

NOTES FROM THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

JANUARY—MARCH 2008

WELCOME TO OCCDA

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

WELCOME TO OCCDA	1
A WORD FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT	1
HIGHLIGHTED VOLUNTEER—JARED HESS	2
BLOOMING GLEN, DAMASCUS ROAD TEAM	2
VISION FOR PROGRAMS	3

Hello and Happy New Year to all. So it's official, I am now the new Director !

What that means to date is that we continue to need your prayers as we step out in faith together. Faith that this is indeed the work that God has called us to in the Oxford Circle community and faith that God will continue to direct us and open doors as we go forward.

In particular, I ask that you would continue to keep me in your prayers. I have been struggling to balance leaving Temple and a beginning with Oxford. Currently, I am doing each half-time. Most weeks, it just feels like I'm doing

two full-time jobs! It also feels frightening to be leaving a secure position as I was being encouraged to take increasing leadership responsibility. So I ask your prayers for my faith even as I'm reminded that security is not what we are called to.

We have seen God work in miraculous ways during the past year in answer to many years of prayer. All of which leads us to say that God works in his time rather than ours.

I was reminded of this as we met with a community leader this week and saw a break through of energy and enthusiasm for the



Anita Lyndaker-Studer, with youth from work project.

new things God is doing in our community. It really does feel that we are in the right place, at the right time.

In this newsletter of the new year, we want to take the time to highlight a few of the ways God has worked through of you and share our plans for this new year together.

~Anita Lyndaker-Studer

A WORD FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT— PASTOR DOW

"I am going to send you what my father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."
Luke 24:49

Jesus tells his disciples to **"stay in the city"**. Such a request on the surface doesn't seem much of a challenge. But when we consider the environment in which the disciples found themselves; violence was common place, resources were limited, and stress levels would have been high both mentally and spiritually as they pondered their past, present and future. Yet, in the midst of crisis we find the resurrected Jesus articulates to the disciples a rather clear vision and promise, all of which was dependant upon

them being obedient by remaining in the midst of their challenging circumstances. What Jesus articulates to his disciples goes against all our human tendencies of survival to run or hide when we are threatened and afraid.

This is our vision and the hope that inspires us at OCCDA to **"stay in the city."** We believe that the blessing that Jesus is bestowing upon the city of Jerusalem is for us today as well, that as we labor we are being "clothed with power from on high" to be the hands and feet of Christ in the city of Philadelphia and the Oxford Circle community. We empathize with the disciples in Jesus day, for we face similar

challenges in Philadelphia; violence, limited resources and stress. Yet, in the midst of crisis we sense in greater measure that our resurrected Lord is speaking to us a clear vision along with the promise that by remaining in the midst of our challenging circumstances God will be glorified!

In this issue you will read how by God's grace we are seeking to minister directly into urban issues with the hope of the full Gospel through the ministry OCCDA. We thank you in advance for your generous support that allows us to not only **"stay in the city"**, but also to actively seek the **"shalom of the city"**!

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **After School: Houseman Recreation Center: April — June, 2008, 3:00 —5:30pm (Mondays and Wednesdays)**
- **Upcoming Board meetings: January 27, 2008, February 24, 2008, March 30, 2008, April 27, 2008**

HIGHLIGHTED VOLUNTEER, JARED HESS

Jared Hess played a key part in our annual community festival over the past several years. With his combined interest in youth and basketball, he started a 3-on-3 tournament to draw youth to the activities. On 1/25/08, Jared died after a year long battle with leukemia leaving his wife, Anne, and 2 young sons, Caleb and Noah. Richard Rohrer shares some of his memories below.

One memory I have was playing basketball with Jared at the church retreat and during a summer league in which OCMC participated. Although

Jared was often the best player on the court he always included the youth who were eager for the ball. Jared had a keen sense for when to step up the intensity in a game and when to just relax and enjoy the game as it unfolded. On and off the court, I saw and sensed a humility in Jared.

Watching Jared battle for his life has given me new perspective on the gift God gives us with each new day. In the end, every day became a gift to him - another interaction with Anne, Caleb, and Noah - day by day he fought to enjoy the things most precious to him. I am always

amazed how being faced with death brings new clarity and focus to life, like putting on a new set of glasses that help hone in on the most important things. Jared got it - he really learned to live before he died - enjoying each day for what it had, enjoying each interaction with others, and in the midst of intense physical suffering remaining thankful to those around him for all they were doing on his behalf. His example is so important for me to learn from - to enjoy one day at a time, when things don't go your way to remain thankful, and in the end to face death with dignity and peace.



In memoriam: Jared Hess (center) founded the 3-on-3 OCCDA B-ball tournament.

BLOOMING GLEN, DAMASCUS ROAD TEAM

For the last several Septembers, a group from Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, a Bucks County congregation, has been showing up at the OCCDA annual Community Festival. They sport the same Kelly-green t-shirts as the rest of the volunteers, but have their own special connection to the Festival, and to the Oxford Circle community. But how did this come about? Berdine Leinbach, who has been involved with the church's outreach to Oxford Circle since the beginning, explains that they were initially "looking for people of

color with Anabaptist faith to begin threads of connection to, so we could widen our perspective of God's kingdom." Then, a few years back, at the invitation of OCCDA board chair and Oxford Circle Mennonite Church lead pastor Leonard Dow, the Blooming Glen team found themselves filling a need for children's carnival games at the Festival, along with staff to supervise them. As the saying goes, the rest is history, and the resulting years of dedication from Blooming Glen's Damascus Road Anti-racism team and youth have been a true blessing

to OCCDA and the community, as well as a fun investigation between two differing expressions of a common faith.

So what do Blooming Glen's volunteers see as the result of their sharing spirit and hands? Leinbach is humble in this regard, admitting that "the real impact comes from the relationships being built in the community." She does add however, that they will continue to share in a "supportive role in the working with systems, gaining financial connections, [and] support in prayer and encouragement."

"Pray for peace in our city. Make us part of the peace, Lord. Keep our neighborhoods safe."



Drumming for Peace— "Walking a Path of Peace" was a focus for our youth programs this past year.

BLOOMING GLEN, DAMASCUS ROAD TEAM, CONT.

Though there have been some obstacles in their ongoing support of OCCDA and the Oxford Circle community, they will continue to “keep hoping and dreaming big, do

[their] part and pray for God to move” – encouraging the very same strengths they appreciate in the Oxford Circle Christian Community Development Association.

Thank you, Blooming Glen, for your generous support and friendship to the Association and the community!

-P. Timothy Gierschick II



Community grocery, school kit, and book distribution from MCC, Fall 2007.

VISION FOR YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS

During the past year, OCCDA partnered with the Oxford Village Housing Authority to implement a summer education program for approximately 25 youth (funding provided by Franconia Conference and Mustard Seed). In addition, this fall we kicked off a mentoring program to expand and build relationships with these children into the school year. We will be using volunteers from our congregation who are partnered with youth from the for a one year period minimum. As the pilot year, we are looking to make 10-15 matches this year with the hope of continuing to expand it over the next several years.

We are excited at the possibilities since we continue to see our church growing from contacts and relationships built through this community service. In addition, thanks to generous funding from the Fransen Family Foundation,

we plan to begin an after school ministry by Spring 2008. We plan to focus on creative arts, reading and conflict resolution. We have partnered with the local recreation center as way to expand our available space.

OCCDA plans to address the social and educational needs of 50 school aged children annually and achieve the following outcomes for participating youth:

- Improve academics and behavior
- Improved self-esteem and decision-making
- Development of creativity in the arts

Our goal over this coming year is to build relationships with families of participating youth that allow us to build into our next phase of programming including supportive services for families and

adults such as: parenting support groups, case management and emergency assistance, and adult education. In addition, our future goals include community and economic development to include job development, neighborhood advocacy for affordable and safe housing, conflict resolution and mediation, just to name a few.

We look forward to working towards God’s vision of his community here in our neighborhood of Oxford Circle.

~Anita Lyndaker-Studer
Director

Prayer Wall Festival 07:

“Healing for Jared. Peace, faith, and patience.”



Community youth wait the start of the 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS - 2008

Officers:

President, Leonard Dow

Treasurer, Ed Dobeck

Secretary, Jennifer Leaman

Members:

Karen Jantzi George Young

Ron Sider Peter Sensenig



Father and son say hello to the camera, Fall 2007.

NOTES FROM THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

OXFORD CIRCLE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

To be added to our mailing list or for more information, please use the contact information below:

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**To extend
healing and hope in
the Oxford Circle
community
believing that
God's purpose of
reconciling all
people to
Jesus leads us to
minister on
spiritual,
physical, social &
economic
levels.**

**We are coming soon to a website
near you!**