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NEWSletter

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Milwaukee Christian Center

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MCC Celebrates 85 Years of Compassion

By Jeri Jende, Development Director



In preparation for our 85th Anniversary, I've been going through old newspaper clippings, annual reports, and photographs to get a better understanding of the agency's history, as well as the impact the Milwaukee Christian Center (MCC) has made on hundreds of thousands of individuals over the years. It's been fascinating to dig through the dusty and brittle "treasures" in the basement to unearth some interesting facts. I've discovered that MCC's legacy of compassion and concern for others has been lovingly passed down from one generation to the next. Directors, program staff, and volunteers have consistently offered hope and strengthened the lives of neighborhood youth and adults, people who have passed through our doors over the past 85 years.

Did you know?

In 1921, Miss Mamie Passolt, a missionary from the American Baptist Home Mission Societies, started the Southside Christian Center (later to be renamed the Milwaukee Christian Center) in the old South Baptist Church building located at Sixth and Washington Streets. Miss Passolt focused her outreach ministry on the needs of the community. She responded to the education and socialization needs of a large number of Mexican immigrant children living in the neighborhood by starting the first Head Start-type preschool program. Her legacy of community interaction lives on through MCC's community-focused programs today.

In 1946, MCC initiated the first Golden Age Club in Milwaukee, one of the first clubs in the nation to specialize in working with senior citizens. Nineteen men and women came to the first meeting and a unanimous decision was made to meet each week. In an article written in 1947 by the Rev. John A. Craig, MCC Executive Director, he stated, "the Christian church has a real opportunity to minister to people in the "golden years" of their lives. These older people need something to do, a place to meet, and friends of their own age. Our Golden Age Club is providing all three of these." Today, our Senior Adults Program



Golden Age Club participants playing cards at MCC in the 1950s.

specializes in meeting the unique needs of our predominantly Southeast Asian participants.

In 1947, the Center provided many services and activities for youth and adults living in the neighborhood, but one of the more interesting services was the use of their basement shower! Rev. Craig wrote, "Lots of homes in this section have no hot water. Many of them have no bathing facilities. Believe me, our shower gets a workout."

In the early 1950's when television was a new invention and just being introduced to the American public, a newspaper article stated that MCC was one of the few Milwaukee area organizations where television had been tried. The reason?

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BITS and PIECES

- ❖ A big THANK YOU goes out to the following out-going board members for their many years of service to MCC: Mark Dudenhofer, Dena Henry, Jarrod Johnson, Claude Krawczyk, Jim McCarty, Steve Meyerson, and Marie Millard. We also welcome new board members Esther Shin, John Rozga, and Dennis Sampson. Newly elected officers are: Mary Binder, President; Rev. Sam Brink, Vice-President; and Dennis Sampson, Treasurer. Sandy Cope continues to serve as Secretary.
- ❖ MCC's Neighborhood Improvement Project (NIP) was awarded the Chase "Cornerstone Award" before an audience of 500 at the 7th Annual Milwaukee Awards for Neighborhood Development Innovation (MANDI) held at the Pfister Hotel on March 16, 2006. Congratulations!

Youth Development "Kozy" Center Opens

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Steve Kunze, Community Service Chair, explained, "the Metro Kiwanis group is interested in working with MCC because the Kozy Center youth program provides an opportunity for us to work with the youth on a monthly basis. We're interested in building positive relationships with the kids, to hopefully make a difference in their lives." Steve continued, "Our



NIP staff accepting the MANDI Chase "Cornerstone" Award.

partnership with MCC has brought a sense of energy back to our group. Our work with Kozy will help define our group and attract new members." The Kiwanis organize a project, bring the necessary supplies, and interact with the youth every third week of the month. In April, the Kiwanis helped the youth decorate terra cotta pots as a special Mother's Day gift. These creative and energetic young professionals provide MCC with volunteer staffing power, but more importantly, they are positive role models for our youth.

Thanks to our partners, the Youth Development Program has grown since September to serve an average of 41 neighborhood youth per day. Together, we can "change the world, one child and one community at a time".

Our Vision

The Milwaukee Christian Center will be a recognized leader, building bridges for positive change from home to community, neighborhood to city, and culture to culture.

Inside...

More MCC History and Memories...

"Kozy" Center Builds Positive Relationships

Join us for our 85th Anniversary Celebration at Boerner Botanical Gardens!

MCC Celebrates 85 Years of Sharing

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Rev. Craig had surveyed the kids at the Center and found that "about 50% of the boys and girls, 9 years old and over, had been going to taverns in the area to see television." They decided that if the Center had its own set, the problem would be solved. Soon afterward, a

television was donated and as many as 50 to 60 kids would be watching the TV set at once! Today, the latest video games attract kids to the Center.

In 1961, the Rev. Gilbert Marrero, MCC's first special services worker, was hired to work with the Spanish-speaking community living in the MCC neighborhood. Rev. Marrero's focus was working with "hard to reach, hard to serve" youth who often wound up in trouble. He counseled and directed the youth into constructive activities, such as sports and service projects, keeping them out of the neighborhood gangs. In 1966, "Mr. G" and MCC opened a special service extension site in a former tavern at 814 S. 6th Street. It began as a coffee house teen center called The Spot where youth and adults focused on recreational activities, youth employment, and leadership development, as well as addressing community issues. The Spot grew over the next five years to the point of becoming an independent entity in

1971, and is known today as Centro de la Comunidad Unida (United Community Center).

MCC was forced to relocate due to expressway construction that necessitated the demolition of the Christian Center building in 1966. A capital campaign, led by former Mayor Frank Zeidler, led to the purchase of the Lubotsky Auto Agency at 2137 W. Greenfield Avenue. The property was converted into a social service center, and 40 years later is still the main site of the MCC!

Again, concentrating on the needs of neighborhood youth, MCC developed a summer program, working with



Popular caravan carts in the 1970s.

ecumenical partner churches, that utilized "caravan carts" to bring recreational programs to kids living in a 48 block area of the near south side.

Two new program areas were developed in the 1970's. Responding to the need for emergency services, MCC established a food pantry in 1974,

and continues to provide emergency food to thousands each year. The Neighborhood Improvement Project (NIP) was created in 1975 to repair housing code violations for people unable to afford them, and to train young people in building and painting skills. Thirty years later, NIP's programs have expanded to include graffiti removal, ramp and lift installation, Youthbuild, and housing construction. Today, NIP is recognized as the neighborhood improvement program model that has been replicated throughout Milwaukee.

MCC was well known in karate circles in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Karate classes began in 1976 under the instruction of Gary Klugiewicz and Nancy Raether. After only five years, MCC organized local



Wishing Mickey a Happy 60th at Disneyland in 1988!

karate tournaments and participated in tournaments around the country. MCC Karate Club members scored a double victory in 1981 at the U.S. Kyokushin Karate Southeastern Championships held in Birmingham, Alabama. In 1982, two MCC members traveled to Tokyo, Japan to compete in the Third World Open Karate Tournament. Gary Klugiewicz placed 9th out of 200 competitors from around the world!

Ten MCC children were given the opportunity of a lifetime in 1988 when Mayor John O. Norquist selected MCC as one of the agencies to receive an all-expense paid trip to Disney World to celebrate Mickey's 60th birthday.

MCC opened their doors in the early 1980's to teens who wanted a place to perfect their break-dancing skills. The break-dancers were well known throughout the city, and went on to perform at Bucks games and other community events.

I could tell you about the fire of 1988, the initiation of the Hmong Elderly Independence/Interdependence program in 1996, the First Time Juvenile Offender program of 2000, and the Food Panty remodeling in 2005, but I think you get the point by now.

MCC, in countless ways, has touched the lives of so many people over the years. As we celebrate our 85th Anniversary, we must be careful not to rest on our laurels, but to look to the future, and our opportunity to pass on the legacy so carefully handed down over the years. We must join together, reaching across time and space, to make sure MCC continues to offer hope and strengthen the lives of future children and adults that call Milwaukee's South Side home. Join us today, by supporting our efforts to pass on the legacy. Please help us continue to make a difference in our community.

Partners in Service: MCC's "Kozy" Center Opens

On September 1, 2005, MCC's Youth Development Program moved into the Kosciuszko Community Center located at 2201 South 7th Street. "Kozy", as it is affectionately called, presented the youth program with an opportunity for growth with its much needed additional space for recreational and educational activities. The Kozy Center has a large gym, and last fall a basketball program was established, that provided an opportunity for three new teams to compete in local leagues. Our younger-aged team, the MCC Believers, won the championship trophy in their division! Emilio Lopez, MCC Associate Director, stated, "We would like to offer youth, ages 7 to 17, with a full range of academic, social, cultural, and recreational programming. While we can't reach every kid on the South Side, we can make a substantial impact by the leadership we show in developing our programs."

Years ago John Donne stated, "No man is an island, entire of itself." It's also true that no nonprofit organization is an island, but dependent on and interconnected with a wide range of partners all working together for a common purpose. Throughout our history, MCC has enjoyed numerous partnerships with individuals, congregations, foundations, government, businesses, and community organizations. The Metro Milwaukee Nights Kiwanis Club, the Redmond Company, and Kohl's Corporation are MCC's newest partner organizations involved with the youth program at Kozy.

First of all, MCC wanted to create an inviting space that would encourage neighborhood kids to participate. The Redmond Company designed a two-tone color scheme and design for the Teen Center space. Hiring professional painters was out of the question, so six employees from Kohl's corporate office volunteered to paint the large area designated for the Teen Center. What a difference a fresh coat of paint can make! The Kohl's group also donated \$500 toward a much needed pool table.



Metro Milwaukee Nights Kiwanis Club members, Lana Reyer and Steve Kunze, with youth participants at Kozy.

Program expansion usually means increased staffing, but like most nonprofits, funding for additional staffing wasn't in the budget. About the same time our move to Kozy took place, the Metro Milwaukee Nights Kiwanis Club was looking for a youth-serving agency to work with on a long-term basis. Service is the cornerstone of the Kiwanis, and this group's particular mission is to provide community service, networking and social opportunities for energetic individuals. The average age of the Metro group is 30 years old, which makes their Kiwanis group unique. MCC has the youth, they have the energetic volunteers, and so a partnership was established.

A Message From the Executive Director

Kathy Baillargeon

Eighty five years of service to the community is quite an accomplishment! It's my privilege to invite you, our friends and supporters, to celebrate with us in the beautiful surroundings of the Boerner Botanical Gardens.

I would also like to thank our corporate table sponsors (as of press time) for their part in making this fundraiser a success! U.S. Bank; M&I Marshall & Ilsley, Platt Construction, Inc.; Robertson Ryan & Associates; and Ritz, Holman, Butala, Fine LLP.

You are cordially invited to join us in celebrating the **Milwaukee Christian Center's 85th Anniversary** of service to families on Milwaukee's South Side.

Friday, June 9, 2006
at the **Boerner Botanical Gardens**
Education and Visitor Center
9400 Boerner Drive, Hales Corners, WI
Wheelchair accessible parking available

6:00 PM
Reception and Silent Auction
Entertainment by Jill Guse, pianist
Cash Bar
Visa and Mastercard accepted for auction items

7:30 PM
Dinner by Bartolotta Catering
Ravioli with Roasted Red Peppers or Chicken Citron

Guest Speaker: Reverend Carman Porco
Executive Director, Housing Ministries of American Baptists in Wisconsin

Reservations are limited. Please respond by May 19th, 2006
For more information, contact Elida Munoz
at 414-645-5350, ext. 101 or emunoz@mccwi.org