

Fall Event Hayride Highlights Awardees and Community

In the spirit of keeping everyone safe this year, the Center of Concern's annual Fall Event on Saturday, October 10th was hosted online: **"Virtual Hayride – A Rockin' Fall Harvest of Friends and Fun."** Terika Richardson, President of Advocate Lutheran General Hospital, Ron Onesti of Onesti Entertainment and the *Des Plaines Theatre* hosted the event.

The Virtual Hayride kicked off at the Center of Concern honoring the 2020 Awardees. *Volunteer of the Year Awards* went to both Donna Donovan and the Center of Concern Teen Board. Mike McGrath received the *Dee Heinrich Award* and Kathy Puetz, MSW, Community Social Worker of Des Plaines was the recipient of the *Excellence in Leadership Award*. And the *Partner of the Year Award* was presented to Diane Slezak of Age Options.



Proud Director John McNabola with a few of our award recipients. Pictured left to right, Mike McGrath, Diane Slezak of AgeOptions, and Kathryn Puetz. Receiving awards virtually (not pictured) are Donna Donovan the Center of Concern Teen Board.

Guests gathered safely with family and friends as dinner was delivered to their home while they cheered on the evening's honorees and enjoyed the various virtual stops along the way which included *FIBs Brewing*, *Pesche's Garden Center*, and a tour of the 95 year old, iconic *Des Plaines Theatre*. The last stop of the evening featured a rockabilly concert by *Rosie & the Rivets* from the historic *Arcada Theatre* in St. Charles, Illinois.

The event helped raise vital funds to assist the Center of Concern programs and services. Congratulations to all the awardees—we certainly couldn't do it without you! We are truly grateful to everyone that supported our event, especially our generous sponsors.

HIP HIP FOR HAY!

2020 Scarecrow Contest Winners

To boost community spirits, the Center of Concern hosted a scarecrow contest where households were encouraged to construct and display clever scarecrows. Community members then voted on their favorites, with the winner being Donna Donovan's "The World is Upside Down" and the runner-up being Katie and Nora's, "When There Are Nine." Congratulations to our winners and everyone who participated!



NEED HELP?

If you or someone you know or love needs help, please reach out to the Center of Concern by calling 847-823-0453 or email concern@centerofconcern.org.

CenterSpotlight

FALL/WINTER 2020



SUPPORTING FAMILIES.
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY.

ADAPTING TO CHALLENGES IN 2020

The Center of Concern has adapted programs and services to effectively respond to the increased needs of older adults and financial hardships of residents resulting from the coronavirus outbreak. We have implemented new services and volunteer opportunities to residents at greater risk of dangers imposed by the coronavirus pandemic. Reducing fear and anxiety of isolated older adults with the safe delivery of vital programs and services has resulted in a 45% increase in services delivered in recent months.

Weekday lunches for older adults are serving record numbers in a "drive-through" format. In person *Friendly Visits* have been replaced with increased *Telephone Reassurance* calls; in-home *Chore Aide* and *Senior Companion* services include extensive safety and social distancing measures; and life enrichment activities for older adults have relied on virtual or telephone dial in platforms for bingo, trivia, *Memory Café*, humanities discussions, and *Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Group* activities to protect clients and volunteers alike.

As difficult as the year 2020 has been, we will remember the outstanding generosity and kindness of our Center of Concern family. We are thankful to everyone who allows us to continue working in support of our mission to help older adults and those who are at risk of homelessness. We are hopeful to continue our important partnerships to serve our community while doing our utmost to ensure everyone's health and safety.

LETTER
from the
DIRECTOR
John McNabola



Dear Friends,

During these unprecedented times with so many challenges and hardships, we are so thankful for the dedication of our Center of Concern family. As we continue to safely offer our supportive services, counseling, and housing solutions, we will continue to embrace positive opportunities to build a stronger community together.

Please enjoy this newsletter with information on our latest services and activities to help older adults and those facing housing insecurity. This year and always, thank you for your ongoing support of our mission to advocate for the isolated and most vulnerable during these difficult times.

Our best wishes to you and your family for a safe and Happy Holiday Season!

Sincerely,

John McNabola



Finding Ways to Share Joy and Blessings to Those in Need

The Center of Concern is proud to have the Teen Board which consists of local teens who meet weekly to plan and implement projects to serve our community. In response to older adults facing increased isolation at home due to the pandemic, the Teen Board prepares birthday cards to brighten the lives of older adults on their special day. They also coordinate the creation and distribution of "Joy Packages" which have been delivered to more than 200 homebound older adults so far. These special packages contain friendly notes, simple activities, jokes, and even some handmade masks and coasters.

In addition, the Teen Board is responding to the needs of young adults facing homelessness as they transition out of the foster care system. In partnership with **Shelter Inc.**, our Teen Board is providing "Blessing Bags" containing basic items such as toilet paper, soap, and shampoo to help young adults acclimate to new independent living arrangements as they themselves benefit from making a positive difference in the lives of those impacted by considerable hardships.

OUR BRIGHT SPOT

Adriana, a junior at Willows Academy, has been serving on the Teen Board since summer 2019. She has seen the effects of isolation firsthand living with her grandma, particularly this year, and because of this has vowed to help our community feel more connected. Participating on the Teen Board has strengthened her leadership skills through planning and executing projects, and she was especially thankful to hear the responses from clients after they received their "Joy Packages".

The Center of Concern is lucky indeed to have bright and caring volunteers like Adriana to help work toward our mission!

CARING VOLUNTEER
ADRIANA



bringing community CLOSER

Community Service Day

Local volunteers traveled throughout our service area to help clients with outside chores during Community Service Day. Projects included window washing, yard maintenance, and other outdoor tasks to help older adults maintain their independence in their homes.



Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP)

Our trained volunteer counselors can assist clients with navigating health insurance options. Without the risk of solicitation, older adults are able to be educated as consumers and receive answers to questions about Medicare, supplemental insurance, long-term care insurance, Medicare HMOs, private fee-for-service, or other health insurances. Clients can receive assistance with signing up for or modifying existing plans as well as filing claims.

Adopt an Older Adult #givingtuesday

From now until #GivingTuesday on December 1st, Adopt an Older Adult through the Center of Concern. Your generosity will support our year-round programs that alleviate loneliness and isolation, and also provide a beautiful poinsettia plant to brighten an older adult's holiday season. To donate, see the enclosed Adopt an Older Adult form in this newsletter or go to www.centerofconcern.org/adopt for more information.

www.centerofconcern.org/adopt

FEATURED PROGRAM

Rental and Mortgage Assistance

Throughout our community, individuals and families are experiencing increased housing insecurity after being economically impacted by COVID-19. Some community members are being affected by layoffs, employer downsizing, reduction in working hours, illness, or have limited earning abilities with greater risks due to health conditions, age, and other circumstances. The Center of Concern works with clients to assist them with these hardships. With experienced case managers to guide them, clients can receive housing counseling, rental and mortgage assistance, and help with past due utilities to reduce even greater hardships.

DON'T FRET, JACK'S BACK

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

Like the staff and volunteers at Center of Concern, Jack understands the importance of brightening the lives of older adults. As a musician who plays guitar and sings in assisted living and extended care facilities, he was always able to delight his audiences with a round of "How Much is that Doggie in the Window." But as the pandemic began to spread and he himself fell ill, his primary and secondary sources of income suddenly stopped. Jack began to fall behind on his rental payments. Thankfully, Jack's landlord referred him to the Center of Concern, and Kelsey, a Housing Support Specialist, was able to process his rental assistance. With his rent secured, Jack has since been able to resume his primary job and is looking forward to playing guitar and singing to audiences again soon.

Volunteer Opportunity: Grocery Shoppers Needed

Would you like to join the Center of Concern volunteer family and give back to your community? Sign up to help a local homebound older adult by picking up and delivering their groceries! Call **847-823-0453** to get more details.