

For Immediate Release  
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**It's time to RESPOND!!!**  
**(Organizations Merging to Improve Community Service)**

Two existing Lake County organizations have united with the goal of coordinating and streamlining access to social service agencies, thereby improving service to residents, it was announced Tuesday.

PEC (Partners for Effective Collaborations) and RESPOND (Respecting Every Single Person through Outreach, Networking and Diversity) combined to form RESPOND Lake County. The coalition will serve as a forum for front-line workers to gather, share and utilize staff expertise more effectively. The group will meet monthly with the mission of better assisting residents to improve their quality of life by facilitating understanding and communication among providers.

"This new coalition will bridge the northern and central parts of Lake County. As much as we try to meet the needs of our residents, we find our effort is amplified if done in concert with other agencies," said Cheri Ditzig, supervisor of Zion Township and founder of the RESPOND Lake County Zion branch. "By establishing face-to-face relationships with our agency counterparts, we are able to more adeptly serve our clients."

Carmen Patlan of Most Blessed Trinity was thrilled to continue the efforts put in place in the Waukegan area, first initiated to address issues significant to the Latino community. "None of this would have gone as far as it did without Terri Denny and John Turner from Catholic Charities. John's passing made us even more vigilant to make sure these partnerships continued in his memory."

Comprised of social services agencies, school districts, senior housing providers, libraries, municipalities, area townships and many others, members collaborate to provide comprehensive services for residents across the county. This new partnership includes about 30 members including: Catholic Charities, YouthBuild, Most Blessed Trinity, Lake County Workforce Development, area townships and many others.

Involvement in RESPOND Lake County:

- Removes duplication of services
- Assists agencies in working together
- Leverages manpower and effort

Meetings are held at 11:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. the second Wednesday of each month at alternating locations: Zion Park District's Shiloh Center or YouthBuild Lake County in North Chicago. The Zion area dates are March 9, May 11, July 13, September 14 and November 9 and are coordinated by Cheri Ditzig, Zion Township Supervisor and CREW Executive Director. The meeting dates for the North Chicago area are February 9, April 13, June 8, August 10, October 12 and November 9 and are coordinated by Gale Strenger Wayne, Shields Township Supervisor, and Laurel Tustison, Executive Director of YouthBuild Lake County.

PEC (formerly Partners for an Enriched Community) was established in 2004 in Zion for the purposes of identifying gaps in service and providing ease of service delivery. RESPOND was established in 2007 by Catholic Charities and Most Blessed Trinity Parish in Waukegan.

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