

Dialogue

A reflective journal about faith and action
from Madison-area Urban Ministry

Spring 2005



MUM builds community

By Mary Kay Baum

This issue of the Dialogue newsletter is dedicated to themes of community building and housing. See the back page insert for a very large community conversation on March 10th entitled "Housing for All." This day will begin a process in which persons from all walks of life will work toward the important goal of ending homelessness in our community.

Especially through our neighborhood clusters, Madison-area Urban Ministry (MUM) thrives at the local and neighborhood level.

For many years Allied Partners has been bringing congregations and individuals around Allied Drive to act together in hope for the future. The Partners fund and work with a community parish nurse, who is now Susan Corrado. Her advocacy and hospitality is indicative of the new broad-based effort for a multi-disciplinary Wellness Center. A large food pantry, effective eviction prevention fund, and many event collaborations round out the activities of Allied Partners. Kermit Hovey is MUM's liaison to Allied Partners. MUM provides grant writing and communication services to the Partners.

The Northside Communities of Faith (NCF) formed among congregations and diverse neighborhoods on the Northside of Madison. Its Homelessness Prevention Fund is a critical resource in the area and is also administered by the Joining Forces for Families Social Worker. Dolores Jackie Austin is MUM's liaison to NCF.

For the latest report of the Greater Isthmus Group (GIG) and its efforts in conjunction with many others to make more decent housing available to Madison's lowest income families, see page 3. GIG founded the Family Warming Shelter and continues to convene efforts to address housing for all.

Investing in efforts to sustain neighborhoods, communities, and the city is smart for all of us. We can offer an alternative vision to isolating greed. David Korten in his book "Post-Corporate World" explains how our current economic system places unsustainable burdens on our planet. Korten says that we deprive others of the basic

necessities of life, usually along racial lines. But he significantly points out that deprivation of others actually diminishes the lives of all of us. We become less of a community. What should we do? Korten suggests that we focus on our local places, our local economics and politics. Meanwhile Korten commends us to stay in conversation and cooperation with other local and political movements to avoid provincialism.

We act and think locally and globally. Prompted by these lines, we enclose information on how the current federal Budget debate will touch us locally...at the neighborhood level...and ways we may choose to act.



Mentoring Connections

Support for children separated from a parent by prison

Mentoring Connections update

We can build community by building relationships, especially caring and supportive relationships where important relationships have been damaged. One way to do this is to connect children that have been separated from a parent by prison to a caring adult volunteer mentor. Mentoring Connections is looking forward to eight new matches between children of incarcerated parents and caring trained mentor volunteers in the month of March. We have a total of 38 adult mentor applications in process with 19 children referred, and additional referrals coming in from schools, Dane County Mental Health and concerned parents. Please consider giving the gift of time to a youth (4-15) who needs an adult friend. The need is great, with 1600

children in Dane County alone with one or both parents in prison. To sign up a child or get a Volunteer Mentor Application contact Match Coordinator Fabu Mogaka at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Dane County at 661-5437. For general information, recruiting, staff presentations and training contact Kermit Hovey at MUM, 256-0906, or Kermit@emum.org. MUM staff are happy to present a three minute video newsclip and discuss Mentoring Connections plus related issues and programs at any organization's meeting—public service group, congregational adult ed class or other.



New Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention Act creates legal debt bondage

Submitted by Adam Schesch

Congress is poised to enact one of the most vicious economic laws ever passed. The 2005 Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention ... Act (HR685, S256) will make it almost impossible for low and moderate-income persons and families to ever get out from under debt.

The concept of bankruptcy, or giving debtors a second chance, is enshrined in the Bible under teachings like the Jubilee Year. Until recently, U.S. law allowed families to declare bankruptcy while keeping a modest income needed for basic living expenses and a place to live. Bankruptcy law clearly provided for certain kinds of debt like child support payments to be exempt from bankruptcy, but protected debtors from life-long consumer debt. But the U.S. banking industry wants the right to keep people in near life-long bondage, if necessary, to repay credit card, education, health care or other consumer debts.

The new law lowers the amount of personal income families can live on

and still file for straight bankruptcy to a level below the minimum standard of living. It severely restricts the right of a second chance. At the same time it maintains the loopholes for the rich that, for example, allow "bankruptcy" while keeping multi-million dollar homes and other "privileged" assets.

The law does nothing to deal with the reasons why modest income families are pushed into bankruptcy in the first place: Skyrocketing health care debts; usury rates for credit card loans and fees; easy to get, high risk loans to people with known debt problems; loan shark-like check cashing services; gambling addiction debt fed by the gambling industry itself; and individual drug addiction dumped onto innocent family members.

The right for a fresh start is as old as the United States itself. Most of our immigrant ancestors fled from tyranny, poverty and debt bondage itself. Contact your Wisconsin Congressional delegation today about this bill.

Mentoring Connections Orientations and Trainings

All trainings at 2300 S. Park St. unless indicated otherwise below. Events include guest Fabu Carter Mogaka and a light meal.

How to Work with At-Risk Children

Tuesday, March 8, April 12th or May 10th
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM Orientation and
Veronica Brown

Returning Prisoner Simulations

Saturday, March 12th
3:30 PM - 7:00 PM Some of the stations
will be staffed by persons speaking
Spanish. Take on the role of a newly
released parolee whether you speak
Spanish or not.

Saturday, April 2nd
9:30 AM - 2:00 PM
At Mount Zion Baptist Church,
2019 Fisher Street

Working Across Cultures with Confidence

Wednesday, March 16th or May 4th
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Stan and Yolanda Woodard

Note: One Orientation session is
required before a mentor is matched.

Register in advance by contacting:
Madison-area Urban Ministry (MUM)
at 256-0906 or mum@emum.org or
write to us at 2300 South Park Street, #5,

Cuts are coming to your neighborhood

The President's budget proposal for 2006 would mean massive cuts to Medicaid, CDBG, Section 8 vouchers, food stamps, public housing and would cap most domestic programs for 5 years.

For more information contact the National Low Income Housing Coalition at www.nlihc.org.

DIGS needs community support

By Steven Schooler, Porchlight, Inc.

Porchlight reduces homelessness by providing shelter, housing, support services and a sense of community.

One of easiest and cost effective ways to reduce homelessness is to prevent homelessness in the first place!

DIGS celebrates its fifth anniversary this year. DIGS is an acronym for Dwelling Intervention Grants and Sustenance. More



**On a shoestring budget
DIGS has served
over 5,000 households
and leveraged over \$1.1 mil-
lion**

importantly it is slang for lodging or housing. The object of the program is to help the people we serve maintain their "digs," and we have done that.

Porchlight needs to fundraise \$35,000 per year to make this program work effectively.

The results of the DIGS program are amazing. On a shoestring budget it has served over 5,000 households and

leveraged over \$1.1 million in direct emergency assistance. Here are some important facts and milestones:

- Small amounts of assistance (\$200 to \$300) usually prevent homelessness for a family.
- More than 80% of assisted households maintain regular housing for at least six months.
- The \$1.1 million in DIGS assistance saved almost \$2 million in homeless shelter services.

DIGS is not just about saving the community direct service assistance costs. DIGS is primarily about keeping people in their "digs." Homelessness is a devastating experience. DIGS works to provide the coordinated emergency assistance at the time when the need is the greatest. A few dollars at the right time saves incredible amounts in direct assistance and social costs, and eliminates untold human suffering. Please consider supporting this effective and worthwhile program with a DIGS designated financial contribution to: Porchlight, Inc. 306 N. Brooks St. Madison, WI 53715.

Including children with special needs in your faith community

On March 12th the Faith Inclusion Network is sponsoring a workshop, "Including Children with Special Needs in the Life of the Faith Community". Hosted by Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ, it will be from 9:00 AM to Noon and will assist congregations in identifying ways to be supportive to children with special needs and offer strategies and resources. All who are interested in helping congregations become more inclusive for people with disabilities are welcome.

The Faith Inclusion Network (FIN) is a group of Madison area congregations, people with disabilities and their advocates assisting faith communities to welcome, include and empower people



with disabilities. For questions or to register, please contact Lori Powell at (608)224-0615.

Wouldn't it feel good to support MUM's valuable work?

Your prayers and donations make all

Report on

The Greater Isthmus Group (GIG)

from a meeting on Thursday, February 17, 2005

Salli Martyniak announced the concept of the home ownership **"Walk to Worship" project** that The Dane Fund is proposing locally. Letters of support are being written.

Nan Cnare, Nancy Jensen, and Mary Kay Baum reported on further progress in the **"Small Apartment Buildings Opportunities" project**. We discussed how congregations, nonprofits and existing landlords can invest or assist in maintaining apartments for very low-income persons/families. The program might be called "Homes for Good."

Everett Mitchell sought help in build-

ing participation of faith communities and low-income persons in the **"Housing for ALL Community Conversation" on Thurs. March 10th at CUNA at 1 PM-5 PM.**

Contact MUM or email housingconversation@gmail.com for an online poster.

LeeAnne Banks, property manager of Madison Development Corporation, has provided information on their **housing options for low-income persons.**

Next GIG meeting: Thursday, March 17th at 8:30 AM at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 1021 Spaight St. We're asking

Dialogue is a reflective journal of faith and action printed by Madison-area Urban Ministry staff. The positions expressed here are the opinions of the authors and not necessarily the board of directors or funding sources of MUM. All individual members and all faith communities in Dane County receive a copy. Individual membership in MUM is encouraged. Please mail contributions to our address below.



United Way
of Dane County



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Housing for ALL Community Conversation

The aim of the Housing for ALL Community Conversation is to engage Dane County residents to achieve safe, affordable and sustainable housing for people with extremely low incomes.

Thursday, March 10, 2005 from 1-5 pm
CUNA Mutual Group
5810 Mineral Point Road in Madison, Wisconsin

Free transportation available & Free child care available off-site, as needed.

RSVP to housingconversation@gmail.com or MUM at 256-0906.

Call to reserve your seat and/or transportation and to find out about childcare.
Spanish Translation available.

The facilitated conversation will focus on determining...

- 1) Methods to engage local people with diverse interests and energy to create a common forum
- 2) Existing community strengths and local skills in order to identify opportunities/values related to the access of permanent and affordable housing for all in Dane County
- 3) Construction of the beginnings of neighborhood strategies to educate and engage the larger community to create increased resources
- 4) Potential to create a community-wide 10 year plan to end chronic homelessness
- 5) Development of ongoing local workgroups created from the passion and energy of the individuals

Join us as we try to get our hands around homelessness by using appreciative inquiry, a new model for addressing issues by working from community strengths and solutions.

RETURNING PRISONER SIMULA-

Saturday, March 12th

3:30 PM to 7:00 PM
Villager, 2300 S. Park St., Madison
Some stations will be staffed by persons speaking Spanish. Take on the role of a newly released prisoner whether you speak Spanish or not.

Saturday, April 2nd

9:30 AM to 2:00 PM
Mount Zion Baptist Church
2019 Fisher Street, Madison
"Walk in the shoes" of a formerly incarcerated person.

At each event, see MUM's documentary, "Today's Prisoners, Tomorrow's Neighbors" and have a light meal. Teenagers are welcome. A \$7 to \$20 donation suggested. Contact MUM to register.

Special community building and housing issue

Non-Profit
Organization
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Permit #1991

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