



Upon retiring from their busy careers a few years ago, Jay and Judy Dunn did an extraordinary thing. Instead of devoting their retirement to leisure and travel, the industrious couple went searching for a local non-profit organization to serve as the recipient of their many talents. They not only searched, they sat down and interviewed several organizations before deciding to focus on Project Self-Sufficiency, a local agency which specializes in delivering essential services to needy families in the Sussex County area. How lucky for Project Self-Sufficiency.

In the past few years, Jay and Judy Dunn have transformed the agency in many ways. Their first task was taking on the agency's "Working Women's Wardrobe" project, a collection of new and gently-used business wear which is distributed free of charge to agency participants. Relying on Jay's background in retail and Judy's background in sales, they brought in clothing racks and posters, arranged the clothing as it would appear in a store, weeded out the items which were not suitable, and created a boutique-like atmosphere at the agency's headquarters in Newton. All of the items are displayed by size and type. Shoes and accessories line the walls. There is even a cozy dressing room for patrons to use to ensure a proper fit.

J.C. Penney, the department store chain which employed Jay for many years, has continued to donate clothing racks, display items and specialty hangers for the Working Women's Wardrobe. Bob Petrocy, Set Execution Manager at the company's Rockaway store, notes that the company is proud to support Project Self-Sufficiency. "We are doing a good thing for people who are less fortunate."

Not satisfied with focusing solely on the Working Women's Wardrobe, Jay and Judy began organizing the agency's Food Pantry as well. According to Judy, Project Self-Sufficiency's Food Pantry distributes more than a ton of food to needy families each month. Non-perishable items such as canned goods, juices, pastas, peanut butter, hair care products, laundry supplies, diapers and feminine supplies are in great demand.

Coordinating the Working Women's Wardrobe and the Food Pantry are time-consuming, on-going tasks for Jay and Judy Dunn. The Dunns threw themselves into assisting Project Self-Sufficiency with their recent move from a cramped rental space on Route 206 to their spacious new campus on Mill Street in Newton. Judy offered her expertise in corporate interior design and furniture sales, and negotiated with local retailers to find bargains on furnishings for the entire complex.

Like many couples who have been together for many years, Jay and Judy Dunn complete each other's sentences. "When we retired we were looking for some way to give back to the community," explains Judy.

They quickly settled on Project Self-Sufficiency. "We wanted something to do with an organization that helped women. We believed that this was one of the best non-profit organizations in the area because it gave people a hand-up, not

just a hand out. It gave women jobs, confidence and security for their children. It's also one of the best distributors of capital funds, because most of their contributions go directly to their clients," comments Jay.

"We get lots of personal satisfaction out of our participation here," adds Judy. "We've met a lot of clients as they come through the Working Women's Wardrobe. We see the difference between where they are when they first come to Project Self-Sufficiency and six months later. Those same clients are completely different people."

As for their participation at the agency now that the organization has moved to its new facility, Judy notes, "This will have its own set of challenges. However, it's so nice that disadvantaged women can bring their children to such a beautiful facility. When people come here to this new facility, their work is better and they work harder."

"It's all about dignity," adds Jay.

"Project Self-Sufficiency has been extraordinarily blessed to be the recipient of the time and talent of both Jay and Judy Dunn," comments Deborah Berry-Toon, Executive Director of Project Self-Sufficiency. "Their work here has literally transformed our agency. We are so grateful to Jay and Judy for the gift of their presence here with us, and we are looking forward to many more years of their treasured friendship."

Project Self-Sufficiency is seeking donations to its Food Pantry, as well as to its Working Women's Wardrobe. Clothing should be new or gently-used and suitable for the workplace. Donations must be dry-cleaned and on a hanger. Items needed in the Food Pantry include soup, canned fruits and vegetables, pastas and sauces, peanut butter, toothpaste, shampoos and conditioners, hair care products, laundry detergents, diapers, toilet tissue, facial tissue, and feminine hygiene products.

To make a donation, call 973-940-3500.



October, 2008