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Naperville CARES hires first executive director

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Sun staff

Naperville Cares has never had an executive director, but that's about to change.

The volunteer-driven organization that helps Naperville families facing economic hardship hired Janet Derrick, 49, to be its first executive director.

"It's a great passion of mine to work for an organization like this," Derrick said. "I'm privileged I've been given this opportunity."

Having volunteered for the organization for seven years, Tom Cordaro, president of Naperville Cares, says Derrick is the perfect fit for this new position.

"Janet is perfectly suited to be our executive director. She is a long-term Cares volunteer and has served on the board, so ... her firsthand knowledge of the Cares mission coupled with her extensive business background made the choice an easy one," Cordaro said in a press release.

He also said part of Derrick's job will be to increase the organization's public visibility.

"Janet will be more of a public face of Naperville Cares to the Naperville community," Cordaro said. "In spite of all the work we've done, were a relatively unknown organization."

Both said the group has grown to the point where it needs a leader who can bring its different committees together and serve as a point person.

"Part of it reflects the maturity of the organization," Cordaro said. "It's the 10th anniversary of Naperville Cares in terms of presence in the community. We've grown to the size that we need the full-time attention."

Derrick will handle the day-to-day business activities of the group, Community Acting in Response to Economic Stress.

Cordaro said in the first three months of 2008, Naperville Cares experienced a 70 percent increase in requests for assistance.

"She also will have to find new sources of revenue for us," he said. "We believe the community wants to support our work."

Derrick served as CARES' vice president for three years and co-president for one year. As a board member, she was responsible for updating the members on the day-to-day operations, which she will oversee in her new position.

Call 630-369-0200 or visit www.napervillecares.org.

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