



NEWSletter

November 2007

Milwaukee Christian Center

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MCC's mission is based on our belief that all people have inherent worth and deserve to be treated with compassion and respect. As a south side based agency, we live out this belief by offering hope and support to low-income individuals and families, and by bringing people together in community where their lives are enriched, empowered and strengthened.

Hunger Hurts

The majority of people reading this newsletter have never gone without enough food to feed their families, yet hunger is a reality for over ten percent of Wisconsin residents living in poverty. If we look at Milwaukee alone, the statistics are even worse; twenty-six percent of all Milwaukee residents live in poverty, making it the eighth poorest city in the country (American Community Survey, US Bureau of the Census). Where there is poverty, there is hunger.

The Milwaukee Christian Center has been addressing the hunger issue since 1977 when it established a food pantry in response to a growing need for crisis intervention. Since that time, our emergency food pantry (EFP) has grown to address the needs of 6,000 low-income individuals and families living in our multicultural, south side community every year.

The people utilizing MCC's pantry come from a variety of ethnic groups, cultures and life situations, but our participants fall into three main categories: single moms, children and disabled adults; the working poor; and the homeless and unemployed. Barbara Ray-Velazquez, Emergency Food Pantry Coordinator, stated, "We see a lot of single females, ages 18-35, with children. They are unemployed or underemployed and struggling to make ends meet. We also provide supplemental food boxes (CSFP) for qualifying seniors, postpartum women, and eligible five-year old children."



Barbara Ray-Velazquez, MCC's Emergency Food Pantry Coordinator.

Barbara experiences a sense of job satisfaction from knowing she has helped a family in crisis, or when she sees an expression of relief on an individual's face

because he knows he will have something to eat that day. But, one of the biggest challenges of working in a food pantry is learning how to approach very worried and upset pantry clients; clients who don't know how they

MCC SUCCESS STORY...

Miguel had always been a working man, but when Milwaukee County made cuts to trim the budget, he was laid off from his job, a layoff that lasted a year. As time went by, Miguel found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet and to put food on the table for himself and his 15 year old daughter. "It's hard for a man to ask for help, but I had to think of my daughter," so Miguel found his way to MCC's emergency food pantry on a few occasions when he had no other choice. When a part-time job with our pantry became available, Miguel applied for the job and was hired. "I was treated well when I came to the food pantry, and I wanted to give back for the services I received. I have patience with the people who come to the pantry because I know what it is like to go to bed hungry." Miguel was eventually called back by the County, and returned to his former job. Miguel reflected on his experience, "It feels good to help, especially when you see a smile on a kid's face when the family receives a three-day supply of food."

are going to make it. Since becoming the EFP Coordinator, Ms. Ray-Velazquez has made some minor changes to address the stress issues and improve the food pantry experience for our clients. The first change was to improve the flow of the intake process by checking peoples' credentials at the door



Hunger Hurts

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resulting in quicker service. Then she created a more calming environment in the waiting and office areas by simply using indirect lighting instead of bright overhead fluorescent lighting. Using techniques she learned as a social worker, Barb lets people know they are being listened to by giving them feedback. She also refers people to other available support services, such as the Food Share (food stamp) program, if they are eligible.

MCC can't solve Milwaukee's hunger issue on our own. But, with the help of the Hunger Task Force, ELCA Hunger Grant program, Feinstein Foundation, Roundy's Foundation, FEMA, churches, United Way, and individual donors, we will be there to do what we can for an individual or family with hunger issues. Until the root causes of poverty are addressed and eliminated, we need you to help us make sure peoples' basic need for food is met. Help us, help others.

Save The Date!

10th Anniversary Bowl-a-thon

Saturday, January 26, 2008
Noon – 4 pm

New Berlin Bowl
16000 West Cleveland Avenue
New Berlin, WI 53151



Contact Jeri Jende for bowling information and sponsorship opportunities (414) 645-5350 x 105 or jjende@mccwi.org

A Message From the Executive Director

Kathy Baillargeon

"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?"

James 2:15-16

A publication from the U.S. Census Bureau, *Poverty Status of People by Family Relationship, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1959 to 2006*, tells us that 36.5 million people in the United States were below the official poverty thresholds in 2006, compared to 31.1 million in 2000.

From the *2006-2007 Trend Report, Scanning the Horizons* published by Alliance for Children and Families, we read – "in a post- Katrina assessment of public opinion on poverty, more Americans agreed that the government should do more to end poverty... That was a year ago. The national roar about attacking poverty has fizzled to a whimper."

The call to serve the poor is found in every major religion in the world. From Christian scripture: "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Found in Muslim scripture: "Whoever saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind." From the Hindus: "They who give have all things; they who withhold have nothing." The Sikh holy book says: "Those who remember God, generously help others." And from Buddhist writings: "An offering given from what little one has is worth a thousand times its value."

The neighborhood MCC serves is poor. The population is very young, under-educated, and the most diverse in the city. Latinos, Southeast Asians, African Americans, Native Americans, and Anglos all live here. They face major challenges on a daily basis – lack of basic education, skills, and training; at risk behaviors – alcohol, drugs, and sexual activity at a very young age; multiple personal, health, and social issues; and many have a limited English speaking proficiency.

MCC reaches out to those in poverty by helping people meet their basic needs and maintain their independence; and by providing academic instruction and vocational training, life skills and social development workshops, and leadership activities. Helping the poor is not just about meeting basic needs, but creating possibilities for better lives. It is social justice, not just charity, seeking the common good and creating a better community for everyone.

MCC, grounded in the Christian faith, is a sister with all in the community who are working to overcome poverty and create a more just society. Won't you join us by supporting our anti-poverty work?

A Miracle for MCC

For the past 14 years, the Potawatomi Bingo Casino has raised more than \$7 million for children's charities in Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, Racine and Waukesha counties. This past August, the Milwaukee Christian Center's Youth Program was chosen in a random drawing as one of twenty charities to benefit from Potawatomi's Miracle on Canal Street program!



The Miracle on Canal Street reflects the Potawatomi cultural concern for others, and is based on the tradition for tribal elders to nurture younger generations so they grow to lead healthy and productive lives. Through the Miracle program, children's charities are helped to do what they do best; improve the quality of life for area children. MCC will receive our Miracle gift along with 19 other charities at a special program on December 14th.

The Potawatomi tribe has a long and rich history in the Milwaukee area going back to the early 1700's. After years of suffering and loss due to forced removal from their lands, the Potawatomi survived and were able to retain their culture, spirituality, and traditions. In recent years, they have prospered allowing them to help others. Miracles do happen. Thanks Potawatomi for caring about our community's children!

IRA Rollover Opportunity Expires the end of 2007!

Now is your opportunity -- as a donor -- to take advantage of the valuable IRA charitable rollover tax incentive, scheduled to expire Dec. 31.

Many people with an IRA don't realize that once you turn 70 1/2, you are required to withdraw a minimum amount each year, even if you don't need it. You must also pay taxes on the money. You can avoid paying taxes on your withdrawal by donating it directly to a qualified charitable organization like the Milwaukee Christian Center. This gift roll-over is NOT taxable and not deductible; it is a "non-event" for taxes, and qualifies for your annual minimum distribution requirement!

Do not withdraw the funds yourself. Request a distribution form from your IRA administrator and ask that the check be made out to **Milwaukee**

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Faith in Action

"...and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6: 8b

Sandy Cope is a quiet and humble person, but she is also a Spirit-filled woman on fire to do God's work in the world. Her faith directs her actions not only in her church-related activities, but in her relationship with her family and in her concern for the marginalized in the community.

In 2002, Sandy began her volunteer service at the Milwaukee Christian Center because her personal values aligned with the mission of MCC; a mission based on the belief that all people have inherent worth and deserve to be treated with compassion and respect. Sandy works toward fulfilling this mission as a member of MCC's Board, serves as Secretary, and chairs the Board Development Committee. She also volunteers for agency events such as the Bowl-a-thon, Harvest Fest, anniversary events, and Kid's Café. And Sandy shares her blessings with others by financially supporting our work.

Sandy is "called" to the ministry of her congregation, First Baptist Church in Waukesha, WI. With a laugh in her voice, Sandy stated that she has "done about every job there is to do" at her church. Her understanding of "church" extends to volunteering at the state office of the American Baptist Churches and coordinating the ABC-WI Annual Meeting. Because of her deep commitment to peace rooted in justice, Sandy also coordinates local activities of the Baptist Peace Fellowship. And four to five times a year, Sandy and her husband invest sweat equity at Camp Tamarack, an American Baptist retreat center, assuring families a safe, Christ-centered place to gather.

Sandy Cope has modeled her life on the example given by Christ the Servant to his disciples so many years ago. Her humility, dedication, and passion for serving others are the tangible signs of her faith as she lives out her life as a faithful servant. "And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." Sandy has willingly answered this ancient call to action, just as Micah and Isaiah before her, with the words, "Here am I; send me."



Kathy Baillargeon (L) congratulates Sandy Cope (R) on receiving the Christian Stewardship Foundation's Faithful Servant award last September.



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BITS and PIECES

❖ Thank you MCC Volunteer Groups! The following groups volunteered over the summer: American Baptist-Girls, United Way Days of Caring groups from Northwestern Mutual & Johnson Controls, West Suburban & Northside YMCAs, St. Ludmila Catholic Church Youth Group from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Metro Milwaukee Kiwanis Club, service learners from Marquette University, and students from the School for Urban Planning and Architecture.



Thanks Northwestern Mutual United Way's Day of Caring volunteers for painting the Greenfield House porch and interior office!

Neighborhood Ambassadors with Lupe Martinez (UMOS), Ald. Robert Donovan, and Ald. Willie Hines.

❖ Thank you Neighborhood Ambassadors for cleaning up our south side neighborhoods, providing a visible presence to enhance safety, and acting as liaisons to local businesses!

❖ Congratulations to Youthbuild participants Javier Matias and Maria Couturier! Both were awarded a \$500 Journey House college scholarship on June 21st. Journey House provides the academic component of MCC's Youthbuild program.

❖ Attention Pick 'N Save shoppers! Please designate MCC (charity # 509250) as your chairity in the "We Care" program. Your purchases will earn monthly donations for MCC... Thanks!



IRA Rollover Opportunity

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Christian Center. The transaction must be completed before January 1, 2008, so be sure to allow adequate time for the process to be completed.

Please contact your financial advisor for specific information regarding your account, and notify Jeri Jende, Development Director, of your plans at 414-645-5350 x105 or at jjende@mccwi.org.

Additional IRA Rollover information available at: www.independentsector.org/programs/gr/IRARollover.html