

- [Home](#) | [News](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Travel](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Homes](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Shopping](#) | [Place ads](#) | [Newspaper services](#)

Search for your new home today!

Chicago Tribune

54° F
Latest forecast



I graduated in:

- 1986
- 1976
- 1966

[classmates.com](#)

Top headlines

- [Pelosi: Need new atty. general](#)
- [Iraq: 4 years later](#)
- [Body of missing woman found](#)
- [New: Juror snag at Black trial](#)
- [Update: Bond denied for mom accused in beating death](#)

Images in the news



- [The day | Photo page](#)
- [St. Pat's parade](#)
- [War families](#)
- [Inside corned beef](#)
- [McCain in Iowa](#)

Sponsored by [Ritz Camera](#)

The latest from ChicagoSports.com

- [Cubs](#) | [Sox](#) | [Bears](#)
- [Bulls](#) | [Fire](#) | [Blackhawks](#) | [Columnists](#) | [Forums](#)

Hello, [Richard](#) | Subscribers: [Get the Advantage](#) | [log out](#) Search:

[chicagotribune.com](#) >> [Living](#) >> [Culture](#)

THE SOCIAL PAGE

Organization gives the homeless hope

By Kevin McKeough
Special to the Tribune
Published March 19, 2007

Lisa Nigro was a plainclothes Chicago police officer making drug busts in 1989, when she began serving sandwiches loaded on a red wagon to homeless people in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood.

Her initiative became the Inspiration Corporation, a non-profit organization that now assists 2,000 homeless individuals in the city each year. Nigro, who now works for a health club, still volunteers at the organization's Inspiration Cafe, which provides meals for the homeless in a restaurant setting.

"They can order off the menu. I didn't like that people thought there was an above and below. I wanted a place where everyone was treated with respect," Nigro said during the 14th annual One Inspired Evening benefit Friday night.

About 650 people gathered under the stained-glass roof of the Chicago Cultural Center's Preston Bradley Hall for cocktails

and a buffet, and live and silent auctions of more than 120 donated works of art, wine, dinner packages and "dream jobs," including opportunities to spend a day working with a museum curator or gourmet chefs. "It's a fantastic auction. There's great art here and great deals, and there's real art collectors here," said Peter Mars, who donated work to the auction, as did a number of the artists who exhibit at his Fulton Market gallery. The \$85-a-person event (\$95 at the door) raised funds for the Inspiration Corporation, which provides housing, employment services and training and supportive services, as well as the meals that volunteers serve at Inspiration Caf in Uptown and its Woodlawn neighborhood counterpart, The Living Room Cafe.

"Homelessness is a scary thing, and when you can sit down with someone and talk with them while you serve them a meal, it humanizes the problem and the injustice of it," said John Pfeiffer, who became the Inspiration Corporation's executive director two months ago but was involved with the very first Inspired Evening event.

He estimated that between 7,500 and 10,000 people are homeless in

free shipping
limited time only

Homeland Flags
Purchase a gift American, US State, US City or International flag.
<http://www.homelandflags.com/>

Lose 25 Pounds This Month
Oprah and CBS featured Hoodia, a dieting miracle. Try a Free Sample.
www.mylipoplex.com

Truckload Piano Sale
Acoustic-Digital. Big Discounts. Immediate Delivery.
www.napervillemusic.com

CHICAGO top jobs

<p>ASST PUBLIC WORK DIRECTOR VILLAGE OF GLEN ELLYN read more & apply</p>	<p>OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR CLUB ASSIST read more & apply</p>
<p>POLICE OFFICER TESTING CITY OF ELMHURST read more & apply</p>	<p>SR. MULTI-LINE ADJUSTER CLAIMSONE LLC read more & apply</p>
<p>OPERATIONS MANAGER CLUB ASSIST read more & apply</p>	<p>JUNIOR UNDERWRITER AMERICAN BROKERS CONDUIT read more & apply</p>

Search Chicago jobs **All Chicago jobs**

Chicago at any given time, and that 40,000 individuals will be homeless sometime during the year. This once included 56-year-old Caesareo Marsh, who had been a heroin addict and homeless for most of his life until five years ago, when he got help from the Employment Project (a formerly separate organization that became part of the Inspiration Corporation in 2005).

Since then, he's cleaned up and earned his GED and a college certificate in psychiatric rehabilitation. He now is taking classes toward his associate's degree in mental health while working for the Inspiration Corporation as a case manager. "I'm very happy and at peace. Now I can go back to the community I helped destroy and give something back," he said.

Willie Cochran, the alderman-elect of the 20th Ward, which includes the Woodlawn neighborhood, has been busy preparing to take office and will go on vacation in Jamaica just before his May 21st inauguration. "While I'm away, then I might be able to enjoy the victory and let it settle in," he said.

The recent sale of Equity Office Properties Trust has been a boon for Inspiration Corporation volunteers Shannon and Thadd Ullrich, who work for and owned stock in the firm. On the other hand, "We find out in two weeks if we have a job or not," Thadd said, although they seemed more concerned about keeping an eye on the silent auction bids for some art they wanted to buy.

Most Friday and Sunday mornings for the last four years, Karen Skalitzky has gotten up early, thrown on some clothes, put her hair in a cap and served breakfast at the Inspiration Corporation's cafes. "Are you ever late?" asked her friend Tamara Wood. "I'm late all the time, I'm supposed to be there at 6:30," said Skalitzky, who wrote "A Recipe for Hope," a book of first-person narratives by the people at the cafes, and who received the Lisa Nigro Spirit Award during the benefit.

Copyright © 2007, [Chicago Tribune](#)

Search Chicago Jobs [Post resume](#)
[Post a job](#)
 powered by **careerbuilder**

SHOP CHICAGO FASHION


 ZIP Code: powered by **shopLocal.com**

Most viewed Most e-mailed

In the past hour

- [Body of missing woman found](#)
- [Motorist fatally shot, plows vehicle into home](#)
- [Cops: Mom beat girl, 5, to death](#)
- [Bond denied for mother in girl's beating death](#)
- ['Angry' man charged in knife attacks](#)

[More most viewed](#)

 **metromix.com**

Find places and events on [metromix.com](#).

quick clicks:
[Music](#) | [Movies](#) | [Events/Best Bets](#) | [Reader Reviews](#)

Videos from CNN, Tribune, CLTV and WGN:

Ads by Google

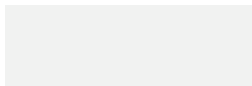
Sapore di Napoli Pizzeria
 Authentic Italian pizza in Lakeview Fresh homemade dough and sauce
[www.saporedinapoli.net](#)

Flight Training Chicago
 Chicago's Premier Flight School Super-Clean Aircraft Rentals
[www.palwaukee-flyers.com](#)

Heli Motion
 Chicago's Premier Helicopter Charter and Transportation Service.
[www.helimotion.com](#)

Printers Corner Condos
 Corner views in every home. Prices starting in the \$200,000s.
[www.printerscorner.com](#)

Chicago Real Estate
 View featured real estate listings, condos, land, and homes for sale
[dan.richrealtors.com](#)



Site index

News <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local news • Nation/world news • Opinion • Columnists • Politics • Religion • Special reports • Photos • Video • Multimedia • Obituaries • Health • Education • Weather • Traffic 	Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your money • Stocks • The Digital Page • What's ahead • Business tech • Technology • Wireless/ Networking • Columnists 	Sports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicago Bears Super Bowl coverage • Bears • Bulls • Blackhawks • Cubs • White Sox • Colleges • High school • Golf • Soccer • Columnists 	Travel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flight tracker • Travel deals • Fall colors • Midwest getaways • Follow the sun • Skiing • Cruising • National Parks • Resourceful traveler • 10 for the road • GeoQuiz 	Entertainment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts • Critics' reviews • Dining • Food • Horoscope • Leisure • Lottery • Movies • Music • Theater • Shopping • Television 	Today's paper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the community • Registration • Subscription • Contact us • Send a news tip • What's in it for you? 	Classified <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find a job • Find a car • Find real estate • Find an apartment • Shopping • Find a mortgage • Dating • Pets • Place an ad • How to advertise
---	---	---	---	--	---	---

[metromix.com](#) | [ChicagoSports.com](#) | [Subscriber Advantage](#) | [Site tour](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#)

Local Tribune sites: [Chicago Magazine](#) | [CLTV](#) | [Hoy Chicago](#) | [RedEye](#) | [Satisfaction Magazine](#) | [WGN Radio](#) | [WGN TV](#)



FREE to subscribers!
[Sign up now!](#)

Daywatch

The day's top stories e-mailed to you each weekday.

365 Day Archive

A free archive search of a year's worth of Chicago Tribune stories.

The Info Desk

Exclusive access to Tribune experts for help with homework or research

The Entertainment Expert

Advice for making the most of a special night out.

This month's featured offers include:

Subscriber Advantage members can enjoy special offers such as win a free trip to Paducah, Kentucky and 2-FOR-1 admission to the Elmhurst Art Museum, courtesy of Chicago Tribune Subscriber Advantage.

STATE OF ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

UNCLAIMED PROPERTY LISTINGS

What's in it for you?