

NEWS



taffy

Taking Action for Friends, Family, & Youth

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Celebrating 10 Years!

TAFFY celebrates 10 years of giving

By Mary Rodrigue
Guest Writer

One thousand dollars in seed money and two sisters ardent desire to honor their late mother laid the groundwork a decade ago for a grass roots charity that has become an enduring legacy of love.

It was in April 2003 that sisters Katie Grode of Northville and Maureen Lemon of Livonia gathered a small group of friends and family to formally launch Taking Action for Friends, Family and Youth (TAFFY). Named for their mother Kathryn "Taffy"



TAFFY founders Katie Grode and Maureen Lemon

who died in 1994 at age 49 of ovarian cancer, the charity is a loving tribute to a mother who always reached out to help others.

TAFFY's mission "to improve the quality of life for people in need and render hope for those who struggle," has been a rousing success. To date the charity has raised over \$100,000 and helped numerous families through crisis. It has provided scholarship funds for a special needs student and a child in Haiti, paid bills for several families hit by catastrophic illness and "adopted" low income families at Christmas.

TAFFY funds bought a car for a single mom who had no transportation to get to work, made a down payment on a mobile home for another family, and financed a residential treatment program for a homeless man addicted to alcohol.

"The original intent was to



Taffy died of ovarian cancer in 1994 at age 49

build financial stability and then after one year start helping various cases, but we were made aware of so many needy cases right away that we've been turning over every bit of funds we've received," recalled Katie Grode, who serves as TAFFY president.

An added bonus is support from old friends, former neighbors and colleagues who are touched to hear of the good deeds TAFFY has accomplished.

"It's overwhelming how

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How did your donations make a difference in 2012?

Sue – Mother/Grandmother

Sue lost her teenage daughter to a rare form of cancer leaving her with medical bills, funeral costs and a 7 month-old granddaughter to care for. Two weeks after her daughter's death Sue was in a car accident that caused several thousand dollars worth of damage. T.A.F.F.Y. paid to fix her car so that she could work and care for her other young children.

Emily – Art Teacher

Emily is an art teacher for Benton Harbor schools. When she began the school year, she had no tables or chairs, minimal art supplies and was isolated in a portable classroom. It was a very challenging situation for her. T.A.F.F.Y. helped by donating \$500 to Emily and her classroom, which allowed her to purchase many of the supplies she needed as well as clay to use with her 7th grade students.

Amanda – College Student

Amanda, a Clarenceville High School graduate, active and healthy, was coaching soccer and going to college when she was diagnosed with leukemia at a routine doctor visit. Amanda needed to be hospitalized for 30 days while she underwent intensive chemotherapy treatments. T.A.F.F.Y. helped ease her isolation by purchasing an iPad so she could communicate with friends and family.

Westland Family

A custodian working for Taft elementary in Westland asked T.A.F.F.Y. to pay rent for his brother-in-law, Joe and his family who had lost their home to foreclosure. Joe was always a hard working man but had been fighting cancer for a long time and couldn't work. His extended family managed to scrape together enough money to get Joe and his family into a land contract home. T.A.F.F.Y. paid two months rent to ease their financial burden.

The Koger Family

During the holidays, a Hilbert Middle School family was experiencing financial difficulties. They had no money to buy food, clothes or gifts to celebrate Christmas, and two family members were hospitalized. T.A.F.F.Y. gave them a \$500 gift card to Meijer.

Al Lemon Memorial Award recipients

In 2009 TAFFY established the Al Lemon Memorial award to annually recognize an outstanding volunteer for his/her dedicated efforts.

2009 – Dan & Debbie Lemon

Dan and Debbie Lemon were the very first Al Lemon award recipients for their dedicated efforts to the TAFFY auction. They worked hard in 2009 going door-to-door asking local businesses for any donations they could spare. Their hard work paid off and made the TAFFY auction bigger and better than it had ever been.

2010 – Ed Gomula

In the fall of 2009 Ed Gomula took it upon himself to plan his own fundraising event – a chili cook-off that proved to be very profitable and a lot of fun. Since then Ed has volunteered his time annually as the Vegas Room Pit Boss at the TAFFY summer fundraiser and is now a member of the TAFFY board of directors.

2011 – Jerry Hawkins

If you've ever been to the TAFFY annual summer fundraiser, then you have definitely enjoyed the incredible voice of Jerry Hawkins. Whether he's performing solo or with a band, his talent brings a special energy to each and every event. We are also grateful for the generous donations Jerry has provided through his company, Skyline Services LLC.

2012 – Mike McGuire

Since 2009 Mike McGuire has donated to TAFFY on a monthly basis and secured thousands of dollars in donations from his employer Wells Fargo. Mike's efforts have raised more money than any other donor.

Three Questions

By: Robb Drzewicki

On a daily basis, people see my red bracelet or overhear me mention that my family runs a charity. The next question is always the same: "What kind of stuff do you guys do?" I've tried to come up with proper explanations, 30-second elevator commercials, and buzz words for a decade now. Nothing ever really sticks. The problem TAFFY will always face is that we won't back away from helping someone just because it doesn't fit certain criteria. TAFFY casts an incredibly wide net into the world hoping to catch any fish that needs a helping hand. Aha! A fish analogy... just what we needed.

We all know the cliché "give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day..." Well, TAFFY is apparently in the business of teaching others how to fish. Each time we band together and get behind a person in need, we usually pick up a handful of volunteers from the family and friends of the recipient. TAFFY's spaghetti dinners are normally staffed by a few of our own volunteers and a band of fantastic well-wishers who ask a different question all together, "Can I help?" This amazing mass of people that we've helped throughout the years is the core of our mission statement.

Well, I titled this editorial "Three Questions" for a reason. I have a third question to mention as well. "I'm only one person, what could I possibly do to help?" We all feel helpless when something goes horribly wrong in the life of a friend or family member. When big problems come about, people tend to feel small and weak. TAFFY offers help, experience, and enthusiasm to those who don't know how to help. In other words, we teach hungry people how to fish. If TAFFY exists for only one reason, it's to answer this question. In answering it and providing our help we're teaching hungry people how to fish.



You're Invited!
to
*JAFFY's Annual
Summer FUNdraiser
10-year Celebration*

*Saturday, July 27th
Paul & Katie Grode's
18745 Ridge Road
Northville
3-11 p.m.*



*Live Bands
Featuring Jerry Hawkins*

*Special Auction Items!
Including a Kindle Fire*

Vegas Room

*first 150 guests will
receive a free
JAFFY J-shirt*

*Cost is \$10 per person or \$20 per
family. For more info call
Katie Grode 248-320-6424*

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people support us without question because they know who we are,” added Katie. “It’s such a blessing.”

One such supporter is Mike McGuire, a former neighbor who reconnected in 2009.

“He lives in Chicago now but was home for the holidays, at which time he heard about a former neighbor TAFFY helped,” said Katie. “He started donating and he also got his employer Wells Fargo Bank to support us.” McGuire’s efforts have raised over \$15,000 since 2009.

MISSION STATEMENT

Taking Action for Friends, Family and Youth is a grassroots organization that strives to improve the quality of life for Michigan families burdened with hardship. We carry out this mission by providing financial assistance and hope to those struggling for a myriad of reasons.

18745 Ridge Road
Northville, MI 48168
248-449-4646



We're on the Web!
Taffycharity.com

Charity Logo

The charity logo includes the image of a bright red cardinal – indicative of the bird they have seen at special moments and interpret as a positive sign from their mother.

Junior Board

The TAFFY junior board comprised of passionate young offspring of the sisters’ families and friends has also teamed with the Farmington Junior Optimists to raise money for a local handicapped woman in need of a service dog. The groups’ joint garage sale netted \$740.

Two years ago TAFFY partnered with the Louise Tumarkin Zazove Foundation to provide a scholarship for a deaf student from Bloomfield Hills attending the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York.

“We help a handful of people each year,” Katie added. “We’re there when no one else is there, to help those people who may have fallen through the cracks, to give them a sense of hope. That’s part of our original intent.”



TAFFY Junior Board members in 2009

Euchre parties, bowl-a-thons, spaghetti dinners, golf outings and Easter egg hunts have been TAFFY fundraising staples through the years, but the charity’s main annual event is the Summer Fundraiser.

This year the TAFFY summer party, complete with live music, Vegas games and a raffle auction is scheduled for Saturday, July 27 at 3 p.m. at Paul and Katie Grode’s home, 18745 Ridge Road, in Northville. Cost is \$10 per person or \$20 per family. The first 150 guests will receive a special 10th anniversary commemorative T-shirt.



Thank You!

We at TAFFY would like to thank you all for supporting us throughout the past 10 years. We feel very fortunate to have so many friends involved in our quest to help local families in need.

As we set our sights on the next 10 years we hope that you will continue to feel like an integral part of the TAFFY mission.

We are forever grateful.