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5 Favorites with Joy of Sox's Tom Costello, Jr.

The Wayne resident shares his inspiration for the nonprofit, and his area favorites.

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Tom Costello Jr. had an epiphany while volunteering at a Germantown shelter alongside his wife. Overcoming an initial phobia of the homeless, the Wayne resident founded the **Joy of Sox**, a nonprofit organization that has distributed 190,000 pairs of socks throughout the country since 2010.

1. Chanticleer.

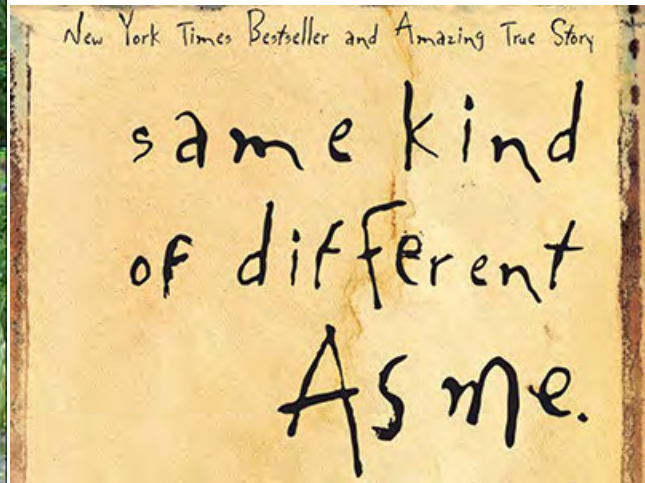
“We love to take my three grandchildren there.”

2. *Same Kind of Different As Me.*

“It’s about a guy, not dissimilar from me, who met some homeless people, and it changed his life.”

3. Cooking.

“I love it. A favorite is salmon, broccoli and roasted potatoes, with beet salad and a glass of chardonnay.”



From Left: Chanticleer, Same Kind of Different As Me

4. Davis Center for Athletics and Fitness at Villanova University.

“I work out on the elliptical a few times a week.”

5. Photography.

“When we had our family over this summer, I took about 500 shots of everybody. It turned into our Christmas card.”

MLT: What is the goal of Joy of Sox?

TC: Our vision is to be able to provide new socks to every homeless person in the United States a couple of times a year.

MLT: What made you decide to found this organization?

TC: My wife was volunteering at a homeless shelter and I used to be chronically homeless-phobic. I went down there a couple years ago, and it scared the hell out of me. [My wife] Nancy mentioned she'd been working with a podiatrist who said the homeless never get donations of socks and they have all sorts of problems with their feet. On the way home, I said I had to do something. I called around and got some donations. A sock manufacturer sent us a bunch of old seconds. I figured that something as simple or basic as a pair of socks can go [a long way] for a person who is in need.

MLT: How does the process work?

TC: We collect socks from sock drives or use money from our donations to purchase socks and then we distribute them to shelters and facilities for the homeless. [After a drive] we have volunteers come over and we separate them into women's, men's and children's.

MLT: What's the usual reaction when you give somebody a pair of socks?

TC: We'll have volunteers deliver a case of socks to a shelter manager and he or she hands them out. But we have been handing them out and people are like, 'Oh my god I never get socks.' Or, 'Do you have a pair of dress socks? I was able to get a job interview, I was able to get a pair of pants or a jacket, but funny socks. Can you help me out?' and we say sure. A lady came up to me that asked if I had any kids' socks. It was an unusual request and I asked why. 'My daughter goes to school and the girls tease her incessantly about the same pair of socks everyday.' I gave her handfuls of socks for her daughter.

MLT: What's the most rewarding part of your work?

TC: When you hand somebody a pair of socks and they smile and they typically say, 'I haven't had a new pair of socks in months or years.'

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