third year that WCCCC has partnered with the IRS as a VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) site.

All services are free of charge, and taxes are filed online to ensure speedy returns. Each of our volunteers and staff who will be preparing returns are trained through an IRS-sponsored certification program.

Appointments for tax preparation will be available beginning January 31, 2014. WCCCC will also participate in three LITAC-sponsored events; the first and second will be hosted by Silver Cross Hospital on February 1 and February 15, and a third event at our office in Joliet on Saturday, April 12. All of these events are open to the public.

For additional information on WCCCC's free tax preparation service or to schedule an appointment, please contact Patricia Venziano at (815)-722-0722, extension 217.

