WCCCC hosts Healthy Homes/Healthy Families Expo

Will County Center for Community Concerns hosted its first annual “Healthy Homes/Healthy Families Expo” on Saturday, October 22 to provide local households with information on services and products that will improve the health and safety of their families. The event was held on the grounds of the Joliet Park District facility on Jefferson Street in Joliet and was co-sponsored by Will County Executive Larry Walsh, Bugle Newspapers and 1340-WJOL Radio.

More than a dozen agencies provided educational information on topics such as cold and flu prevention, composting, fire safety, child safety seat checks and dental services. WCCCC staff were available to speak to attendees about utility assistance, weatherization services and lead-based paint hazards. Attendees were provided with an energy kit containing smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and socket sealers. Income-eligible families also received a package containing energy-efficient CFL light bulbs donated by CITGO Petroleum Corporation.

WJOL Radio broadcast live from the event, giving participating agencies the opportunity to relay information on the services they provide to the Will County community.

Also on hand were the Joliet Fire Safety Trailer and the Will County Mobile Dental Clinic. The Joliet Police Department distributed safety information and demonstrated the proper installation of child safety seats.

WCCCC extends thanks to our partners and donors!

Thank you to the many agencies who participated in the Healthy Homes/Healthy Families Expo!

Special thanks to County Executive Larry Walsh; Michelle Allen, Will County Land Use Department; Scott Slocum and WJOL Radio; Joliet Park District; Will County Mobile Dental Clinic; Joliet Police and Fire Departments; and to the following businesses for providing items for the energy kits and other donations:

CITGO
Duke’s Ace Hardware
First Alert
Home Depot
Shure Tech Brands

A-I Construction
ARC Insulation
Arcos Environmental
B.B. Construction
Care-N-Comfort

DNR Construction
E’s Construction
Mobile Home Stuff
Parliament Construction
Domino’s Pizza
From the Director: Will County Center for Community Concerns earns Social Service Agency Award

On behalf of the WCCCC Board of Directors and Staff, I would like to thank the Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce for selecting WCCCC as the recipient of the 2011 Social Service Agency Award. There are many outstanding not-for-profit agencies in the Joliet area, and we are honored to be recognized for our work in the community. I want to thank our dedicated Board Members and my staff for their efforts on behalf of our customers.

This is the season to count our blessings and express our gratitude to the people who affect our lives. As I reflect back on this year, I am truly overcome by the number of people and businesses who have left their mark on our agency. In April we participated in the state-wide Community Action tour and I was amazed at the crowds who gathered to show their support. Despite the current state of the economy, foundations and businesses continue to give us the financial support to really make a difference in our community.

In 2011 we hosted our first Healthy Homes/Healthy Families Expo, and due to the many partnerships within our community, it was a resounding success. I am very proud of our agency and the work we do here, but I recognize that our impact would not be so great without the wonderful network of businesses and organizations supporting our work.

Happy Holidays, Kris

New programs to better serve low-income residents of Will County

Emergency Food and Shelter Program

This year United Way of Will County selected Will County Center for Community Concerns to administer the utility assistance portion of the Emergency Food & Shelter Program. Under the guidelines of this program, households may receive assistance paying their water, electric and gas bills.

Households must be at or below 200% of poverty level or have suffered a financial hardship in order to qualify for a one-time direct payment to the utility vendor. Qualified applicants can receive up to $500 to maintain their gas, electric and/or water services.

Customers who are behind in payments or who may have had utility services disconnected may apply to WCCCC for assistance. Many of the households seeking assistance receive help through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Customers who’s level of income makes them ineligible for LIHEAP are evaluated by trained intake staff to determine if they may get help through Emergency Food and Shelter.

WCCCC received $72,797 in funding and has expended $72,768 to date, providing assistance to 382 Will County households.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

Beginning in 2012, Will County Center for Community Concerns will offer tax preparation assistance to households with income of less than $50,000.

As a member of Will County LI-TAC (Low Income Tax Assistance Coalition), WCCCC has partnered with the Internal Revenue Service and other local agencies to offer no-cost tax preparation services for low-income households to save them the cost of paying a preparer, or paying high interest rates on a tax refund loan, and boost their incomes by helping them claim the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Families or individuals who have simple tax returns may schedule an appointment with a volunteer to get help in electronically preparing and filing their returns. WCCCC will provide work stations and computers for volunteer’s use after they complete an online training.

Volunteers will work a few hours a week with flexible hours. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity please contact Todd Fuller by email at tfuller@wccc.net or call 815.722.0722 ext 205 for more information about how to become a VITA volunteer.

Hardest Hit Fund Program

WCCCC is administering the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) Hardest Hit Program to offer temporary mortgage payment assistance to households that are struggling with income loss due to unemployment or underemployment, but are working to regain sufficient income to keep their home. Borrowers may be currently experiencing an income loss or experienced one in the past that caused them to get behind on their mortgage payments. Applicants are assigned to a HUD-certified housing counselor who will work with them to complete and submit their application. Once approved, households may receive assistance with their mortgage payments for up to 18 months with a maximum benefit of $25,000. To date more than 464 Will County families and/or individuals have sought assistance under this program through WCCCC.
Home Repair Program Receives Grainger Foundation Funding

Will County Center for Community Concerns was recently presented with a generous donation from the Grainger Foundation to support our Home Repair Program. Grainger’s Dawn Calderone presented a check for $10,000 to Director Kris White to support the program, which provides the funding necessary to make repairs to Will County homes.

Very often homeowners find themselves facing possible eviction when they are unable to replace a water heater, repair a roof, or make other improvements that would keep their homes fit for occupancy. Families who are struggling with unemployment and the ever-increasing costs of utilities and healthcare simply cannot afford to maintain their homes. Other programs administered by WCCCC such as the Weatherization Program and the Lead Hazard Reduction program can make some of the needed repairs, but each of those programs have specific guidelines about what issues can be addressed.

Other foundations that have made contributions this year to the Home Repair Program include:

- Dr. Scholl Foundation
- Weist Foundation
- Caterpillar Foundation
- Mary Margaret Church
- Aileen S. Andrew Foundation
- Old Plank Trail Community Bank
- Joliet Junior Woman’s Foundation
- Ozinga Foundation
- First Midwest Bank
- Individual donors

Thank you to each of the foundations and donors who have made a commitment to our community by offering financial support to the Home Repair Program!

Thank you to our Outreach Sites!

We are fortunate to be able to offer our customers the convenience of applying for services at locations around the county due to the support of our local township offices and senior residence buildings. Without their cooperation, our customers would have to travel to our Joliet office to receive assistance. By opening their offices to our staff, they enable us to serve our customers closer to their homes, sparing them both time and the cost of fuel. This partnership brings great benefits to our customers and we are grateful for their support!

Special thanks to the following sites for opening their doors to us on a regular basis:

- Crete Township
- DuPage Township
- Frankfort Township
- Lockport Township
- Monee Township
- New Lenox Township
- Plainfield Township
- Housing Authority of Joliet

For a full listing of our outreach sites visit our web site: www.wccc.net

Holiday Baskets

On December 16, 2011 WCCCC will once again invite 125 families and their children to our agency to visit with Santa and pick up their food basket. Our goal each year is to provide each family with a generous food basket, plus a hat, warm gloves and a toy for each child.

If you would like to make a monetary contribution to ensure a merry Christmas for our families, please send your tax-deductible gift to:

WCCCC
Holiday Baskets
304 N Scott Street
Joliet, IL 60432

Happy Holidays!

December 16:
Holiday Food Baskets
February 13-14
Chamber Expo at Westfield Mall
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 Welcomes New Board Member
Ron Alberico, Lockport Township Supervisor, was recently appointed by Will County Chief Executive Larry Walsh to serve on the WCCCC Board of Directors. Ron’s term of service became official in June. Prior to his appointment to our Board, Ron served as a Lockport Village trustee from 2006 until he assumed the role of Township Supervisor in May 2011. On behalf of the Board of Directors we welcome Ron and look forward to having him serve on our board in the years to come. Ron is filling a vacancy left by Judy Batusich, the former Lockport Township Supervisor after her retirement earlier this year. Judy served on the WCCCC board for five years, and her ongoing commitment to the people of Will County inspired us all. While Judy will be sorely missed, we look forward to having Ron “on board”.

CITGO Petroleum Corporation donates CFL bulbs
WCCCC thanks CITGO for donating 24,000 CFL bulbs to our agency! As the agency responsible for administering the LIHEAP and Weatherization Programs in Will County, we are always conscious of the need to help our customers find ways to make their homes energy-efficient and spend less on their utility bills. The bulbs are being distributed to families whose income is below 200% of the federal poverty level. Each eligible household will receive one dozen bulbs to install in their homes. To date more than 900 families have benefited from this generous donation. Again, many thanks to CITGO and to Peter Colarelli for providing these bulbs to WCCCC’s customers!