

The Macomb Daily (<http://www.macombdaily.com>)

## Kish: Fundraiser helps provide shelter, meals for homeless

*By Ken Kish, The Macomb Daily*

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Transitioning from helping people adopt pets to raising funds for homeless people might sound a little strange.

But for Joe Sowerby, it's about community involvement, helping others and doing something to honor his late mother, Lorraine Sowerby.

"This is for my mother's legacy," Sowerby said, noting that a March 25 event "The Warmth Of Music" at O'Halloran's Public Hall in Mount Clemens raised \$26,000 for the Macomb County Warming Center.

Lorraine Sowerby, widowed in 1976, served on the board of directors and as a volunteer at the Macomb County Warming Center for nearly three decades. She died in 2005.

So when Joe heard the center was losing some \$40,000 in state and federal funds, he decided to help.

And he knows more than most about organizing public events.

He started the first "Meet Your Best Friend at the Zoo," an event still going strong now hosted by the Michigan Humane Society and the Detroit Zoo.

For more than a decade, he ran Pet-A-Palooza, which found homes for thousands of cats and dogs in conjunction with animal rescue groups. Pet-A-Palooza was first held at Freedom Hill Park in Sterling Heights and then moved to the Palace of Auburn Hills.

Sowerby pretty much single-handedly generated news coverage in advance of the annual event. The last Pet-A-Palooza was in 2013.

"You have to act with a sense of urgency," said Sowerby, 66, a realtor and partner in Anton, Sowerby & Associates in Mount Clemens.

Sowerby, his wife Kata, and Kathy Goodrich, executive director of the non-profit Macomb County Warming Center, set up a planning committee for the fundraiser.

Other members included Mindi Priskey, Debbie Boone, Chad Halcom, Paul Boone and Thomas Beindit.

To keep the admission price at only \$25 per person, the committee sold sponsorships for \$100, \$250, \$500 and \$1,000. Those alone put the event in the black.

The \$25 ticket included a buffet lunch with O'Halloran's popular selection of sliders, fries, salad and soft drinks.

The event, which ran from 1-6 p.m., featured entertainment by local singers Maggie Cocco, Edward Dupas, Jeff Karoub and Jim Woolsey.

The food was great, the entertainment was lively and patrons helped the homeless.

“The people attending were all very friendly and interested in our shelters, and other services,” said Executive Director Goodrich, who noted the center received calls the next day pledging continued support.

“Our prayers of being able to continue serving are being answered,” she said.

The Macomb County Warming Center, along with partnering churches, provides a safe, warm place to spend the night and also serves meals evenings and mornings.

Those assisted must be at least 18 years old, since the facilities do not reject adults with criminal records or substance abuse problems. Security is provided at all times.

The center also partners with Ray of Hope Day Center, which offers “resources to enable the homeless to move into secure and productive lifestyles.”

The Macomb County Warming Center serves more than 700 homeless each year and the number keeps increasing. Homelessness remains a problem. One federal survey found more than 9,000 homeless in Michigan on a single night in 2017.

Sowerby is working on next year’s fundraiser to help those in Macomb County.

“We had about 100 attend. I think we can double that or more,” he said.

It’s Lorraine Sowerby’s legacy.

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