

SICM NEWS

Year 40, Number 1, Winter 2009

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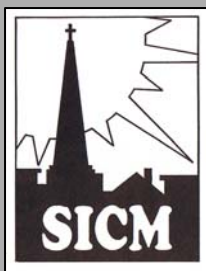
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SICM Community Service Award Recognizes Key Volunteers

SICM honored 4 volunteers at its December Assembly meeting with its Community Service Award. **Marilyn Berrigan**, a SICM delegate from Our Redeemer Lutheran Church since 1978, has served on the SICM Emergency Food Task Force for 26 years, helped start the Save and Share Co-op, coordinated Our Redeemer's participation in the Summer Lunch program, and staffed CROP Walk events as well as many other community service projects with SICM and other organizations. Marilyn has been on the Board of Our Redeemer and served as an Elder for many years.

Rev. Art Downing, Pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, was also a recipient of the award. He has offered Trinity Lutheran as a site for summer lunch since 1998. Each Spring, he reaches out to congregations in the Central State Street Ecumenical Cluster, and he recruits and schedules volunteers to staff the Summer Lunch site. Over the past 3 years, SICM has served 4,137 lunches at Trinity (about 1400 per year) with Rev. Downing's help.



Honoring the Brousseaus

Gene and Linna Brousseau have been faithful food pantry volunteers and help on average 24 hours/week: They volunteer on Mondays, picking up the food at the Food Bank and staying to arrange the stockroom; on Tuesdays they help unload the Tuesday delivery and store it; on Fridays they pick up donations from Hannaford and work in the storeroom. They also volunteer on the last Tuesday and Thursday of the month, and work

at the Post Office drives. Gene built the wood shelves and assembled the steel shelving in the storeroom, and Linna serves on the Food Task Force.

Many thanks to all of our award recipients, for all that they do for SICM and the community!!

Safe Parks and Edible Playgrounds



SICM is one of only 21 faith-based coalitions across the country (from Guam to Massachusetts) that was awarded a two-year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to prevent childhood obesity by increasing access to healthy foods and physical activity through community advocacy. SICM's "Safe Parks and Edible Playgrounds" will advance community policies and environmental changes to improve access to safe places to play for area children and establish "Edible Playgrounds" (gardens for and by children). This project will be coordinated by Rev. Van Stuart. Noting that faith-based coalitions have been at the forefront of local and state efforts on social issues such as homelessness and hunger and poverty, RWJF is optimistic about these groups advocating for improved food, nutrition and environmental policies. SICM will be enhancing coalitions with other interested neighborhood groups such as Weed & Seed, ACORN, and the Hamilton Hill Arts Center. A key partner in the project will be Roots & Wisdom, a youth agriculture and community service program, bringing together Schenectady County youth and committed adults to grow organic vegetables for donation to local food pantries and for sale within the county.



GE Foundation *DOUBLES* Match! Story on p. 3



Rev. Grigsby, Marilyn Berrigan, Phyllis Clas

Schenectady Inner City Ministry (SICM) celebrates the partnership of 58 member congregations "relating the resources of the congregations to the human needs of the city," which means ministries of social service, education, witness and social action. The SICM newsletter and more detailed financial and program information is available from SICM at 930 Albany Street, Schenectady, NY 12307 or (518) 374-2683. FAX: (518) 382-1871. Email address: information@sicm.us. Website address is: www.sicm.us. SICM's finances are audited annually by an independent auditing firm.

Ministry Notes



The old saying in New York goes: "Neither man nor beast is safe when the legislature is in session."

However this year may be different, at least as far as a critical issue affecting those we see every time at the food pantry.

I ask to consider being involved with the initiative to increase the welfare grant. As you may know, it has been about 20 (that's right, 20, not a typo) years since it was increased.

Governor Patterson has recommended, even in these hard fiscal times, that the welfare grant be increased 10% a year starting next January 1. This is long overdue. However, some including our own Assemblyman Tedisco was quoted as saying that New York has the "Cadillac" of welfare programs. With all due respect to our Assembly member, any conversation with those each time at the pantry will tell you it is not a Cadillac. Who can live on what they had 20 years ago?

I could cite you the numbers. But I won't. The main moral reason for supporting the welfare increase (besides the obvious downturn in the economy) is welfare reform. President Clinton "ended welfare as we know it" in 1996. It was a controversial move.

What welfare reform did was end

welfare as an entitlement, i.e. you qualified no matter what, like Social Security or Medicare. Welfare became time limited (5 years in your life: it is now called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families instead of Aid to Families with Dependent Children.) Welfare became "work first." The argument was that the "best welfare program is a job" (which I agree with, by the way, it just needs to be a living wage, but that is another article). So now if you apply for welfare, you may first go to a job, or if assessed as employable then referred to a job first.

The perception in 1996 was that too many on welfare were employable, that welfare was not for "the truly needy." Once welfare reform happened, the rolls dropped. In our county the caseload went from 2,000 families or so to a 1,000. While this was deemed a success (begging the question of what happened to those not on the rolls, another article), it meant the state had a welfare "surplus" because the funding level was set at the pre-1996 levels. A number of states increased the grants at that point because it was seen for those remaining on welfare, an increase was justified. New York did not. The welfare surplus was used to some extent to help the welfare to work process (the local Cars for Work Program, for example); much of it went into the general fund.

The obvious reason for supporting a grant increase is the worth and dignity of each human person. The current grant is so low and so far below even the poverty level that, in my experience, you can only attempt to live on it if you have some form of subsidized housing. Most do not. The grant level is one reason why demand at our food pantry is up 27% from last year.

It is up to "we the people." Our new President encouraged us to responsible citizenship. All our faith traditions invite and urge us to care for the least of these – not only with direct help as we do, but also in the ways of justice that set up the systems and institutions by which we live each day.

Too many of us believe that someone else will contact Albany. I urge your consideration and action on this important issue.

Grace and Peace,
Rev. Phil Grigsby

SCHENECTADY INNER CITY MINISTRY

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The Assembly of SICM includes one clergy and two lay delegates from all member congregations: Albany Street United Methodist, Alplaus United Methodist, Altamont Reformed, Bellevue Reformed, Bethel AME, Burnt Hills United Methodist, Carman United Methodist, Christ Church Episcopal, Church of St. Adalbert, Duryee Memorial AME Zion, Eastern Parkway United Methodist, Emmanuel Baptist—Friedens UCC, Faith United Methodist, First Baptist, Sch'dy, First Baptist, Scotia, First Reformed, Sch'dy, First Reformed, Scotia, First Unitarian Society, First United Methodist, Friendship Baptist, Good Shepherd Lutheran, Grace Lutheran, Grace Temple Church of God in Christ, Immaculate Conception, Sch'dy, Immaculate Conception, Glenville, Immanuel Lutheran, Koinonia Christian Ministries, Lynnwood Reformed, Mount Olivet Missionary Baptist, Niskayuna Reformed, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Grace, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Redeemer Lutheran, Refreshing Spring Church of God in Christ, Rotterdam United Methodist, St. Anthony's, St. George's Episcopal, St. Helen's, St. John the Baptist, St. John the Evangelist, St. Joseph's, Sch'dy, St. Joseph's, Scotia, St. Luke's, St. Paul the Apostle, St. Paul's Episcopal, St. Stephen's Episcopal, Scotia United Methodist, Society of Friends (Quakers), Stanford United Methodist, State Street Presbyterian, Tabernacle Baptist, Trinity Presbyterian, Union Presbyterian, Westminster Presbyterian, Woodlawn Reformed, Zion Lutheran.

Gifts & Grants

GE Foundation Doubles Match

Recently the GE Foundation announced that it will direct more than \$20 million in 2009 funding to organizations responding to the impact of the economic downturn. Focused on addressing basic needs, specifically the provisioning of food and shelter, these organizations have experienced a significant increase in demand without the proper funding to keep pace with the need. To that end, a Special Food & Shelter Matching Gifts Program has been created. Effective immediately, the GE Foundation will double all gifts made by GE employees and retirees up to \$25,000 (for a \$50,000 match) to qualified organizations providing these basic needs. SICM's Emergency Food Program is among the organizations qualified to receive **GE's double matching gifts**. For more information, go to www.gefoundation.com/matchinggifts.

Household Hazardous Wastes Grant

The Schenectady Inner City Ministry (SICM) has recently received funding from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation for "Healthy Homes — Healthy People," a project designed to address multiple environmental harms and risks to low-income, inner-city residents of Schenectady through education about Household Hazardous Wastes (HHW). SICM is seeking to fill one part-time, grant-funded position for two years. The Community Outreach Worker will work with a Program Advisory Committee on a number of initiatives. For more information and a job description, visit www.sicm.us.

SICM Programs Receive Grants

The Schenectady Damien Center received a grant from the **Hudson/Mohawk Conference of the Lutheran Church**. The Emergency Food Pantry received a grant from the **Reformed Church World Service**.

The staff at the **Open Door Bookstore** in Schenectady decided to make a donation to the SICM Food Pantry this year instead of giving gifts to each other. The donation was very much appreciated!

Rotterdam United Methodist Church donated several hundred hats, scarves and gloves from their mitten tree and other individual donations. These items were given to those in need at the Damien Center and at the Food Pantry. Thank you for helping folks stay warm during the cold winter months!

The **Princetown Hourglass Seniors** made a food and cash donation to SICM's Food Pantry in December. Thank you for helping to feed the hungry people in our community!

Many thanks to all for your kind acts of generosity!



GoodSearch

There's no reason not to.

You search... We give!

What if you could support SICM just by searching the web or shopping online? That's the idea behind GoodSearch.com and GoodShop.com, and we're pleased to say it's working! SICM received a check in November representing funds earned by our supporters who used the sites for the previous year. Thank you!



Harvest for the Pantry Fundraiser a Great Success!



On Sunday, November 9, 2008, SICM held its first-ever fundraising dinner, “Harvest for the Pantry.” The goal of the event was to raise money specifically for SICM’s Emergency Food Pantry. Local restaurants contributed a variety of foods for the dinner, and many local businesses donated goods and services for a silent auction. The event was held at the First United Methodist Church in Schenectady, where overflow of attendees from Fellowship Hall were accommodated in the Library. Entertainment was provided by musicians with local ties, George Rush and George Seror. In the adjoining room, several items were on display for the silent auction, where bidding took place throughout the evening. The organizing committee had expected about 100 people to attend, and hoped to raise \$5,000 for the pantry. To the delight of all, over 200 people attended, and \$13,000+ was raised! Watch for the 2nd Annual Harvest for the Pantry Fundraising Dinner to take place in the Fall of 2009!



Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of this event! We truly appreciate your support!

Needs and Usage of Food Pantry on the Rise

The downturn in the economy has hit everyone, including those who are food deficient. A reflection of this is shown in the dramatic rise in use of the Emergency Food Pantry. Some telling statistics:

<u>Month/Year</u>	<u>Individuals Served</u>	<u>Meals Served</u>
January 07	2,339	21,051
January 08	3,026	27,234
July 07	2,909	26,181
July 08	3,478	31,302
November 07	2,847	25,623
November 08	3,647	32,823
<u>Totals for 2007</u>	29,701	267,309
<u>Totals for 2008</u>	37,721	339,489

Mass Distribution Total for May—December 2008:

Households: 2337 Individuals: 9722

Increase in Pantry Usage from 2007 to 2008: 27%

Feb. 19, 2009

Dear SICM,

I'm giving you \$5 to buy some food for hungry people.

From Olivia Wheeler

A 6-year-old's Valentine's Day Gift is shared with SICM. Thank you, Olivia!

Damien Center News

It has been an exciting time at the Schenectady Damien Center. New guests, new volunteers, new funders, new programs! Damien's fourth quarter of 2008 has shown an increase of over 75 individuals coming to the Center for services, meals, and socializing! Here are just some of the happenings at the Center:

Aids Quilt: At this year's World AIDS Day event at the Empire State Plaza, the Schenectady Damien Center dedicated its first AIDS Quilt panel in memory of guests who have passed away from AIDS-related causes.



Over the course of two months, Damien guests worked collaboratively to design and sew the panel, which will now be displayed with other AIDS Quilt panels around the country.

Volunteers: Thank you to all the congregations who continue to support the Schenectady Damien Center by providing meals and fellowship! Monthly volunteers come from Eastern Park way UMC, St. John the Evangelist RCC, Calvary Tabernacle AOG. And we're very excited to welcome two new congregations who have just joined us—First Reformed Church of Schenectady and Woodlawn Reformed Church. And we still have days available if your church

is interested in joining our team of volunteers!

Christmas Party: More than 45 Damien Center guests braved the snow to join us for a holiday party at the



Assembly Hall at the First Reformed Church of Schenectady on December 20th. Gifts were donated by members of the SICM assembly and several churches, including the congregations of St. Adalbert's, St. Anthony's, Calvary Tabernacle, and First Reformed of Scotia, helping to brighten

the season for many! A special thanks to Christ Gallo, for help with gift-wrapping and cookie baking, Joe Doolittle, for storytelling, and Mark Mattis, for playing Santa Claus! A special year-end grant by The Schenectady Foundation also supported the event.

Upcoming Programs and Events: The new year has sparked some new programs at the Damien Center. Guests will be participating in "The Butt Stops Here," a 6-week smoking cessation course; "Spiritually Sound, Physically Fit;" a gardening workshop series with Cornell Cooperative Extension; and the continuing lunch-time emotional support group series with Amy Anderson-Reid from the AIDS Council of Northeastern New York.



Coming Soon – Summer Lunch

The flowers may not yet be in blossom, but we are once again making plans to feed the kids in Schenectady during the summer break. In our city, 70% of the children qualify for free or reduced rate lunches during the school year, and many don't have regular lunch when school is not in session. So SICM and our amazing volunteers work to make sure no child is hungry in the summertime.



Last year 67 volunteer groups (37 congregations, 19 teams from GE, and several other businesses and organizations (Bank of America, ARC, Air National Guard, Girl Scouts, etc.) all stepped forward to feed the kids. We served meals at 14 sites for the entire summer break, and provided a total of 30,750 meals. This summer we expect to see a continuing demand for this program, and likely an increase due to the economy. At SICM, we are currently selecting our sites and obtaining funding to purchase the food. If your congregation or group would like to help us feed the kids, or for more information, please contact Crys Hamelink at crys@sicm.us or by calling 374-2683.

Volunteer Opportunities

Do you have an hour a week or a month with nothing scheduled? Are you interested in becoming involved? Would you like to make a difference in the lives of members of your community? SICM is always looking for volunteers to assist with many of our programs, including the Food Pantry, the Damien Center, Summer Lunch, or help with newsletter and other mailings. For more information, check out the Volunteer Opportunities link on our website, www.sicm.us or contact the SICM Office at 374-2683. Call today to see where your time and talents can best be utilized to make a difference!



L-R: Deacon J. Neil Hook, Rev. Phil Grigsby, Peter Notch, Barbara Notch, Patricia Mahoney, Deacon Frank Thomas

New Church Covenant

At the December SICM Assembly Meeting, **Our Lady of Grace** joined the list of covenanting members of SICM. On hand for the celebration were Deacons J. Neil Hook and Frank Thomas, as well as parishioners Peter and Barbara Notch, and Patricia Mahoney, and Rev. Phil Grigsby, Executive Director of SICM.

Welcome, Our Lady of Grace!

NYS Health Commissioner Visits SICM Food Pantry

On Friday, February 6, New York State Health Commissioner Richard F. Daines, M.D., visited several sites in Schenectady to discuss health care reforms in Governor David Paterson's budget, including SICM's Emergency Food Pantry. The Commissioner's visit included a tour of the facility, and conversations with Reverend Phil Grigsby and others.



NYS Health Commissioner Richard F. Daines, M.D., and Rev. Phil Grigsby

Commissioner Daines, Rev. Van Stuart and Steve Jacobson (City of Schenectady)



Rev. Phil Grigsby gives Commissioner Daines a tour of the Food Pantry.

Rhode Island Company Makes Donation to Food Pantry

Ocean State Job Lot, based in North Kingstown, Rhode Island, made a generous contribution to the SICM Emergency Food Pantry. The company donated 10 pallets of food which was delivered directly to the Pantry at 839 Albany Street last September. *Thank you, Ocean State Job Lot!*



Thank you!



Gail Van Valkenburgh, Rev. Phil Grigsby and Gene Brousseau unload the truck of donations.

Safe Sanctuaries/Safe Church Training

This program addresses the need to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual abuse, and to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. The training will be held at Emmanuel-Friedens Church on Saturday, April 4, 2009, from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm. For more information and to register, contact Marcia Tolman, Director of Christian Education, at 374-4114 or dcemtolman@nycap.rr.com.

Delegate News



Congratulations to **Herb Shultz, Jr.** for receiving the Nonprofit Board Service Award given by the Tech Valley Nonprofit Business Council of the Albany-Colonie and Schenectady Chambers of Commerce. This award recognizes an individual or board who demonstrates effective nonprofit governance practices, exemplifies ethical voluntary leadership and creates a positive board culture that is reflective of the organization's values. *Good job, Herb!*

In Memoriam

Patricia Marie Gibbons of Niskayuna passed away on January 20, 2009. Pat was a career employee with the Schenectady County Department of Social Services, and volunteered her services to many organizations, including the SICM Food Pantry. She was one of the early members of the Project SAFE Task Force (spun off from SICM's SAFE, Inc.)



SICM Summer Internship Program

Each summer, SICM seeks potential interns and sponsors to support the Summer Internship Program. Interns come from various SICM congregations, and gain valuable experiences working with those in need in our community. Interns also meet with the internship coordinator on a regular basis to reflect on their observations and involvement. These high school and college students work at the food Pantry, Damien Center, the Summer Lunch Program, Computers for Kids, and other special projects. Congregations may sponsor an intern for \$2,500 for a student to work on

“The weeks I spent with SICM and the summer lunch program were the most amazing and life changing weeks of my life.”

-high school summer intern

average of 10 weeks in the summer. If a congregation would like to participate but does not have an intern prospect, SICM can help identify one from another congregation that may not have the funds for sponsorship. For congregations interested in sponsoring an intern, and for students wishing to apply for an internship, contact Janet Mattis at the SICM office, 374-2683 or jmattis@sicm.us.

“Working with SICM has been an incredible experience. I have learned so much and have been able to see how much these programs really do help the people of Schenectady.”

-college summer intern

Interesting Note: One summer intern changed his college major from Classical Literature to Human Services, based on his summer internship experience at SICM!



2009 Schenectady CROP Walk: Sunday, May 3, 2009

The CROP Walk is a celebration where people from all walks of life join in common cause to fight hunger here and overseas. Funds raised are used locally for food pantries and meal programs and funds overseas are used for relief, refugee resettlement, and self-help development through partner agencies or designated by contributors. Schenectady's CROP Walk has consistently been in the top 25 in the country, thanks to many supporters. Recruiters are needed to recruit others in a congregation, company, school, group, etc. A Recruiter's Workshop will be held on Monday, March 16 from 5:30-7:00pm at Emmanuel Friedens Church, 218 Nott Terrace, Schenectady. A light supper will be provided at the program, where materials will be distributed. Materials will be available afterwards at Emmanuel Friedens Church and the SICM office. Sponsored by SICM, this year's walk has a new route, starting and ending at Emmanuel Friedens Church, with parking available in the MVP Garage. For more information contact Rev. Phil Grigsby at revphil@sicm.us or call 374-2683.

100 Days of School/100 Cans of Soup

Recently the kindergarten and first grade classes of **Yates Magnet School** and **Fulton Elementary School** in Schenectady celebrated the 100th day of school. One of the ways the children celebrated



was to collect and donate 100 cans of soup to SICM to use at the Food Pantry. Each school had an assembly and a ceremony, where the cans were presented to Janet Mattis, Community Outreach Coordinator at SICM. In turn, each of the teachers received a Certificate of Appreciation.

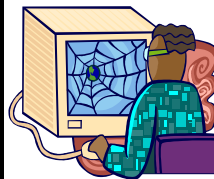
Thank you to all the students and teachers who helped collect soup to help feed hungry people in Schenectady!

Speakers Bureau

Would you like to have a member of the SICM staff speak to your group or congregation? Topics could include an overview of SICM and our programs, the Emergency Food Pantry, Summer Internships, Volunteer Opportunities, and more! If you are interested in scheduling a speaker, please call the SICM Office at 374-2683.

www.sicm.us

Check out our new and improved (and in progress!) website! We've reformatted our web page to make it easier to navigate, and we've added some new features, as well! If you are a member church and do not have an activated link from our website, please let us know your church's website url, so that we can add the link to our site.



Many thanks to **Chris Jones** of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, for leading us in this venture! Kudos, Chris!!

Dear Friends of SICM,



It remains a very busy and exciting time for SICM this winter. We received a sizable Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant to fund our new Edible Playground program headed up by Rev. Van Stuart. Further, a combination of grants and individual giving made possible the payoff of the debt on the new Food Pantry building in only two years!

We look forward to raising some new building improvement funds; the economy has increased the Pantry usage and we must also face current financing issues there. Summer Lunch planning has begun and Damien Center is the beneficiary of new leadership in the person of Dan Butterworth, with the support of First Reformed Church of Schenectady.

John Held, President

Volunteers for this Issue of SICM News

A special thanks to **Marlene Paccico**, who not only organizes the crew of mail volunteers for each newsletter mailing, but also supervises the mailing, and in her “spare time” puts labels on almost 4,000 envelopes! Others who helped with this issue include Jim Bedard, Crys Hamelink, Dan Butterworth and Sharon Carter.



Join Us for a
“Dining to Donate”
Fundraiser to benefit SICM!



Tuesday, March 17, 2009
4:00pm to 9:00pm
Applebee's Restaurant

Cambridge Road at Route 7, Schenectady

Applebee's will donate 10% of your check (excluding tax & tip) when a “Dining to Donate” voucher is presented. Get your voucher at the SICM Office, or online at www.sicm.us.

Feel free to duplicate as you wish, but remember to bring it with you on 3/17!

(vouchers will not be available at the restaurant)

*Bring your friends, spend St. Patrick's Day with us,
and contribute to a great cause!*