

# Rockaway WISH

## Women Inspired to Support and Help

**November 2013 Newsletter**

*Member Spotlight: Ann Coughlin*



Ann is a Rockaway WISH member who has been a valuable volunteer at WISH events in the past. Last spring she organized and ran a successful event, which raised money for WISH and TEAL. She is an inspiration and here is her story:

While I was spring cleaning, I came upon a couple of items in my closet that were new and/or barely used when my "idea" was born. My sister, Mary Erhard-Moran, had just given me a beautiful black leather jacket with a great matching necklace. She explained she had bought these items at her friend, Christine Good-Smith's fundraiser, which took place at Christine's home in Connecticut. The premise of the fundraiser was for people to donate new or slightly used items which Christine collected and then hosted a fundraiser evening where friends came to "Shop for a Cause." Everyone paid a \$20 suggested donation at the door and then each item could be purchased for \$5... this led to my "Shopping for Causes Event" on Thursday, May 30<sup>th</sup>!

There were two very important organizations I was interested in raising money for, Rockaway WISH & Tell Every Amazing Lady (TEAL – an ovarian cancer group). I had recently attended the TEAL Luncheon, which my friend Donna Johnson is on the executive board, and was overwhelmed to hear survivors' stories and sadly from a father whose daughter, Louisa McGregor, the founder of TEAL, died from ovarian cancer when she was 44. I also felt very strongly about raising money for Rockaway WISH – WISH was vital to the success of Rockaway in the aftermath of Sandy. I was in awe of so many of the Wish ladies who dedicated their time and effort in helping Rockaway after Sandy, even though their homes had also been damaged. I wanted to give back to WISH!!

So, I put out an email asking friends and family to donate new or slightly used items and the response was great! Even better, I was put in touch with Colleen Brady, and her emails to all the WISH members asking for donations were instrumental in helping me collect even more items. I would like to thank all the people on my email list who received so many emails from me asking for help, donations, racks, hangers and making date changes etc. I would never have been able to pull this night together without the help of so many people, especially, Colleen Brady, Mary Butler, Regina Carey, Loretta Courtney, Abbe Erhard, Diane Erhard, Kristin Franchock & her kids for "duct taping" a coat rack, Pat Johnson, Mary Erhard-Moran, Trish Murray, Helena O'Sullivan, Kelly Schmitt, Christine Good-Smith and all my "little helpers" – Noelle Carey, Max & Nicholas Coughlin, Diane Erhard, Kelly Erhard & Kathleen Schmitt, who collected the suggested donation and raffle money. Most importantly, I have to thank my amazing husband, Michael, for always loving and supporting my "ideas"- always with a smile on his face!

What I love most about Rockaway is the generosity and support you feel in this neighborhood – even people that were not able to attend the function donated money. On the night of May 30<sup>th</sup>, people came to shop, eat appetizers, have some drinks and laugh with friends while supporting two great organizations! When it was all said and done, I collected \$2,000 and was able to give \$1,000 to each organization. I also was able to donate items that were not bought to Dress for Success and St. Mary's. It was a remarkable event and one I will not forget!



**Ann helping at her first WISH event:**

**The Baby Drive 2011**

## Ladies Who Brunch

This year we decided to have our First Annual Rockaway WISH Ladies Brunch to recognize a few of the amazing women in our community. We are privileged to live in a neighborhood where people care about each other and help others in times of need. This was truly evidenced after Hurricane Sandy ravaged our town. So many people stepped up to help even when they were struggling themselves. WISH stands for Women Inspired to Support and Help and this year we wanted to acknowledge three women who epitomized what WISH is all about during our neighborhood's greatest time of need. We honor, admire, and congratulate these women:

**Meghan Flanagan** - When Hurricane Sandy hit Meghan did not waste anytime, she was part of the group who began the donation center at SFDS, helping to organize hundreds of volunteers and thousands of donations. She later worked tirelessly at the BHYC donation center, while constantly reaching out to her numerous contacts to secure generous donations of goods, food, and money to help her Rockaway neighbors. Due to her grant writing Rockaway WISH acquired our Robin Hood grant, Mrs. Redmond's playground was rebuilt, and many other companies donated goods to our donation center. She helped to organize the many uplifting community events at the BHYC after the storm and she continues to work hard everyday to ensure that the Rockaway community is supported and not forgotten.

**Marybeth Bevacqua** - Immediately after Sandy Marybeth began assisting her neighbors, walking around Breezy with her daughters handing out gift cards to those in need. She was integral in obtaining donations to fill the Breezy supply center and to line the main road with American flags. Marybeth also helped to organize playground rebuilds and a relief concert in Bay Ridge. During this time she realized that because families were struggling, children might miss out on special milestones and "Operation Seniors" was born. She acquired donations of formal attire and make-up and hair appointments for the proms, as well as monetary donations to assist families paying for senior dues and college applications. Marybeth recently moved back to Breezy and will surely continue to do what she can to help her neighbors.

**Stephanie Wagner** - After the storm, Stephanie helped with various relief efforts in Broad Channel. She immediately began the Broad Channel Relief Page to raise funds from outside sources for her fellow Broad Channel residents. Her website raised over \$18,000, including a \$5000 donation from PC Richards, which she turned into gift cards that she distributed throughout the neighborhood. When the holidays rolled around she wanted to ensure that the people of Broad Channel were filled with the Christmas Spirit. She felt that the lights would also bring joy to the people of Rockaways who had been driving home on a dark and desolate Cross Bay Boulevard for two months. She raised the money and hired a company to light up Broad Channel, a beautiful tradition that she continued this year for our enjoyment.



**On November 3rd, five Rockaway women crossed the finish line at the ING NYC Marathon, not only accomplishing an incredible feat of physical endurance, but also helping to support Rockaway WISH in our efforts to help the Rockaway community. Board Member Colleen Brady secured five fundraising spots for Rockaway WISH in the 2013 Marathon and Katie Green, Elizabeth Bishop, Lauren Koester, Donna Miley-Figueroa, and Cara O'Donnell ran as Team Rockaway WISH. They raised over \$18,000 for our charity and we couldn't be more proud of these amazing women. Thank you girls for all of your hard work and support—you are truly inspirational!!!**