



VOLUME 7, ISSUE 2

NOTES FROM THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

MAY 2013

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UPCOMING DATES

Events - located at 900 E. Howell Street, 19149 unless otherwise indicated:

- After School, 3-6pm, Mon-Fri through 6/21/13
- GED and ESL, 5-8pm, Tues & Thurs
- Workshop Series with Christian Legal Clinics, "Wills, Power of Attorney, & Living Wills", 6:30pm, 5/16/13
- Summer Camp, 9am-3pm, Mon-Thurs, 7/1/13-8/8/13

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" Eph 3:20

This scripture for most of us is most often reserved as a benediction for the end or closing of a Sunday morning service. However board member Jen Leaman at our last board meeting opened and led us in a time of sharing and praying together utilizing this powerful passage. During this time we were encouraged and reminded that God is still desiring in our world today to "do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine" and lest we forget this same God is wanting "to do immeasurably more" in our Oxford Circle community through OCCCDA!

Over the last 4 years here at OCCCDA as many of you know we have been so blessed to see firsthand the "power" of God at work among us in our chosen areas of focus - youth development, family support, employment and economic development (see inside for more details). However it is in this environment of thanksgiving we also want to resist the temptation to "reminisce" at the powerful moves of God at the expense of continuing to "dream forward" into God's preferred future for our OC community and the ministry of OCCCDA. To this end, an important way we "dream forward" together is through listening and learning at our "community conversations", which is the focus of this issue.



As you read about the challenging needs and transformational opportunities set before us here at OCCCDA and our OC community I would like to invite you, your family and/or your church to join us in praying Ephesians 3:14-21. As the Spirit leads, pause periodically to pray over this issue in faith knowing that our God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work with us"! Amen.

*--Bishop Leonard Dow
OCCCDA President*

(Below photo: Christmas in the afterschool program)



Community Dialogue



This past fall, we held a series of “community conversations” at Oxford Circle Mennonite Church to reassess where we saw God moving in our community. Thanks to the work of many facilitators and a volunteer “scribe” (thank you Jordan!), we presented back to the congregation this past month. The following is the overview which correlated strongly to our community feedback two years ago. Overall, there continues to be a need for a variety of youth support programs, support for single and teen parents, access to community resources including transportation, and opportunities for employment.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

What is working?

Through our out of school program and back to school day, OCCDA and OCMC are highly visible in the community. We also have many positive relationships with our community schools.

How can we get involved?

Help physically revitalize recreation centers and other public facilities. Create opportunities for youth to do community service and college/career prep. Get involved in the community through avenues such as block captains, coaching and 1-on-1 mentoring. Take multiple approaches to violence prevention. A long-term perspective teaches a message of non-violence to elementary students so they grow up with it while in the short term, mentor and model a better way.

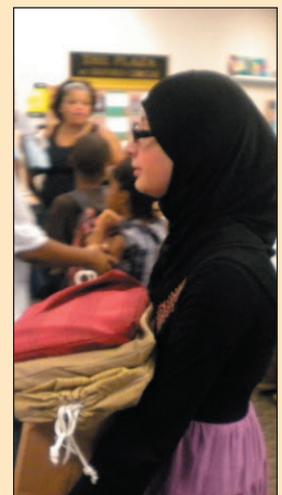
FAMILY SUPPORT

What is working?

OCMC and OCCDA have a strong presence in the community and facilities are accessible. OCCDA and OCMC are familiar with health, mental health and addiction including those who have experienced it to those who work in the field.

How can we get involved?

Provide support for single parents, teen parents, and families struggling with mental health/addiction. Provide emergency assistance such as transportation and food, etc. Train volunteers and members how to deal with mental health/addiction. Model healthy alternatives by healthy potlucks, physical activity and nutrition classes, and bike safety resources. Network and connect with resources such as Esperanza (health mentors), counseling, Food Trust, YMCA, schools for gardening, PHMC nutritional classes, and sports leagues. Finally, create space for information on healthcare reform, “txt 4 baby”, weight loss programs, and physical activity opportunities.



Community Dialogue



EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

What is working?

The community knows we're here and many OCMC members live in and connect with people as part of the community. Have many partner organizations such as Kingdom Builders, Interfaith Hospitality Network and supports programs such as the soup kitchen.

How can we get involved?

Provide support services such as child care for students, a food program that allows recipients to participate, and emergency shelter. Create a business training program including job skills, preparedness, interview skills and a community board for posting employment/education opportunities. Partner with organizations such as Mennonite Economic Development Assoc., Kingdom Builders, and Interfaith Hospitality. Look for "unstructured" and natural ways to be part of community. Continue to use our space for community events and meetings.



PRAYER

What is working?

Prayer through OCMC small groups for people with different needs as well as structured prayer support for OCCDA.

How can we get involved?

Create more opportunities for intentional prayer in the community such as prayer walking, community prayer events, going door to door and distributing cards.

- Praise and prayer for our incoming summer interns: Quinn and Emily (Goshen College SIP), Carlos (MCC Summer Service Worker), Lisa (Eastern University independent study), high school counselors (PYN Youth Works), and Tanja (IVEP MCC).
- Praise and prayer for outgoing interns: Raquel (Temple University) and Tandezie (IVEP MCC).
- Prayer for significant staffing changes and that God would be calling the right people.
- Pray for remaining staff, Anita, Bridget, Josh, and Naida that they would remain encouraged and positive in the midst of changes and additional responsibilities.
- Praise for interest in starting a conversation to explore opportunities and next steps for economic development/small business development in Oxford Circle.
- Praise for Youth Coalition completing planning for new Middle School component starting this Summer Camp!

Bridge of Hope Update

Our newest program launch, Bridge of Hope, has had an exciting development. We are starting to receive applications and referrals for mothers and their families who are struggling with the effects of homelessness. We are also starting the training for our first ever mentor group which is comprised of attendees of Oxford Circle Mennonite Church. However, our exciting development is not these things I just mentioned (although they are certainly exciting), what we are especially excited to announce is the start of our new Bridge of Hope Caseworker, Marie Toussaint! Marie will be working on the continued growth of the Bridge of Hope program through participant case management and mentor recruitment. It is such a blessing to see how the Lord has brought Marie to OCCDA for this season and we are looking forward to all the ways He will be using her in the Oxford Circle community and beyond through the Bridge of Hope program.



Hi everyone. To introduce myself, my name is Marie Toussaint. I am originally from South Florida and recently moved to Philadelphia. I have eight years of experience working in the Social Service field aiding Homeless Families. I am truly excited about being the new Case Worker for the Bridge of Hope Program and fortunate that the position was bestowed to me. I look forward to working with single mothers that are facing homelessness to be that advocate and voice to help them transition into being more self-sufficient and offering a positive supportive environment.

God Bless,

Marie Toussaint

**OXFORD CIRCLE CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
ASSOCIATION**

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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.*



NOTES FROM THE BELOVED COMMUNITY



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