

WAGING WAR ON HUNGER: HARRY WOULD BE PROUD

Hunger is sometimes found in the most horrifying of places. Places you'd least expect it. Nassau and Suffolk Counties – two of the most affluent in the country – are home to some very hungry people. Hunger doesn't discriminate. It's a predicament that befalls Long Island's children, Long Island's parents, many of them single and hardworking, and Long Island's elderly. Hunger victimizes blacks, whites, males, and females. And, it begs the question: Does anyone care enough to do anything about this atrocity and help people out of this plight?

It takes people of extraordinary vision and care to take up the crusades of those in need. Harry Chapin was one such man, and one that will never be forgotten. Alleviating hunger was his greatest crusade. The famed singer/songwriter co-founded World Hunger Year in 1975, a charity designed to raise money to fight international famine. The organization earned over \$350,000 in its first year. He was just beginning to breathe life

into this cause on Long Island when his, suddenly, came to an end. It was a July day in 1981 when Harry Chapin lost his life in an accident on the Long Island Expressway. But, thanks to the people who continued his mission of Long Island Cares, which he founded in 1980 in response to the needs of Long Island's hungry, we have not lost Harry Chapin's extraordinary vision or compassion.

A quarter century later, the not-for-profit 501(c) organization continues its work today, led by Chapin's wife, Sandy, and executive director Lynn Needleman. They coordinate the efforts of staff and countless volunteers who continue to make a difference in battling hunger on Long Island.

LI Cares provides emergency food where and when it is needed, sponsors programs that help families achieve self-sufficiency, and educates the general public about the causes and consequences of hunger on Long Island. The organization delivers food to over 600 food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, group homes, day treatment facilities, senior nutrition sites, and day care centers in Nassau and Suffolk counties. Their efforts prevent



untold numbers of Long Islanders from going to bed hungry.

LI Cares is realizing its 25th year of humanitarian service and hosting its 25th Anniversary Dinner on Nov. 17 at the Crest Hollow Country Club in Woodbury. That kind of longevity can only be attributed to the tenacity of caring people who've opted to carry on Chapin's dream. This year's honorees, the recipients of the Harry



Thomas J. McAteer

Chapin Humanitarian Award, have earned their place amongst those who have continued his crusade. They are Thomas Murray and Thomas J. McAteer, Jr. – both friends of LI Cares, both friends to Long Island's hungry. And, if Harry Chapin were still with us today,

absolutely among those he would also call friends.

Murray and McAteer have demonstrated what the award was designed to recognize – community service and helping those less fortunate. Both are busy guys, yet have managed to keep this cause close to their hearts.

Murray is a managing partner with Albrecht, Viggiano, Zureck & Company, P.C. (AVZ), one of the largest certified public accounting firms on Long Island. With AVZ since 1977, he also serves as vice chairman and treasurer of the Worldwide Board of BKRI, a worldwide consortium of accounting and business advisory firms. He began volunteering his time in 1993 as treasurer for LI Cares, a position he filled for a number of years, and served as its president from 1999 to 2001. He currently serves on the board of directors.

McAteer, president and CEO of Vytra Health Plans, joined Vytra in 1993, was named chief operating officer in 1998, and appointed to his current position in 2000. He serves on the boards of several not-for-profit organizations, including the Nature Conservancy, the Long Island Philharmonic, the Old Westbury Foundation, and Friends of Karen.

Lynn Needleman describes both Murray and McAteer as friends of LI Cares. "Tom Murray has been a long-term board member and, as such, he not only brought his skills and talents, but his heart and his passion for our mission. I've worked with Tom for a long time and hold him in such high regard. His

dedication, leadership, and generosity of time have never wavered during his 10-plus years as a board member of LI Cares. He initiated our first golf outing, and worked with the board on doing a feasibility study for our new location in Hauppauge when we had to vacate our offices at Pilgrim State." Under Murray's leadership as Capital Campaign Chair, roughly \$2 million was raised toward the purchase of their new building.

"Tom McAteer has supported us financially over the years," Needleman continues. "His support of LI Cares has been significant and he is also very deserving of this award." Vytra Health Plans has donated over two tons of food to Long Island Cares since 1997, money from fund-raising events, and sends employees to help sort food at the warehouse.

Murray and McAteer share a willingness to give back to the community. They also share fond memories of Harry Chapin, his music, and his work. "When I was first approached in '93 to serve as treasurer," Murray recalls, "the thought of helping hungry people was certainly cause enough. But when I learned that LI Cares was founded by Harry Chapin, it piqued my interest even further. I was a huge fan and doing work for a



Thomas Murray

cause he was involved with was important for me."

Working with and getting to know Sandy Chapin has also impacted Murray. "Sandy is directly involved. She's very warm and very active in continuing to carry out Harry's work. Her commitment is unwavering. I've learned a lot from her; I can see where Harry got a lot of his inspiration."

McAteer says, "I loved Harry Chapin's music and who he was. This cause is so important because hunger doesn't only strike the poorest of the poor; it strikes in places you wouldn't even imagine. Organizations like this have such a capacity to get food out there, but they need our help. Sandy Chapin and everyone at LI Cares has done a great job over the years."

Receiving this award is a coveted honor for both honorees. "When I accept this award, it'll be on behalf of the whole Vytra

staff," McAteer says. "I've had the privilege of accepting awards from extraordinary organizations over the years. The fact that this is the Harry Chapin Humanitarian Award, and given in his memory, means so much to me, personally. He gave so much of himself, which makes it that much more special."

In looking back over his years with LI Cares, Tom Murray says, humbly, "My involvement in the organization has helped me a great deal personally. It's been an honor to meet and work with so many wonderful people. I've met so many high quality people as a result of my involvement. I'm extremely proud to be honored with this award. Harry Chapin was someone I admired very much and to be given an award in his name is extremely meaningful to me."

How Can the Long Island Business Community Get Involved?

Corporate Giving

- Make a gift to the donor CD wall to support their new warehouse

Corporate Volunteering

- Bring a group of colleagues to sort food

Join a Special Event Committee

- The Annual Golf Classic or Harry Chapin Humanitarian Awards Dinner or their Check-Out-Hunger Team

"We have to remember that people are hungry everyday. Whether it's a hurricane in Louisiana or poverty on Long Island, people need help all around us. Sometimes we only recognize poverty when we see it on TV. The truth is, there's plenty of poverty on Long Island."

– ELENA PEREZ

(Bank of America, formerly Fleet, friend and supporter of LI Cares)

To help alleviate hunger on Long Island, contact LI Cares at (631) 582-FOOD or e-mail: info@licares.org.

