



## Naperville CARES works to help those in need

By Christie Willhite | Daily Herald Staff

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### Wish list

- Cars to repair and give to households needing transportation
- Monetary donations to assist Naperville households having difficulty paying for basic needs

To donate

**Call:** (630) 369-0200

**Visit:** [NapervilleCARES.org](http://NapervilleCARES.org)

**Mail:** 618 W. 5th Ave., Suite B, Naperville, IL 60563

**Info:** (630) 369-0200, [NapervilleCARES.org](http://NapervilleCARES.org) or [contact@NapervilleCARES.org](mailto:contact@NapervilleCARES.org)

To volunteer

(630) 369-0200

Like so much of DuPage County, Naperville's reputation says it's a community of people who are financially strong if not downright wealthy.

But those who work and volunteer at Naperville CARES know that reputation often masks the poverty we have in our communities and adds to the stress of the financial crises that have been hitting with increasing frequency in the past few years.

CARES works with people faced with sudden financial emergencies, directing them to available assistance and services to help them survive the crisis and get back on their feet. The agency also helps pay bills in a pinch and fixes up donated cars to give to people who need transportation to find or hold a job.

The need for help has been rising, says Janet Derrick, executive director of Naperville CARES. The number of clients requesting assistance increased 18 percent from fiscal 2008 to 2009 and already has jumped another 6 percent in the first half of fiscal 2010, she said.

Derrick tells us more about how the down economy is affecting the community and how CARES helps.

### Q. What is the organization's mission?

A. The mission of Naperville CARES is to provide resources to people within the Naperville community who need assistance to avoid homelessness and attain self-sufficiency. We provide services to residents of Naperville or members of Naperville congregations.

### Q. What do you do?

A. For families facing an economic crisis, we make referrals to private and government agencies that provide financial and nonfinancial resources. When assistance is not available through other agencies, CARES provides direct financial assistance to help pay for basic needs like housing, utilities and transportation. Our car program repairs donated cars to make them road worthy for families needing transportation.

### Q. Are there other local organizations with a similar mission? What sets you apart?

A. The purpose of Naperville CARES' Emergency Assistance Program is not to duplicate already existing services but to fill the gap when other funding sources are not available. CARES is committed to providing for its clients by helping them to first access existing resources in the community. We always refer clients to their respective township and county for assistance, but not everyone meets the income eligibility requirements.

Through collaboration and communication with all area organizations and congregations, CARES tries to put together a "package" of financial assistance for a client who would not otherwise qualify for help. CARES often becomes the funder of last resort.

In the first six months of fiscal 2010, Naperville CARES made referrals to 26 social service organizations in surrounding communities including but not limited to: Loaves and Fishes Community Pantry, Angel Food Ministry, Community Career Center, Worknet DuPage, Teen Parent Connection, People's Resource Center, Samaritan Interfaith, DuPage PADS, NCO Youth and Family Services, VA Assistance, Community Housing of DuPage, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Salvation Army and Catholic Charities.

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**Q. What changes have you seen in the community and the need for your services in the past three years?**

A. A review of our client database for the past two fiscal years shows the number of clients requesting assistance increased 18 percent from fiscal 2008 to fiscal 2009, and for the first six months of the current fiscal year, it has increased 6 percent.

Naperville is not often considered a community where people would need financial assistance. The truth is that more than 3 percent of the community (4,600 individuals) has income below the federal poverty line.

In addition, the current economic crisis has many people out of work at all levels of prior income. The October unemployment rate in Naperville alone was 8.1 percent according to [www.economagic.com](http://www.economagic.com), a 72 percent increase from October 2008. Our schools are seeing an increase in requests for free lunch and the foreclosure rate is increasing as well.

The findings of the Naperville Housing Market and Needs Analysis show other indicators of economic stress in the community: 15 percent of all Naperville households spend more than 30 percent of their family income on housing; 21 percent of Naperville's 9,040 tenant households report an annual income under \$25,000; 23 percent pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing, with 11 percent of tenants spending more than 50 percent.

A just-released study from the Brookings Institute, "The Suburbanization of Poverty: Trends in the Metropolitan America, 2000-2008," states that Chicago ranks fourth in the nation among cities that have seen a large shift of poor to the suburbs. In 2008, 48.1 percent of the area's poor lived in a 13-county region around Chicago compared to 38.9 percent living in the same region in 2000.

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**Q. What major accomplishments has Naperville CARES achieved in the past three years?**

A. In fiscal 2009, the board of Naperville CARES realized it was time to hire its first executive director, who is now overseeing the day-to-day operations. The 40 direct service volunteers, in addition to the executive director, continue to assess the needs of clients, review documentation, make referrals to community resources and provide cash assistance to third parties (such as landlords and utilities) as is necessary.

During 2009, Naperville CARES celebrated its 10th anniversary. In 10 years of service to the community, CARES has provided about \$780,000 in direct financial assistance and spent more than \$230,000 repairing 461 cars that were donated to households needing transportation.

In 10 years, CARES has evolved from an agency funded solely by community donations to one that gets funding from numerous funding streams. In fiscal 2009, CARES revenue came from the following sources: 37 percent from fundraising; 23 percent from the city of Naperville and civic organizations like the Exchange Club, Rotary Clubs of Naperville, Jaycees and Kiwanis; 17 percent from congregations; 10 percent from individual donors; 7 percent from United Way of DuPage; 4 percent from vehicle sales; and 2 percent from foundations.

Naperville CARES redesigned and launched a new Web site to provide both clients and donors with important information. Our "Services" page provides clients with much-needed links to both financial and nonfinancial resources. Donors now can easily donate online and buy tickets to Cuisine for a Cause and Toasting for a Cause.

Through the generosity of Tellabs, last year Cuisine for a Cause was moved to the more spacious facilities of Tellabs Global Headquarters. We can now more easily accommodate our 500 guests and better showcase the food and wine offerings of the participating Naperville restaurants and beverage vendors. We also introduced a new fall fundraiser, Toasting for a Cause, which was held at Sullivan's Steakhouse and raised more than \$60,000 for Naperville CARES.

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**Q. What goals have you set for the coming year?**

A. We have a goal to increase our emergency assistance budget by 12 percent.

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**Q. What are the organization's long-term goals?**

A. One goal is to continue to seek out new donors and foundations to increase our program budget. We also are striving to cultivate our relationships with business and community leaders to engage them in our organization.

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**Q. Describe Cuisine for a Cause.**

A. Cuisine for a Cause showcases the culinary creations from 25 Naperville restaurants and tastings of fine wines from several area wine shops.

At this seventh annual event, each of the restaurants will serve taste-sized portions of their signature dishes, and wine shops will feature some of their finest selections. This event offers our guests the opportunity to try the food of a diverse group of the finest restaurants in Naperville all at one spot.

The event will also feature the musical talents from Naperville Unit District 203 and Indian Prairie Unit District 204 high schools.

Proceeds will support the operations of Naperville CARES programs. Our goal this year is to raise \$110,000. Last year, 500 people attended, raising \$118,000.