

# NOTES FROM THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

JULY—SEPTEMBER 2008

## WELCOME TO OCCDA

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### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- We are hiring a PT Youth Coordinator! If interested, contact Anita at [occcda.verizon.net](mailto:occcda.verizon.net).
- After School: OCMC, 10/13/08–12/12/08, 3:00–5:30pm (T–TH)
- New Property Open House: 11/1/08, 6:00–8:00 pm
- OCMC Anniversary: OCMC, 11/2/08, 10–2pm

When I reflect on the last three months, what stands out is the volunteers who blessed us with their time this summer.

The summer camp volunteers showed up faithfully day after day, long after the mid-summer exhaustion hit. The summer interns provided leadership to the camp (their time was generously provided through the Menonite Central Committee and Franconia Conference) and the instructors came prepared weekly with lesson plans and met the challenge of keeping very active campers engaged!

We were also blessed by two youth work teams. One K-team from East Petersburg joined us through the Harrisburg Disciples House and EMM. In spite of joining us the first week of camp

(which required a lot of grace on their part), they not only matched our campers energy but blessed the church and larger Oxford community with their hard work.

The Conestoga youth came and volunteered in spite of a fire in their own church. They recruited for our Red Cross blood drive as well as spent time with our campers and in community clean up. Thanks to their help (and a dedicated church member—thank you Rich) we met our goal of 50 pints of blood!

Which brings us to those who showed up to donate blood and enabled us to meet the challenge grant set by Einstein Hospital.



East Petersburg K-Team and EMM volunteers.

Finally, I can't forget the 40 volunteers who showed up to serve our community through the festival this past weekend. Especially the team leaders who helped with the planning 3 months in advance and who made this year's festival such a great day!

So to all of you (and to anyone I neglected to mention), I say thank you for the generous gift of yourself!

~Anita Lyndaker-Studer  
Executive Director

## A WORD FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

While our president, Pastor Leonard Dow, is on a short, much deserved sabbatical, I have the privilege of trying to fill his shoes as temporary president.

Wonderful things are happening at OCCDA. We had good summer programs and a successful festival for the community on September 13.

Even more exciting is the tremendous opportunity to purchase a large building that will provide space to vastly expand our programs for our community in the coming years. Our first crunch time is this September 30. We must pay \$90,000 on that date. The good news is that we already have over \$70,000 in hand. The challeng-

ing news is that we still need \$20,000 in the next two weeks.

Prominent business leaders are working with us, and with their help we know our business plan is solid and realistic. But we do need your generous gifts right now.

Thanks so much.

Ron Sider, Acting President

## A PRAYER FOR PEACE

Dear God,

Just last week the children and I witnessed a horrible fight. Lord, I know you saw it too. We watched two boys pummel each other to the ground. Their fists were flying, and their noses flared. They seemed really upset. But God, you also knew that the children and I were astounded by the chaos unfolding before our eyes. Surely, you knew how helpless we felt. But the good news is... you also knew we weren't helpless at all.

This is because each child who attended the Summer Education Program now holds a special ability. They each have been empowered with the skill of peacemaking. Last week's fight was not the first fight they witnessed; nor will it be their last. But knowing what steps to take in the midst of a conflict is powerful and life

changing. I am glad to have had the opportunity in witnessing this change.

The Summer Education Program has just come to a close. I reflect on the clay that was sculpted, the poems that were written, and songs that were sung. Lord, I know you see my smile. Your peace showed up this summer; just like we had asked. Believe me, Oxford Village was not the most peaceful place; and at times we wanted to give up. But peace "does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart."

I walk away from this experience feeling content. The staff and I allowed you to use us (and stretch us too). You provided us with the helping hands we needed, and an-

swered the many requests of those who prayed for us. Yes, something great has just ended, but something even more spectacular has just begun. I do not believe the peace we experienced this summer has abandoned us. It will only multiply as our students head back to school and encounter more conflicts in their neighborhood. I am sure they will know the right thing to do. Thank you God; because when your peace shows up, it is here to stay. And thank you once again for a great summer.

Your child, Celmali

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God." Matthew 5:9

*-Celmali Jaime was the Summer Camp Director and Summer Service Intern with Mennonite Central Committee.*



Exploring Pennypack Nature Preserve—Summer Camp

## COMMUNITY FESTIVAL—IS IT WORTH IT?

This year's festival cost over \$7,500 and countless people hours. Was it worth all the work? Let me tell you a little bit about the day and you decide.

The children played games and won school supplies as prizes. They saw a goat, a sheep, a llama and ducks, some for the first time in their lives. They rode ponies and watched a presentation from The Franklin Institute. They had their faces, arms and legs painted. They made crafts, painted pictures and blew bubbles. They ate hot dogs

and ran around the field.

The adults spent time in the resource tent, learning about the agencies and programs available in the community. They listened to music from talented artists, including our pastor, Peter Sensenig. They prayed in the prayer tent and wrote their prayers on the prayer wall. They ate hot dogs while they watched the children playing.

We gave out 150 school kits and 100 bags of groceries and could have given out many more. We talked with

our neighbors and made some new friends. We thanked God for a sunny day with a breeze. We had over 40 people who volunteered to make it happen. We received donations of money and materials from congregations and organizations throughout the city and suburbs.

Those of us who participated believe the festival is an important ministry in our community. Why don't you join us next year and see for yourself?

~ Karen Jantzi, Board Member

Peace "does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart." ~ Celmali



Family shows off contents of MCC grocery bag—Community Festival

**IN OUR OWN WORDS**

I Am, I See, I Come

I come from a neighborhood of fighting, shooting, and people smoking crack.

But I am like people laughing, goofing around, and having fun.

I am my mother and my grandma.

I will see myself stop lying and cursing.

-Tennece

Who I Am - Star

I come from a neighborhood of fighting and smoking.

I hear people cursing.

The things I experience are madness, sadness, and being scared.

But I am like a tree,

A garden, and the sun going down.

I am Rosa Parks, who took a stand against violence.

I am Pastor Leonard, who helps us make peace.

I am Moses, who tried to help free his people.

I will see my dreams come true.

Playing together non-violently

Everyone joining hand in hand

And standing against violence

Caring about each other

Everyday walking the path of peace.

-Yamina

(Acrostic Poem)



Sharing the best of the Festival.

**SUMMER REFLECTIONS**

Working at the Summer Education Program (SEP) this summer was a relatively new experience for me. I have not spent much time working at a structured program for kids so I was not sure what to expect. Although SEP was a definite learning experience and a challenge, the camp proved to be a valuable and rewarding part of my summer.

The over-arching theme of the camp was peace and resolving conflicts without using violence—an important topic for children growing up in an environment where violence and revenge are generally seen and practiced more than acts of peace. On a given day, about 25 kids showed up to attend SEP. The kids attending SEP were excitable, active, and eager for attention.

Even during points of frustration, I found myself having a

great deal of compassion. Many of the kids had difficult lives, often thrown into situations they did not choose and forced to grow up much faster than is actually helpful for them. From a conversation with one camper, I learned that because of tough occurrences in their life, they did not realize that there are caring and loving people in this world. Working at the camp, I saw an enormous need for hope and love and prayer.

Sometimes, in the midst of the chaos, we, as leaders, had to wonder if we were really making a difference. Were these kids truly getting anything out of the afternoons at day camp? Were they learning anything?

Regardless of our doubts, we did and continue to have an impact on these young lives.

We taught them that alternatives to violence exist—and that they work. Revenge and aggression are not the only ways to handle conflicts. We hope that these messages will come back to them and stay with them as they get older and potentially find themselves in difficult situations.

I am confident that many children will remember and act on the messages they heard one summer at SEP. This summer, it was a privilege to be able to work with them, struggle with them, and laugh with them. They are good kids who are talented, have caring hearts and energetic spirits. Let us continue to remember, encourage, and pray for these youth in Oxford Circle and beyond.

~Emily Derstine, Summer Ministry Intern through Franconia Conference

“The things I experience are madness, sadness, and being scared. But I am like a tree, A garden, and the sun going down.” ~ Star



Mrs. Dow's artists at work—summer camp.

**OXFORD CIRCLE CHRISTIAN  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
ASSOCIATION**

**PO Box 28340**

**Howell and Langdon Streets**

**Philadelphia, PA 19149-3611**

Phone: (267) 265-1709

E-mail: [occcda@verizon.net](mailto:occcda@verizon.net)

[www.occcda.org](http://www.occcda.org)

**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.**



**Check our website:  
[www.occcda.org!](http://www.occcda.org)**

## **NOTES FROM THE BELOVED COMMUNITY**

### **PROPERTY UPDATES**

The property process continues to be an exercise in faith. Believing that God is calling us to move forward but also waiting for him to move. In all of that, he has continued to open doors and we continue to move forward!

Within several days of receipt of this newsletter, we plan to put down our deposit of \$90,000 (in addition to the \$10,000 already held in escrow) which ends our due diligence period (see Board Chair's update on pg. 1). As part of due diligence, we have: completed an architectural feasibility study; are awaiting final confirmation of financing;

completed the building inspection; placed our current property on the market; and met with local elected officials in regards to zoning and financing. As you can tell, we have been very busy!

The next step is our closing date of February 28, 2008. In preparation for that date, we will need to raise an additional \$1 million (\$600,000 in cash and \$400,000 in in-kind and pledges). During the last week of October, we will begin meeting with small groups of interested persons to present our vision ending with a Open House at the new building on November 1,

2008 and an Anniversary celebration at OCMC that following Sunday. Please contact us if you are interested in participating or hosting any of those activities or if you interested but unable to make those dates.

*~ Anita Lyndaker-Studer for  
the Property Committee*



Front view of new building we are in the process of purchasing.

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

#### **Officers:**

President, Leonard Dow

Treasurer, Ed Dobeck

Secretary, Jennifer Leaman

#### **Members:**

Karen Jantzi

Peter Sensenig

Ron Sider, Acting President

George Young