

# Nonprofit leaders share highlights of 2012

All four organizations experienced an increased demand for services over the past year

By Ken Knutson  
and Pamela Lannom

Last week we asked the leaders of three nonprofit agencies to take a look back at 2012.

This week we catch up with the remaining four organizations to learn about the highlights and challenges of the past year and their wish for 2013 (see sidebar).



**Hinsdale Humane Society**

The Hinsdale Humane Society worked in 2012 to make the agency — and the dogs and cats it has available for adoption — more accessible to residents.

A major component of that effort was a website redesign, which took place in March.

"We just did a customer satisfaction survey in November and December, and we have over 98 percent approval and people find it really helpful," said Lori Halligan, executive director. "We're including so much more about the animals and their health and temperament and their behavior, and it's really helped adoptions."

Adoptions have increased 31 percent over the past two years, Halligan said. She attributes the rise to several factors in addition to the website.

"We've really tried to focus on the needs of our community," she said. "People in this community really want puppies. It's supply and demand. We're working with more transfer organizations from high-kill shelters, from some of the rural shelters in southern Illinois, and getting puppies and purebreds and small dogs and some of the things people seem to be more interested in."

A "no fee felines" program instituted in November is encouraging adopters to look at cats who are over 1 year old.

"Kittens are so much more in demand. We want to make sure those adult cats aren't staying at the shelter weeks on end," she said.

The past year also marked the 25th anniversary of the humane society's pet therapy program, in which volunteers work with their own pets in the community.

"We really were an early innovator in that process of pet therapy," Halligan said, noting that eight libraries and 25 nursing

homes are currently involved with the program.

"We are so proud of how our pets can really affect people's lives," she said.

The society was excited to be one of five finalists for the Alfred Axelson Award, which recognizes strong leadership, financial management and board engagement in a Chicago-area nonprofit.

Staff and board members have worked hard to make the humane society, which will celebrate its 60th anniversary this year, more than just a shelter for homeless pets, Halligan said.

"We're not just a place where you come and adopt a pet. We really want to be a resource in the community because we feel pets bring so much to our lives."



**Robert Crown Center**

Kathleen Burke, executive director of Robert Crown Center, said 2012 saw an extension of the agency's heroin prevention drive into four counties.

"One of our biggest obstacles is people not knowing that there's a problem," she said. "We were able to work with Hinsdale schools for community awareness and place a billboard over I-294 over the Thanksgiving holiday."

The inaugural Hunt for Health in April proved inviting to parents whose kids have yet to make a visit to the center.

"That led to connections with a whole new population, and that stimulated a whole group of new volunteers for the center," Burke said.

She said hosting an after-hours gathering for local business people and installing two Hinsdale residents on the center's board of directors in 2012 has helped reinvigorate Robert Crown's relationship with its hometown.

"We're strengthening our community connections," she said. "It takes a community to keep kids healthy."

Another connection formed was with the DuPage Medical Group, particularly regarding issues around heroin and pain pill abuse.

"What I'm really happy to see is the flow of information back and forth (between the center and physicians). It's really nice to be collaborative and feel that we're accomplishing something for kids," Burke said.

Two new sites were added for the center's popular Body Trek summer camp — in Chicago and Naperville — where kids got to try their hand at, among other activities, suturing a pig.

"We do a nice job of connecting kids with hands-on science and with the kinds of careers that you could go into. Medical folks come in a talk about their careers," she said.

To find out what topics are on the minds of those just starting their careers, Robert Crown Center has formed the Young Professionals Committee.

"We're getting much more community voices focused on the center and what the community needs are," she said.

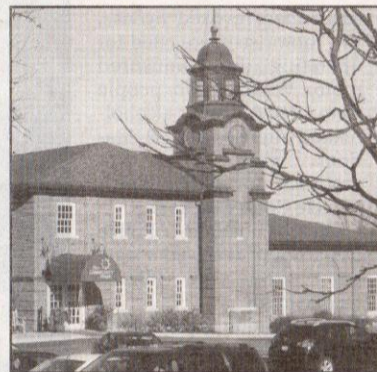
Of course, the primary entry point to Robert Crown Center continues to be visits by school classes and other youth groups.

"We host 80,000 kids a year. Business is booming," Burke said.

Imbedded in the programs that educate kids about their bodies are messages conveying the dangers of drug use and premarco also trying to speak to the social-emotional issues that often underlie risky behavior.

Enlisting doctors, teachers and other prominent grown-ups to help deliver the information is proving highly effective.

"We consider them influencers of children," Burke said. "We're connecting to our community, and there's an evolution of a much stronger connection with adults."



**The Community House**

The past year was the first full one for Executive Director Jeni Fabian, who started work in September 2011.

"It's been a wonderful year," she said. "I've gotten to know so many fantastic people. I'm so appreciative of everybody's input and support and ideas about how we can continue to grow and be a robust resource for people in the community."

The year also has brought about some changes at The Community House.

"One of the things we're so excited about is the launch of our new high school junior board," she said.

The 40-member group, with students

Please turn to Page 25

## One wish for 2013

The Hinsdalean asked each of the nonprofit leaders featured in this week's story to share one wish for the new year.

"As corny as it may sound, I wish more people would realize that allowing ourselves to be unconditionally loved by a pet actually makes us all better human beings." — **Lori Halligan, executive director, Hinsdale Humane Society**

"My wish is that we become a stronger family, and that we help kids navigate their increasingly complex world in a healthy ways." — **Kathleen Burke, executive director, Robert Crown Center**

"Our wish for The Community House is that we can get more people involved and share the news about all the ways The Community House is good for them, how we touch lives and inspire people. We have so many exciting opportunities coming up for people to get involved. It's going to be a wonderful year in 2013." — **Jeni Fabian, executive director, The Community House**

"I wish that those who come to Wellness House are more empowered in their own ability to stay well after they have undergone treatments and can make changes in their lives to they can live healthy lives." — **Jeannie Cella, executive director, Wellness House**