

# Jewell Cardwell: WITAN invites community to dine, dance and donate to Akron causes

Published: January 22, 2014 - 12:00 PM

By Akron Beacon Journal Staff

Jewell Cardwell

Women In Touch with Akron's Needs (WITAN) — which quietly has been raising money for all kinds of programs and projects, big and little, to improve this city over a span of 71 years — gets my vote for Queens of Clout.

It proves that not all power has to be wielded in boardrooms. Sometimes it happens in less formal haunts, and by those we might least expect, who may not think of themselves as power brokers.

I've known of WITAN's good works over the years, but it took member Carol Null to really shine the spotlight on the depth of its gifts to the community.

What better time than as the organization readies for one of its major fundraisers: the WOW Gala, "The Imagine Ball," at the Akron/Fairlawn Hilton at 6 p.m. Feb. 1.

It's hard to imagine that these women, of all ages and from all walks of life, have donated more than \$1.2 million in cash grants and more than 3 million hours of volunteer service to the Greater Akron community.

"I come to you specifically because you have always been the voice for the 'silent ones' — those people who have often fallen on hard times through no fault of their own," Null wrote. "Without you shining a light on their plight, we would never know about them. WITAN finds and assists those quiet agencies, agencies here in our community that do so much in a quiet and often silent way to help people less fortunate."

Null and her fellow members want you to know more about WITAN:

- WOW is the largest fundraising event. Others are the July rummage sale and the French Market, a juried show held the last Friday and Saturday of February at Todaro's with craft items, raffles, baked goods, spring flowers and lunch.
- WOW aids WITAN's community project fund, which provides grants and allocations for nonprofit organizations and services. WITAN distributed more than \$50,000 in 2013 to more than a dozen local agencies, including OPEN M (Opportunity for People Everywhere in Need Ministry) for supplies for its Free Clinic, and Mobile Meals for its children's program.
- Recipients of grants are carefully examined for need. WITAN gave \$31,000 to begin Ronald McDonald House at Akron Children's Hospital and funded it for many years, as well as the Reach to Recovery program for breast cancer patients and a recently fulfilled pledge of \$75,000 to Stewart's Caring Place.
- WITAN does not have any employees; all are volunteers.

- Here's the real beauty, as pointed out by Null: "What we raise stays here!"

So, dear readers, if you're looking for a deserving local organization to support and a good time to boot, think about the WOW gala. Tickets start at \$125 and go up to \$3,000 for a table of 10. Deadline is Saturday. For a reservation or more information, please call 330-376-6668 or email [cnull@neo.rr.com](mailto:cnull@neo.rr.com).

Members of WITAN – wherever you are right now – stand up and take a bow, with a special nod to the WOW committee: Beth Fink, chair; Doris Antal, Linda Banasiak, Margaret Cook, Marti Cowden, Katie Goodwin, Janice Hatch, Leslie Kissel, Kathy Mooock, Carol Null, Kathy Ost, Linda Shippy, Dolores Zuder and Barbara Gerber, president; and Debra Faber-Cailor, president-elect.

I can think of few other groups that deserve our collective applause so much.

Dolls distributed to kids

Project RISE (Realizing Individual Strength through Education) recently distributed 40 handmade dolls to children under 6 years of age in six of Akron's homeless shelters.

To date, about 3,300 dolls have been distributed along with a parent activity book, baby doll quilt and more since 1999.

The Love-and-Learn Doll Project is inspired by Marcia Zashin of Project ACT of the Cleveland Public Schools, funded by Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Akron, with storage and work areas supplied by Trinity United Church of Christ.

"Many groups and individuals have helped with the Love-and-Learn Doll Project over the years," wrote Project RISE spokeswoman Rachel Breece. "Recently, through efforts of Michelle Walters, a member of First Presbyterian Church in Cuyahoga Falls, the project has gained even more enthusiastic volunteers ... Volunteers are needed to help cut fabric and sew and all experience levels are welcome."

Doll workshops are held on the last Monday of every month from September to May, 6 to 8 p.m. at Trinity United Church of Christ, 915 N. Main St., Akron. The next one is this Monday. Interested in volunteering, or have materials to donate? Please contact Megan Heavrin at 330-703-5819 or [mmh36@zips.uakron.edu](mailto:mmh36@zips.uakron.edu).

Project RISE is a federally funded program through the Ohio Department of Education involving Akron Public Schools, local homeless shelters and the community, providing supplemental education services to homeless children. It is managed by Debra Manteghi; reach her at [dmanteghi@akron.k12.oh.us](mailto:dmanteghi@akron.k12.oh.us).

Comedy with the Cops

The Akron Fraternal Order of Police will host "Comedy with the Cops X" benefit Saturday at the lodge at 2610 Ley Drive, Akron. Doors open at 7 p.m. followed by 8 p.m. showtime. Tickets are \$10. All proceeds benefit Akron-area charities supported by the FOP Auxiliary Lodge No. 1.

WKDD radio's Keith Kennedy is emcee, with performances by Michael Gershe, Bill Boronkay and Katrina Brown with Mike Conley as headliner. For more information, please call 330-773-3032.

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