“KAT: 5 YEARS & COUNTING” FUNDRAISER SUCCESS

YORKVILLE, IL – On March 18th, the VOLUNTARY ACTION CENTER (VAC) held the “KAT: 5 Years & Counting” fundraiser to support and bring awareness to KENDALL AREA TRANSIT (KAT), Kendall County’s community and public transportation program.

The evening was a celebration of KAT’s growth and success in providing transportation services to Kendall County residents, especially senior citizens and individuals with disabilities. Paul LaLonde, VAC Assistant Director and KAT Program Director, emphasized that “our mission is one of offering a freedom and peace of mind to those who otherwise may not have a ride to the doctor, work, or grocery store.”

KAT began in March 2010, and has provided over 110,000 trips since that time. “Our first week of operation, we averaged 14 riders a day. Recently, we’re averaging over 150 a day. This tremendous growth is a testament to our community’s need for these types of services,” LaLonde stated.

Since beginning KAT operations in 2010, the VAC has provided over:

- 32,000 rides to seniors,
- 30,000 rides to persons with disabilities,
- 58,000 employment trips,
- 33,000 medical trips, and
- 15,000 trips for essential shopping, social/recreational, educational, and nutritional reasons.

LaLonde continued, “ridership has increased by triple and double digit percentages every single year. We’ve been fortunate because we’ve had a lot of room to expand!”

Tom Zucker, Executive Director of VAC, emphasize that “it’s important to remember that KAT is an avenue for seniors, persons with disabled, and other residents without vehicle access to live an independent lifestyle. KAT helps people remain active members of the community.”

The event would not have been a success without the sponsorships of VAC’s community partners, including “Event Sponsors” Friends of John D. Anthony and The Record Newspapers; “Reception Sponsors” Rush Copley Medical Center, Hillside Helia of Yorkville, Heritage Woods of Yorkville, and musician Dave Byron; and “Ride Sponsors” the Tillers of Oswego and Kendall Printing. Through the generous support of the Sponsors, silent auction donators,
and the many attendees, the event was a wonderful success, and VAC looks forward to building upon that success for future events.

All proceeds from “KAT: 5 Years & Counting” will be used to help VAC provide community transportation through the KAT program. Every $100 raised will help provide six (6) rides to community members in need – these are trips to dialysis, employment, higher education, food banks and grocery stores, and so much more. All donations stay in the community to support local services and will help improve the quality of life for people’s neighbors, friends, and family members.

While the past five years have come and gone very quickly, the KAT project was a work over ten years in the making. Particularly instrumental in the process were former Kendall County board member Jessie Haffenrichter; Kendall County Administrator Jeff Wilkins; Bette Schoenholtz, Executive Director of Senior Services Associates; Tom Zucker, Executive Director of the Voluntary Action Center; and Paul LaLonde, KAT Program Director.

“KAT is a diverse coalition of community stakeholders.” LaLonde said. “From our local government partners, area businesses and social service agencies, we’ve been very fortunate to have such committed community partners.”

VAC was incorporated in 1974. The organization is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. VAC has transit and/or nutrition programs in DeKalb, LaSalle, and Kendall Counties. The KAT program is a general public transportation service for all Kendall County residents but is particularly vital to seniors and individuals with disabilities. Since the KAT program began operations in early 2010, VAC has provided over 110,000 trips to community members wishing to live a more socially integrated and independent life. In January of 2013, KAT added Park and Ride services in Oswego, and looks forward to continuing to adapt the system for the needs of the community.

For more information on the “KAT: 5 Years & Counting” event, VAC, or KAT, please contact Paul LaLonde, Assistant Director of VAC, at (630) 882-6970.

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Musician, Dave Byron, tuning his guitars before the event.

Tom Zucker (middle) VAC Executive Director, speaks with event guests, including Micki Miller (left), Assistant Executive Director of Senior Service Associates, Inc.
Paul LaLonde (center), VAC Assistant Director and KAT Program Director, addresses attendees of the event.