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NEWSletter

November 2006

**Milwaukee
Christian Center**
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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...

Help us "Raise the Roof!"

MCC is here to meet winter's challenges

Make our Wish List come true!

Youth Program Response to Childhood Obesity

Health professionals have described child obesity as a national epidemic. According to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, "Reversing the rapid rise in obesity among American children and youth will require a multipronged approach by schools, families, communities, industry, and government." The Milwaukee Christian Center (MCC) youth program is responding to this critical issue by participating in the Citywide Nutrition & Physical Activity for Urban Children and Families program.

MCC, and the seven other United Neighborhood Centers of Milwaukee (UNCOM), are partnering with the Medical College of Wisconsin to prevent or lower the risk of health problems associated with poor diet, inactivity, overweight, and obesity in youth. The project includes structured, age appropriate activities that improve the nutritional and exercise behaviors of pre-school age children, teens, and their parents or caregivers. The goal of the program is to promote and support healthy lifestyle choices throughout their lives.

The World Health Organization stated, "increased consumption of more energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods with high levels of sugar and saturated fats, combined with reduced physical activity, have led to obesity rates that have risen three-fold or more since 1980 in some areas of North America." MCC will be using a National Institute of Health education program designed for parents and caregivers called *We Can!* (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition) to help children stay at a healthy weight. The curriculum helps educate parents and children on the

importance of balancing caloric intake with physical activity, and offers fun activities to encourage healthy eating, increased physical activity, and decreased time in front of the TV or video game screen.



Kathi Boyce, Kids Place Program Manager, takes LaQuan Spencer's baseline measurements at the start of the program.

The *We Can!* program was introduced in September at the youth program's Family Night event. Emilio Lopez, MCC Associate Director/Youth Director, explained, "The beauty of this program is that parents and staff receive on-going training and are actively involved in the program along with the youth." Parents and kids were introduced to healthier snack alternatives and learned how to make a fat-free taco dip. The emphasis in October was vegetables, and the November focus is physical activities for parents and children.

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BITS and PIECES

❖ Welcome to Wendy Cipolaro, MCC's new Volunteer Coordinator and Special Events Assistant! Wendy, a Marquette University Trinity Fellow, will gain hands-on nonprofit work experience at MCC while completing her Master's Degree in Public Service. Prior to joining us, Wendy grew up and went to college in Arizona. After graduation she spent two years in Sylhet, Bangladesh while serving in the Peace Corps.

❖ MCC thanks the following foundations and agencies for their generous support:

Alan S. Feinstein Foundation, ELCA Hunger Grant, Helen Bader Foundation, Miller Employee Fund, Roundy Foundation, Wagner Family Charitable Trust, Pettit Foundation, ABC One Great Hour of Sharing, Wisconsin Tennis Association, Metro Milwaukee Nights Kiwanis Club, MPS- Summer Stars, and CDBA summer mini-grant.

❖ Attention Pick 'n Save shoppers! If you have a Pick 'n Save Advantage Card, you can earn donations for the Milwaukee Christian Center by signing up for their *We Care Program*. Just fill out the paperwork and designate the Milwaukee Christian Center as your organization to be credited with your purchase. MCC's charity number is #509250. Every time you shop, be sure to use your Advantage Card so MCC will be credited for your purchases. Pick 'n Save will then send MCC a donation each quarter. Thanks!

❖ Upcoming Events!

Harvest Fest (Senior Adults Program): December 1, 2006

Breakfast With Santa (Youth Program): December 2, 2006



Save the Date!

The 2007 Bowl-a-thon Fundraiser is scheduled for Saturday, February 3, 2007, and will take place at AMF West Lanes, 7505 W. Oklahoma Avenue, Milwaukee. The event is open to youth and adult participants or intergenerational teams. Proceeds will help support MCC programming.

New "Satellite" bowling option this year for congregations located outside of the Milwaukee area.

Please contact Jeri Jende for registration details at 414-645-5350, Ext 105 or at jjende@mccwi.org.





Kathi also records LaQuan's weight as his mother, Mary Blaha, looks on.

MCC Tackles Childhood Obesity

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The program will officially begin with a November participant "weigh-in". Mr. Lopez recently announced his personal weight loss campaign to demonstrate his commitment to this program. "I plan to lose 75 lbs in the next six months by changing my eating habits. I need to make better food choices, cut out the candy and soda, and begin a regular exercise program. I will model a healthier lifestyle for our participating families."

The Milwaukee Christian Center continues to make a difference in the lives of our neighbors. Through this important project, we will make a real impact on the current and future health of our MCC families.

Mayor Barrett visits MCC



Mayor Tom Barrett chats with Tou Lor, a MCC youth summer worker hired through Mayor Barrett's Summer Youth Employment Program.

A Message From the Executive Director

Kathy Baillargeon

"Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful."

Joshua J. Marine

We, at the Milwaukee Christian Center, thank you for celebrating our 85th year of ministry with us. Thank you for your special gifts; contributions to our anniversary dinner and silent auction; your volunteer time; and your prayers and support. Through our 85 years of service, the Milwaukee Christian Center has faced enough challenges to make life interesting, yet has persevered because of people like you, who help us make life more meaningful for others.

As winter approaches, we all will be challenged with cold weather, ice, snow, and many gloomy days. But for some, like our program participants, cold weather brings additional challenges like increased heating bills and less money for food and basic necessities, such as winter clothing and transportation. Seasonal workers are laid off in the winter with decreased income. Youth and seniors need safe, warm places for fellowship, meals, and new learning experiences. Families experience more stress during the holiday season and worry about what kind of Christmas they can offer their children.

MCC strives to help our neighbors meet these challenges. In addition to our basic 3 to 5 day supply of emergency food, the emergency food pantry and our community partners distribute staples for holiday meals, mittens, coats, hygiene items, and Christmas gifts for families. We hold Christmas Camp for youth the week between Christmas and New Year's and have expanded our programming to include Saturday hours. Seniors celebrate Harvest Fest, a wonderful event celebrating the cultural diversity within our senior program.

MCC staff and board of directors face the challenges presented in operating out of six sites and maintaining an overcrowded main site always in need of repairs. We struggle with the ongoing challenges of funding and staffing. And, the exciting challenges of new programming. This year MCC became involved in housing production constructing homes for low to moderate income families. We are now completing our first three houses. To address the nationwide issue of obesity in children, MCC is participating in a citywide nutrition and physical activity program with the Medical College of Wisconsin and seven other neighborhood centers. Our senior program also has expanded its health and wellness services.

As our 85th year of ministry is coming to a close, we continue to find meaning in helping our program participants overcome their challenges and in building a solid organization for service to the community for years to come. Thank you for your support!



MCC's "mini-sausage" race

Contestant Ryan Spencer, youth program participant, came in first place on "United Way Day" at Miller Park on Sept. 9th.

Make the MCC Wish List Come True!

Following is a list of suggested items currently needed to better serve our youth and adult participants. All in-kind gifts are 100% tax deductible.

Thank you for your on-going support!

Youth

Healthy snack items
Movie passes
Area rug for playroom
Doll house
Headphones for computer lab

Senior Adults

Games: Jenga, checkers, dominoes, Chinese checkers, decks of cards
Pick 'n Save Gift Certificates
Groceries for Asian meals
8 foot banquet tables
Set of World Book
Encyclopedias (ESL class)

Emergency Food Pantry

Personal care products (deodorant, shampoo, bar soap, toothpaste, tooth brushes, toilet paper)

Office

Trade show 3-panel table-top display board (30"x60" or 36"x72")
Polo shirts, sweatshirts, or tote bags with MCC logo
Laser printer capable of printing multiple envelopes (merged lists)



Governor Jim Doyle talks to the Summer Youth Employment Program graffiti removal crew during his Aug. 3rd visit to MCC.

Faith in Action

Help Us "Raise the Roof"!

When I was a child, I would look forward to spending a couple of weeks during the summer at my aunt and uncle's farm in northern Wisconsin. I have many wonderful memories of those visits, but I particularly remember going to a barn raising. A barn raising was an exciting occasion where a whole community would come together to help a family build a barn in a couple of days. The preparatory work was done beforehand, like drawing up the plans and gathering the lumber, and then the workers and their families would arrive to help assemble the barn. It was a lot of hard work, but a real sense of community spirit and accomplishment was evident in the faces of those involved.

Barn raisings are almost a thing of the past, but modern philanthropic projects offer individuals a similar sense of community and accomplishment. This past June, the Milwaukee Christian Center was facing a crisis: immediate repairs to our main site at 2137 W. Greenfield Avenue were necessary to assure the safety of our participants and integrity of our building. MCC had serious roof leakage in the newly renovated food pantry area; the large activity room used by our seniors and youth; the food storage area; and above the copy machine and computers. After progressively more water damage patches, our entire roof had to be replaced at a cost of \$50,000.

We need your help to pay for these repairs. The preparatory work is done. MCC has received \$14,440 in Leadership donor gifts and an \$8,000 American Baptist Churches One Great Hour of Sharing grant for a total of \$22,440. Now, we are ready for the "workers and their families" to join in the effort to "raise the roof". As farmers did in the past, we invite our MCC friends to come together to help us raise the additional \$28,000.

For 85 years, MCC has remained true to its mission and the individuals and families we serve. With your help, MCC will continue to offer hope and strengthen lives through service in our neighborhood.

Thank you for your consideration and support,
Jeri Jende, Development Director

Please make checks payable to Milwaukee Christian Center and write "Roof" in the memo line.