

ASK AN EXPERT

PETER HUGHES, FUNDRAISER CHAIR

How do you coordinate a fundraiser?

Joining the HCS Family Services Junior Board two years ago was a chance to meet people for teen Peter Hughes, having recently returned to Hinsdale.

Now a Hinsdale Central senior, his main objective is helping residents of DuPage County meet their basic needs as chairperson of the Neighbors Helping Neighbors benefit April 11 at Vistro (see Page 20 for details). The second annual event, in which a portion of the restaurant's proceeds as well as other charitable gifts will support HCS' two local food pantries, was actually cooked up by Hughes when he was the board's liaison.

"I had to communicate ideas we had at the board with other people (in the community) at schools and businesses," said Hughes, who has ascended to co-president of the board this year.

A personal connection with Paul Virant, chef-owner of Vistro and a Hinsdale resident, inspired the idea for the fundraiser.

"It seemed like a good opportunity, and Paul was very helpful in wanting to work with us," Hughes said.

He had never taken on such a task before, however, and sluggish participation initially caused consternation. To Hughes' relief, reservations picked up as the day approached.

"Our goal last year was \$1,000 in donations," he said. "We ended up raising over \$6,000. That's all because people were willing to give and be generous."

Assistance from fellow board members and friends were vital, Hughes stressed. And he ascribed the success to presenting guests with lists itemizing specific staple groceries they were providing to needy families.

"It was a way that people could see directly where their money was going," said Hughes, adding that the concept will be expanded this year.

Hughes also learned the value of perseverance in enlisting resources and coordinating the logistics.

"Ideas are great, but they only have value if you put work into them," he said. "To make something a reality, you have

to put a lot of work into it. "At first it can seem kind of daunting, but as you start working on a project you begin to realize that people want you to succeed," Hughes remarked.

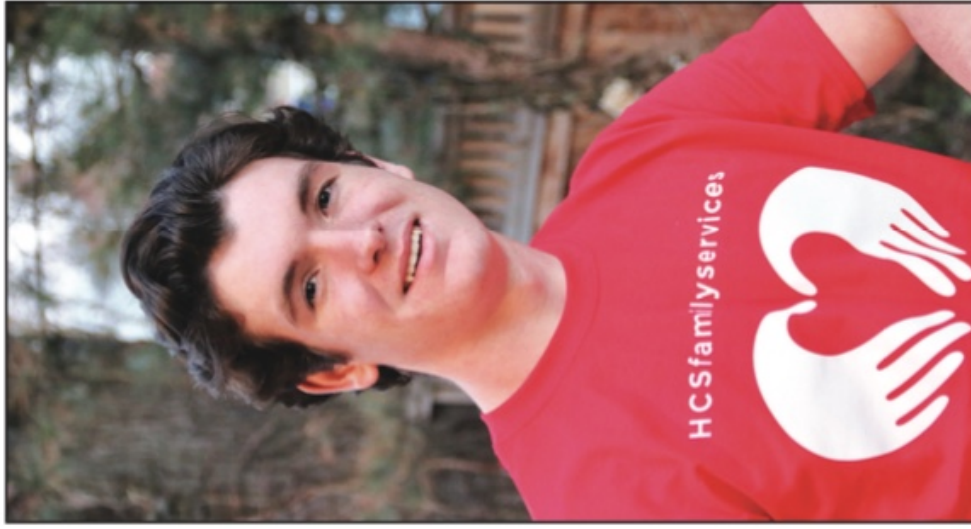
He recalled the mantra from the school he attended as freshman: "Lift while you climb." Having young people lead the lifting is especially meaningful, Hughes suggested.

"It helps those our age realize that the way we live life is very privileged and comes with a responsibility to help others," he said.

Hughes, who will head to Holy Cross College in the fall to study environmental engineering and compete on the rowing team, is confident junior board members coming after will pick up the baton.

"I want to establish this (event) so that it's something that will continue for the next few years, at least," he said. "It's good to know that what I'm doing is helping to make it easier for other people to move on with their lives. It's good to know that we as an organization are lightening the load that a lot of these families have economically."

— by Ken Knutson



To help the hungry of DuPage County, which has the second largest food-insecure population in Illinois, Hinsdale teen Peter Hughes came up with the Neighbors Helping Neighbors fundraiser. (Jim Stonoff photo)