

[View this email in your browser](#)



A MESSAGE FROM MARK

Happy Holidays!!!

I am very fortunate to have grown up surrounded by plenty and privilege. My family has been blessed by safety and joy! As you know, many of the families in our region are not as fortunate as I have been. In this issue of our newsletter, you will hear of some of the many ways West40 has attempted to add to the safety and joy of our region.

Our West40 Region is very diverse (no news to you). Our work over the past 8 years has taught us many lessons. First and foremost, every corner of our 20 square miles has specific and pronounced needs. No neighborhood or community is without significant needs. Some are obvious. Others are silent or hidden. Nonetheless, they exist.

In response to their various needs, the West40 team has grown from 40 staff members to closer to 250. We see ourselves growing even more over the next couple years. The only driving force to this growth is the desire to address the countless needs of our students, schools, districts, families and communities. There is much work to do!

At this holiday time, I am shaken by the myriad of needs to address. However, we are up to the challenge!! I am so GRATEFUL for the willingness of our district leaders to partner with us to reach out to embrace our families with a bit of the bounty that we experience. I am so very THANKFUL for the ability and the resources to help some of our families receive the safety and joy they deserve. I love that we can call our colleagues partners in GIVING BACK to those less fortunate or less privileged.



As our belief statement says...“Every Child Deserves” to be blanketed with the magic of the holidays. Please join me and West40 in finding ways to bring safety, joy and magic of this time of year to ALL of our families.

The Happiest of Holidays to you ALL!

Mark

Dr. Mark A. Klaisner
President, IARSS
Executive Director, West40 ISC #2

DOROTHY'S JOURNEY



The journey toward high school graduation starts when a student first steps foot in a classroom. But along the way, life happens. Some students may face roadblocks or other obstacles that make their education journeys difficult.

There's also the challenge of overcoming a certain feeling that affects many teenagers toward the end of high school

"I'm not gonna lie, I had senioritis and I'm not even a senior. That's a good one. Right, guys?" chuckled East Leyden High School student Dorothy in a room with West40 staff members.

Dorothy, 16, is half-way through her junior year. What started out as a slow school year has picked up, according to her West40 student advocate, Miriam Luna.

"At the beginning of the semester, she was a little bit lower in her grades," Luna said. "She didn't really want to be in school!"

But Dorothy realized a change was needed. So she and Luna set academic goals. And they continue to meet several times a week in between Dorothy's core classes.

"High school is just something very scary and when I need help in academics, I know I can come here," Dorothy said.

The result: Dorothy is now attending her classes and not skipping. Dorothy said her advocate has even learned math overnight to help her study for a test.

"She's getting her grades up and she's passing almost everything. So it's really nice to just see that progression that she's getting," Luna said.

Dorothy joined West40's advocacy program as a middle school student. She's stuck with it ever since and said advocates like Luna help boost her confidence.

"Any time anybody ever asks me, 'What is Tapestry?', I say, 'It's what you want it to be.' Every day it's something new. I could be doing homework or I could be catching up on life. I could be meeting with teachers. It's what you want it to be," Dorothy said.

Being an advocate gives Luna an opportunity to be a voice for students.

"I think it's important that students get the chance to have somebody there for them, that's trying to advocate for them, that's trying to get them to where they want to be and that is supporting them," Luna said.

Outside of school, Dorothy is an entrepreneur. She buys and resells shoes and has had more than 250 transactions in the past six months.

"All I want to do is give back (to) my customers. I wouldn't have grown so much without them," Dorothy said.

What's on the horizon for Dorothy? She said that she has dreams of opening her own store or becoming an attorney. She said she's even thought about becoming President or even working for West40.

"All I want to do is help people and give back and that's why I wouldn't mind coming back to work here because they've done so much for me. I want to give back. Help other students and stuff like that," Dorothy said. "Because I know what it's like and I feel like it would be easier to connect with people. Just help people out. That's all I want to do."

FOOD, RESOURCES & HOPE



The season of giving spans year-round at West40 as we aim to provide food, resources and hope for students, families and community members.

Throughout 2022, West40 attempted to make a difference in the lives of hundreds, if not thousands of people through the following:

- Partnered with Panera Bread to provide bread for 4-6 families per week.
- Partnered with Loyola Medicine to provide services for a Med-Van.
- Partnered with Morton College to provide 3,200 backpacks to students.
- Supplied more than 2,000 students through family events.
- Received donations to provide Thanksgiving turkeys to 100 families.
- Partnered with Riveredge Hospital and P.T. MAN Ministry for a Winter Coat Drive.
- Served nearly 250 families with shopping experiences through our Heart 2 Heart store.
- Partnered with Casa Esperanza, Quinn Center, Community Alliance, World Vision and others to support our families

West40 staff members said they are grateful and honored to be able to give back to the community.

"I love that I get to create relationships with our amazing community partners and help students and their families."

Maria-Elena Agrela, West40 Community Resources Coordinator

Heart 2 Heart coordinator Pam Vujovich estimates the value of new items that have found their way into the West40 area homes in 2022 to be around \$100,000.

"We see the need are never ending and yet the Heart 2 Heart store is a wonderful, respectful way to bring new items to our families who need and deserve a bit of help in their journey," Vujovich said.

Nearly all of the stock in West40's Heart 2 Heart store is provided by generous donations.

FAMILY NIGHTS



West40 advocates hosted multiple welcoming events for students and their families in November, ahead of Thanksgiving. The festivities offered students a chance to introduce family members to West40 staff members, play games, listen to music and enjoy in a festive environment.

Proviso area director Yessenia Olivas said the annual event is an important reminder of spending time with family.

"It makes me feel like what we do is worth it," Olivas said. "There's no better feeling than seeing students with their advocates and their families."

Ana, a parent of a West40 student, said her son is making better choices after participating in West40's ALOP program.

"They help support him. It's very good for him and me, too," Ana said. "Everybody is very nice, polite and professional."

"Family Nights" were held at Proviso East, Lyons Township, Mannheim Middle School, Riverside Brookfield High School and Hester Junior High. More are planned!



- STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN WEST40 PROGRAMS AS OF DECEMBER 2022
 - ALOP: 1801
 - Truancy: 167
 - Safe School: 46
 - Remote School: 42
- NEXT SHORT TERM SUBSTITUTE TRAINING WILL BE HELD VIA ZOOM ON JAN. 18
 - [Register now](#)
- REGISTER TODAY TO BE CERTIFIED IN YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AID
 - [Register now](#)
- LISTEN TO THE WEST40 PODCAST "SHIFT EVERYTHING"
 - [Listen here](#)
- WATCH VIDEOS TO LEARN ABOUT WEST40
 - [Watch here](#)

We love sharing stories of how lives have been changed in partnership with your school or district.

Want to join us in inspiring others? [Please send your story our way.](#)



Copyright © 2022 West 40 ISC #2. All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).