

**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

ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES AT OCCDA

The Oxford Circle neighborhood is an incredibly diverse community, with students in the local elementary school speaking a combined total of 26 different foreign languages in their homes. For the past three years Oxford Circle Christian Community Development Association has offered free English classes for English language learners. These classes form close-knit communities of individuals who seek to learn together and support one another in their pursuit of mastering English as their second or third language.



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Volume 7, Issue 3

**NOTES FROM THE
BELOVED COMMUNITY**

AUGUST 2014



A WORD FROM A BOARD MEMBER

Inside this Issue

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Creating Lasting
Impact**

A Dream Realized

**English as a
Second Language
Classes**

I recently attended a conference for Christian community health professionals. There was a title that hooked me... **“Dive Deeper to Swim Further: the Paradox of Comfort-Busting Incarnational Ministry,”** presented by a medical provider in inner city Memphis.

I was trained as a social worker. In social work, practitioners are taught to create professional boundaries to protect yourself and your clients. On the surface, this seems wise and there are facets of this that are very important. But recently, I’ve been questioning this as a Christian. God created us for relationship. When we erect these boundaries, we can rob ourselves and others of authentic, give-and-receive relationships. It would be easier to keep the walls up and not let anyone get too close – not help carry the burdens of others and definitely not show our own mess. I recognize in my own life however that the times that I’ve pulled back, are the times I find myself becoming cynical and uncaring. We’ve taught ourselves that burnout happens when we carry the problems and issues of our clients (and friends) and we don’t know how to “leave work at work.” Perhaps, but maybe burnout really happens when we don’t allow ourselves to get close enough to know someone else’s burdens and let them glimpse ours. To really NEED our neighbors (and not just to borrow a cup of sugar).

As Christians, we are called Christ’s ambassadors. An ambassador is not a smooth-talking politician who remains in their own country while remotely conducting international affairs. An ambassador lives in the country they are sent to and immerses themselves in the local culture and language. The people that I’ve known who have ministered in difficult places for long periods of time are: 1) called by God; 2) giving and receiving ministry from their church community and neighbors; and 3) not concerned about erecting boundaries.

I would be remiss if I did not say that this is impossible on our own. When we get tired and weary, Jesus doesn’t instruct us to pull back from difficult relationships or stay away from “needy” people (as if only some of us belonged in this group). But He says, “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” (Matthew 11:28-30, Message) So, we can be free to dive deeper... to go further.

**UPCOMING
DATES**

Back to School Festival September 13, 2014 – 12:00 noon - 4:00pm

21st CCLC Out of School Program Starts, September 29, 2014: 3:00-6:00pm

Adult Education Classes, September 16, 2014: 6:00-8:30pm, Tuesday and Thursday

~ Jennifer Leaman

ADULT EDUCATION: CREATING LASTING IMPACT

As an organization we seek to share the *Good News* with our neighbors through our various ministries and programs. For those needing to pass the General Education Development (GED) tests, gaining them the equivalent of a high school diploma, **FREE** GED preparatory classes are good news indeed!

There are an estimated 550,000 adults in the city functioning below basic adult education levels to qualify for family-sustaining jobs and post-secondary training and education. (Mayors Commission on Literacy)

Joe Beech is a celebrated partner in the ministry of OCCDA. Soon after the Mayor issued his Commission on Literacy in 1983 Joe got involved, “working with adults at city shelters and halfway houses and became a trainer of volunteers, working with the Commission.” (Dorothy Brown, former Enterprise Editor for Philadelphia Inquirer)

For the past four years after teaching at Samuel Fels High School during the day, two nights a week he would bike on over to OCCDA and lead GED preparatory classes for adults. This fills a tremendous need in our neighborhood as the 2010 US Census found that 30.1% of males and 14.9% of females 25 years or older in this area had less than a high school degree.

Bory is one of many lives transformed by this ministry, and her desire to share her learning with others, a “pay it forward” attitude, ensures that the community will continue to benefit from the impact of her accomplishment!



A Dream Realized - Bory Kuoch

I started college in 1975, the same year the Khmer Rouge forced everyone to leave the cities for camps. Families were split up and I was sent to work in rice paddies at the Cambodian/Vietnamese border. We were allowed to return to our homes in 1979, 3 years, 8 months and 2 days after we left. My city had been bombed, my family’s home destroyed, and two of my brothers were dead. Soon after we returned, a close friend from the camp found me and told me that she wanted me to marry her brother. We met, liked each other and were married on July 13, 1980.

We left by cart for the Thailand border the next day, paying a guide to take us there. It took us 1 ½ months to get to the Khao I Dang camp only to find that it was not taking any more refugees. A group of us cut the wire one night and sneaked in. It was difficult to get into the US. You needed a sponsor and money to buy the applications. We had nothing. We heard that the UN Secretary General, Kurt Waldheim, was visiting the camp. We peeled the label off a can and wrote the information for the application on the back of it. When Waldheim’s car drove through the camp, we ran to the car and threw our application in the window. A Korean Lutheran church sponsored us for immigration 2 – 3 months later.

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We entered the US in 1982. By 1986 I had 2 sons. I was talking to a friend about going back to college. She suggested I go to a trade school. My mother had cut hair so I decided to take cosmetology courses. I graduated in 1987 and immediately began working in a salon. Our 3rd son was born in 1990. That same year we bought a house with a salon on the first floor. My older boys came home from school and played in the salon while I cut hair. We bought a 2nd salon in 2004, a 3rd in 2008. I wanted to get my cosmetology teacher’s license so I could have apprentices in my salon, immigrants who needed a skill.

In 2011, I started taking instructor’s classes. It was hard to study, work, and run the salons. I completed the instructor’s course work but could not take the test without a high school diploma. A friend told me about the GED program at Oxford Circle Christian Community Development Association and I began attending there in 2012. I learned many things from those classes, not just about the subjects but about studying, taking tests, about being confident and how to encourage others as a teacher.

2013 was an exciting year. I received my GED diploma, my oldest son married and I passed my instructor’s exam. I am not finished learning. I want to teach people to cut hair so they can earn a living and support their families. It’s important to give back, to help other people the way people helped me.



GED Class Participants



March 2014

We want to express our appreciation for all the volunteer instructors who make the adult education classes possible!