



2137 W. Greenfield Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53204-2698



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NEWSletter

March 2007

**Milwaukee
Christian Center**
2137 W. Greenfield Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53204
Phone: 414-645-5350
Fax: 414-645-1859
www.mccwi.org
Contact: Jeri Jende,
Development Director

ESL Helps with Day-to-Day Living

Just imagine going to school for the first time in your life when you are 70 years old and sitting in a classroom where the teacher speaks a different language than you speak. It's hard to relate to that situation, but for many of the Hmong refugees participating in our Senior Adults Program, this is their reality.

language. Beginner students practice holding a pencil for the first time, learn numbers and the days of the week, write their name, and recite and write the ABC's. The more advanced students read high interest, low beginner level books to develop phonics awareness.

Denise Gallope, the ESL instructor with a Masters degree in Education and a Masters degree in English/Linguistics, uses a variety of techniques and methods of teaching. Denise explained, "I make this class quasi-recreational. I keep the pace fast and change activities every 15



ESL students gain language skills while studying U.S. history

minutes. I use a lot of visual aids such as pictures, bring real items to class such as a book or radio, and I pantomime gestures and use exaggerations to support understanding." Denise also integrates cultural, newsworthy, or citizenship topics into her curriculum. For example, she explains how Americans celebrate Christmas, shares current events such as the Hmong hunter that was murdered, or talks about the election process. "We sing songs and repeat chants to expand vocabulary and have fun. We play bingo to practice aural number recognition; it's important for the elders to recognize the sound of the letters and numbers." Our ESL instructor helps the elders decipher American culture. Literacy means reading a street sign, taking a bus without getting lost, making a purchase in a store, or understanding their Americanized children and grandchildren.

Learning the English language is very difficult for the Southeast Asian elders because of literacy issues such as serious learning disorders. Jennifer Evans, Senior

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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.

Inside...

Our Mission Transcends our Differences

Bowl-a-thon nets \$11,000 for MCC Programs

Lao and Hmong Refugees Find Support at MCC

BITS and PIECES

- ❖ MCC sends a **Big Thank You** to the individuals, organizations, and churches that made the holidays extra special for our program participants. We especially thank: The Turkey Club - donated 60 Thanksgiving turkeys; The Metro Milwaukee Nights Kiwanis Club - Breakfast with Santa; Wells Fargo Advantage Funds employees - Christmas gifts for Emergency Food Pantry participants; Johnson Controls: Giving Tree Christmas gifts for NIP, Senior, & Youth program participants; Wauwatosa Avenue United Methodist Church - Mitten Tree children's Christmas gifts.
- ❖ In the last couple of months, MCC has been fortunate to receive financial support from the PPC Foundation and the Knights of Columbus Foundation. Thanks for your partnership!
- ❖ The Alan S. Feinstein Foundation will offer another \$1 Million Challenge this spring to help fight hunger. **All cash, checks, or food item donations received**

by MCC between March 1 to April 30, 2007 will be reported to the foundation to qualify for the challenge. MCC's Emergency Food Pantry (EFP) will participate in this program and receive its share of the \$1 million equal to our proportion of the total raised by all participants. If you wish to donate toward the Feinstein Challenge, please write "Feinstein" on your check or include a note with your cash or food donation.

- ❖ MCC received a Certificate of Recognition for its participation in the *Called to the City: A Ray Bakke Urban Ministry Consultation* conference held in Milwaukee in October 2006.
- ❖ MCC is proud to announce the promotions of two employees. Bernadette Arellano, our emergency food pantry coordinator and facilities manager, is moving to the Neighborhood Improvement Project (NIP) to assume the responsibilities of Youthbuild placement coordinator and stockroom supervisor. Barbara Ray-Velazquez, a tracker in the First Time Juvenile Offender Program, will take over Bernadette's responsibilities at the

main site as the emergency food pantry coordinator and facilities manager. Both have done outstanding work in the current positions!

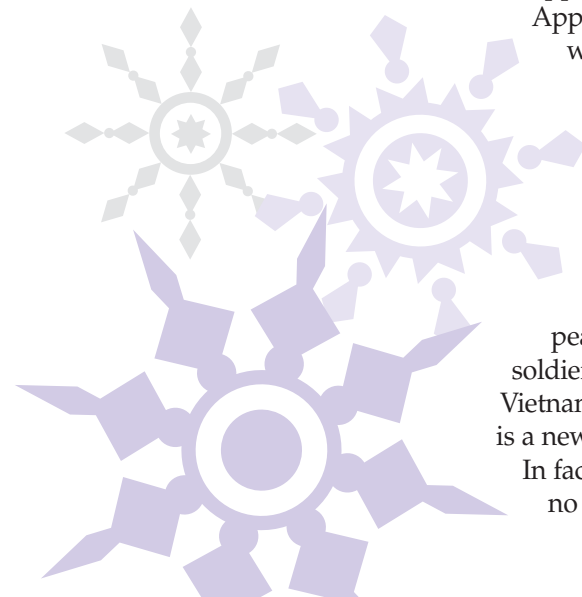
Faith in Action

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father with five children wrote, "We thought we were going to have to postpone Christmas, but thanks to you, I can honestly say you have made my family's holiday. Losing my job... I had lost hope. You have given me faith and the ability to hold my head up. With much thanks..."

Every day we have an opportunity to "preach the Gospel" through our actions. But we can't do it alone. Please share your blessings through a monetary gift or by volunteering at the Center. Please help us continue to put our faith in action.

Thank you for your consideration,
Jeri Jende, Development Director



ESL Helps Refugees Adapt

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Adults Program Director, explains, "Many of our participants suffer from Post-Traumatic Disorder (PTD) as a result of the horrors they experienced during the Vietnam War, or in the refugee camps. There are also extreme cultural differences between Western and Eastern approaches to learning."

Currently, Denise is working with 8 new refugees



Denise Gallope (standing), ESL instructor, works with new refugees on a taped repetition exercise.

and 15 continuing students with some prior ESL experience who speak Hmong, Lao, Korean, and Vietnamese. Although the number of people participating in the ESL class is small compared to the total number of Southeast Asian senior program participants, the learning experience that Denise provides is important. The elders communicate with each other, and share the knowledge among themselves.

Our goals for the ESL class are modest, but extremely important: The ESL class will (1) help the elders develop enough life skills to function in society on a day to day basis; (2) reduce the sense of isolation many elders experience; (3) move the students to the next level of language functionality; and (4) help the elders maintain a connection to their culture and past. Our ESL class enriches and strengthens the lives of our elders. The ESL participants may struggle to learn the language, but they show courage and tenacity as they strive to attain literacy in the English language.

Faith in Action

"Preach the Gospel always; and when necessary, use words."

- St. Francis of Assisi

I came across the above quote, attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, years ago. I think the quote sums up in few words what we're all about at the Milwaukee Christian Center. Although MCC has its roots in the American Baptist Church, the current MCC staff come from a variety of religious backgrounds. Despite our denominational differences, we do share a common value... a real sense of compassion and concern for the people that come through our agency's doors.

Every day our staff has an opportunity to interact with hundreds of individuals participating in our youth, senior, and emergency food pantry programs or our neighborhood improvement project. What makes this place special is the way people are treated here. The people we serve are predominately low-income, at-risk individuals who struggle with the challenges associated with poverty. Our participants are treated with respect, offered the supportive services they need, and then encouraged to be the best that they can be. Our staff lives out their faith through everyday actions and interactions.

Most of the time we do not know the effects of our actions, but once in awhile we hear back from a participant. Last December, via a letter she sent to Alderman Donovan's office, a single mother with a 7 year old daughter shared her story. She recently received free home repairs through MCC's Neighborhood Improvement Project (NIP). She wrote, *"As a low income single woman it was extremely hard to come up with a way to make necessary home repairs... I received a grant through the NIP and it has been one of the biggest blessings in my life! My daughter and I stood in awe as all the repairs were made. All of the people that worked through MCC were very nice and accommodating. They fixed my porches and basement steps. I got a new roof, new windows and even repairs to help my home become more burglar proof... We were so blessed, and it will help us remain in our cute little home that I can afford."*

MCC also gives individuals throughout the community an opportunity to live out *their* faith. For example, this past Christmas, employees from Wells Fargo Advantage Funds decided they wanted to share their blessings with some of our food pantry families. The group delivered wrapped gifts that were distributed in time for Christmas. An appreciative single

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A Message From the Executive Director

Kathy Baillargeon

*"Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt."** (Exodus 23:9)

Thousands of years later, the oppressed continue to flee their homelands and seek better ways of life. The Milwaukee Christian Center, rooted in service to immigrant populations, has been welcoming and uplifting "foreigners" throughout our history. Milwaukee's near south side has been home to waves of Polish, German, Slavic, and Mexican peoples, to name a few.

In this issue of our newsletter, you will hear about our Southeast Asian refugees. Approximately 14,400 Southeast Asians live in Milwaukee County, and we have the third highest population of Hmong and Lao refugees in the nation. For over ten years, MCC has operated the only comprehensive program in Milwaukee designed to address the complex needs of elderly Southeast Asian immigrants.

Elderly Southeast Asians belong to a largely invisible and underserved minority population, with complex health and social support needs. They struggle with the emotional trauma and impoverishment resulting from their experiences during the Vietnam War, forced exile, and internment in refugee camps. Southeast Asians are dissimilar from other Asian "model minorities" in that they tend to be less educated, experience higher levels of poverty, and face more barriers to accessing services. This is particularly true for elderly Hmong refugees, who came from an agrarian, pre-literate, clan-based culture. The elderly also are hampered by a distrust of western medical practices. The Hmong do not use a bio-medical model of health, but attribute health problems to magical causes or a loss of soul. Laotians, a culture deeply rooted in personal privacy, often delay treatment due to stoic Buddhist attitudes toward suffering and death. Southeast Asians frequently use herbal remedies and folk medicine.

MCC's senior adults program provides week-day congregational meals, recreation and socialization, health services, English as a Second Language and citizenship classes, case management, family care, and transportation. In turn, our Southeast Asian "foreigners" have given us the opportunity to appreciate their culture and enjoy their traditional foods, music, dance, and handiwork.

Please feel free to stop in or call Wendy Cipolaro, volunteer coordinator, (645-5350 x 103) to learn about volunteer opportunities in the program.

**After Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and arrived at Mt. Sinai, God declared the people, as God's people. In addition to the Ten Commandments, God delivered a set of laws including the laws of justice and mercy. (Exodus 23:1-9).*

Bowlers Help Strike Out the Effects of Poverty!

Over 120 bowlers, volunteers and friends of MCC braved the sub-zero weather on Saturday, February 3rd, to participate in MCC's 9th Annual Bowl-a-thon fundraiser. Everyone had a fun time while raising \$11,000 to support our multiple programs addressing the many issues associated with poverty.



Two U.S. Bank teams bowled with a purpose at the 9th Annual Bowl-a-thon

Many thanks go out to U.S. Bank, our Presenting Sponsor, as well as the following Lane Sponsors: at the \$500 Level: Ritz, Holman, Butala, Fine LLP, Robertson Ryan & Associates, and Rozga Funeral Home; and at the \$300 level: Arteaga Construction, Inc., Foley & Lardner LLP, The Horton Group, Hurtado Consulting LLC, Lincoln State Bank, M & I Bank, and Urich Lock Company. The bowling trophies were donated by Dave's World Bowling Pro Shop.

Lance Allan, Today's TMJ4 sportscaster and MCC Celebrity Bowler, welcomed the bowlers at the beginning of the event. He then joined his team, and helped them bowl their way to first place in the Highest Adult Team category. Lance was on hand to help Kathy Baillargeon, MCC executive director, congratulate the winners and award the trophies at the post-bowl-a-thon pizza party.



Lance Allan (left) and fellow teammates take home the Highest Adult Team and Highest Male Series trophies.

A BIG THANK YOU goes out to all of the on-site bowlers, "Satellite Bowlers," and volunteers, as well as to the individuals and businesses that donated the many silent auction and raffle prizes. Thanks for making this year's bowl-a-thon the best ever!