

# Allies for Allendale

**Nanette Jenkins and Susan Weninger**, the 2015 Allendale Boutique co-chairs, are on a mission to spread the word about the Allendale Shelter Club and get you to shop 'til you drop at this year's boutique.

WORDS BY JENNY QUILL / ILLUSTRATION BY KIRSTEN ULVE

**N**anette Jenkins, Susan Weninger, and I are huddled around a small table in Einstein's Bagels, swapping tales of babysitter cancellations and one-too-many meetings. Behind me, Weninger's boys are engaged in a pretend swordfight and Weninger is trying to keep one eye on them and one ear tuned to the conversation. It's a familiar scene—family, work, and volunteer obligations all colliding into one multitask-because-we-must meeting.

Jenkins and Weninger both became members of the Allendale Shelter Club four years ago. For Weninger, joining the Shelter Club meant continuing a proud family tradition: Her mother served on the club, and Weninger has fond memories of attending club events as a child. For Jenkins, the Shelter Club was an opportunity to make a difference. "I was drawn to the fact that you could have this hands-on experience with these children," Jenkins says. "You can see the tangible fruits of your labor and fundraising."

Through stewardship, special events, advocacy, and fundraising, the Shelter Club works to improve the lives of students at the Allendale Association, a non-profit child welfare agency based in Lake Villa. The association provides disadvantaged youth and their families with a safe home, specialized educational services, and therapeutic programs. Revenue raised by the Allendale Boutique directly funds these critical programs.

Jenkins and Weninger tell me that their greatest challenge as co-chairs has been ensuring that the Shelter Club's message is not lost in translation. "This year, the focus has been reaching out to the community and letting people know what Allendale is and how we impact the lives of these children," says Weninger.

"The Shelter Club is not just a bunch of women who get together, select some vendors, and sell cute things once a year at a boutique," adds Jenkins. "We raise major funds for improvements at the school. We are a support system and a bridge for these kids. For many of them, this is their final stop. Foster care has come and gone." Funds contributed by the Shelter Club have been used for many projects, notes Jenkins, including the construction of numerous student-housing units, a new cafeteria, and, most recently, a new student technology center.

To get the word out about their efforts, the Shelter Club kicked off a grassroots "friendraising" initiative with a back-to-school event in September that featured three guest speakers—Bill Cartwright, former Chicago Bulls player and an Allendale Board of Trustees Board Member; Mary Shahbazian, President and CEO, Allendale Association; and Chris Fisher, Board Member, Allendale Board of Trustees. "The root of what Allendale is, the message, was getting muddled a little bit," says Jenkins. "The back-to-school event and others like it are part of a new effort to re-educate the public about Allendale."

Of course, the Shelter Club's primary fundraiser is still the Allendale Boutique, now in its 52nd year. Planning the boutique, the ladies tell me, is an eight- to nine-month process requiring the efforts of all of the club's 70 members. "This year, we have 50 percent new vendors," says Weninger. "We have new, fresh, exciting vendors that will appeal to a lot of people." Notable vendors include SeeSaw Society, which sells children's clothes; Rungolee, a returning favorite that specializes in women's fashion and jewelry; LuLu's Vintage clothing and jewelry; Seam St. preppy apparel; and Dishique Boutique, purveyors of personalized dinnerware.

For Weninger, a boutique highlight is the School Shop, where shoppers can scoop up crafts made by the children of Allendale School, including embroidery and succulents from the school's greenhouse. "It makes the cause of Allendale so tangible," says Weninger.



## READY, SET, SHOP:

### The 52nd Allendale Boutique

*The Allendale Shelter Clubs hosts the 52nd Allendale Boutique, benefiting the Allendale Association, November 3-5 at the Lake Forest Club, 554 N. Westmoreland Road, Lake Forest.*

#### Hours:

TUES., NOV 3

9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

6:30 to 9:30 p.m., Ladies' Night

WED., NOV 4

9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

THURS., NOV 5

9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

#### Tickets:

Boutique general admission: \$10

Ladies' Night: \$50

*For more information about the Allendale Shelter Club and the Allendale Boutique, visit [allendaleshelterclub.org](http://allendaleshelterclub.org). To learn more about the Allendale Association, visit [allendale4kids.org](http://allendale4kids.org).*