

SICM NEWS

Year 45, Number 2, Spring 2013

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SICM Day(s) of Service: Success Once Again!

On two Saturdays this spring, volunteers came together for the opportunity to give back to the community. On Saturday, March 9, volunteers gathered at Faith United Methodist Church to assemble Easter/Spring bags for the children using the Emergency Food Pantry. These volunteers made it possible for us to hand out over 200 Spring Bags to the children, who were able to have a nice Easter treat, thanks to the generous donations of goodies and time by many people. On Saturday, April 13, we had over 75 volunteers from local congregations, the community, and student groups from Union College and Siena College who gave of their time to help beautify some of Schenectady's parks. All of the targeted parks look much nicer and will be welcoming to the children of Schenectady when the Summer Lunch program begins on June 24. Groups, families and individuals enjoyed doing good work, giving back to their community, and having fun!

Thank you, thank you, thank you to all who helped make SICM's 3rd Annual Days(s) of Service a huge success!

Members of the Friendship Baptist Youth Group helped at Jerry Burrell Park.



Niskayuna HS students lend a hand at Wallingford Park on the Day of Service.

See more
photos of the
Day of
Service on
page 3!!

CROP Walk 2013—a Great Day!



And they're off!

The 32nd Annual Church World Service CROP Walk was held on Sunday, May 5. The weather couldn't have been more perfect for a nice walk through downtown Schenectady (including the Greenmarket!), with abundant sunshine and temperatures in the mid 70s. 500 people walked the 5K route to raise funds for food pantries, including SICM's Emergency Food Pantry. So far \$31,000 has been turned in; we hope to reach the \$55,000 goal. Thanks to all those who walked, supported walkers, and helped with the organization of the day!



The end is in sight!

More photos on page 3!

Schenectady Inner City Ministry (SICM) celebrates the partnership of 55 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 1055 Wendell Avenue, Schenectady, NY 12308 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



You Shall Have No Poor Among You

The early Hebrews were reminded in the book of Deuteronomy that what God intends for creation is

that "there shall be no poor among you." Later passages would go on to detail the vision of the Jubilee Year when all the land (read: wealth) would return to its original owner. All debts would be forgiven.

God reminds us of that vision periodically. This is especially true when we stray too far in the wrong direction.

Last October, the Times Union published that the American Community Survey (ACS, part of the Census that happens between the big ones) showed that it is likely that over half (50.8%) of the children in our city live in households whose income is below the poverty line. (I use the word 'likely' because the ACS uses sampling, it could be more or less; but even 40% is a big problem). The Times Union updated it in December as well.

In preparing for a presentation this spring on child poverty, I read research on the effects. I can give you the article. I did not know until doing research that there is, for example, a national center on child poverty not far away at Columbia University.

No one wants to hear the effects; but we need to face the truth (remember that "you shall know the truth and it shall set you free"). The effects of persistent child poverty are not just temporary. They don't just disappear if suddenly the family wins the lottery. The short summary is that if a child grows up in a household that is 'consistently poor' (definition: over half of their life in poverty) then the chances of them getting a high school degree, or not being a teen parent, or other indicators of success in later life are much less. That's simply the truth; and it frees us from the illusion that things will be better on their own. We need to do more than simply hope that a slowly improving (slowly) economy will take care of the problem. This is not a case where 'a rising tide lifts all boats.'

At the same time there is a movement in the land to face the reality of poverty through 3 major media projects. "A Place at the Table" was here recently and we hope to show it here again. We are working on getting a non-commercial license and showing it in congregations, or wherever we can. "The Line" is put out by Sojourners and deals with the poverty line. You can get it free from them, and they are working in conjunction with Bread for the World on the current Offering of Letters. "American Winter" is an HBO product looking at families living in poverty; like most of theirs it will likely be for sale soon.

Locally some are gathering under the theme of "End Poverty Schenectady" to see what we can do by coming together. The first task is to make wider awareness of the crisis; and then second what can be

(cont'd on p. 3)

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The Assembly of SICM includes one clergy and two lay delegates from all member congregations: 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), Immanuel Lutheran, Lynnwood Reformed, Messiah Lutheran, Mount Olivet Missionary Baptist, Niskayuna Reformed, Our Lady of Grace, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Lady Queen of Peace, Our Redeemer Lutheran, Refreshing Spring Church of God in Christ, Rotterdam United Methodist, St. Anthony's, St. George's Episcopal, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, 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, Woodlawn Reformed, Zion Lutheran.

Ministry Notes *(continued from page 2)*

done. It will pretty quickly get to the topics of jobs and opportunity.

In the days of Deuteronomy it was about the land; and reaching out to the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. Today it is the same (immigration reform is about the stranger) and different. We are reminded that God invites us to live in the light of that which is to come: God's vision is that there is enough for all. As a people of faith, we cannot leave it well alone.

Rev. Phil Grigsby



Congratulations, Reverend Phil and Gail!

Recently Gail Van Valkenburgh and Rev. Phil Grigsby were given the Hamilton Hill Neighborhood Association's "You Make a Difference" Award for their contributions to the neighborhood. They received awards at the HHNA's Community Awards Dinner on Saturday, March 23, at Proctor's Theatre Fenimore Gallery. Kudos to both of you!

Attention GE Matching Donors: Call in Your Donation to the GE Foundation

Unmatched GE Donations: We All Want to Double Our Gifts!

One of the blessings that SICM enjoys is the benefit of having so many donors who are GE employees and retirees. These donors qualify to have their donations matched by the GE Foundation. The only catch is that the donors must contact the Foundation in order for SICM to receive those funds. Unfortunately, SICM missed out on additional amounts of match money that was never reported to GE.

In the coming year, if you have told us you are eligible for GE Match for your donations, you may receive a few gentle reminders to please call your donations in. For example, every \$1 buys 6.25 lbs. of food—worth over \$5.00. In other areas, \$1 leverages \$4 more. SICM cannot make the match happen; please call the GE Foundation or log on to their website.

Please call the Business Office if you have any questions about your GE match.

Days of Service and CROP Walk Photos



SICM Program Updates

Food Program 2012 Food Drives/Donations (in pounds):



DATES SICM CONGREGATIONS OTHER TOTAL

January 2012	2,146	11,759	13,905
February 2012	2,254	34,343	36,597 *
March 2012	1,512	13,830	15,342
April 2012	2,304	13,022	15,326
May 2012	1,375	12,373	13,748
June 2012	1,268	11,323	12,591
July 2012	944	11,429	12,373
August 2012	1,467	14,616	16,083
September 2012	1,387	12,201	13,588
October 2012	1,773	13,223	14,996
November 2012	2,337	14,906	17,243
December 2012	1,492	12,348	13,840
YTD Totals	20,259	175,373	195,632

*shows Ocean State Job Lot donation.

Thank you to all!

Volunteer Appreciation Week

During the last week of April, the Emergency Food Pantry celebrated "Volunteer Appreciation Week" by honoring the many volunteers who give of their time on a regular basis at the pantry. Currently over 150 individuals donate their time regularly to help out by assembling bags, stocking shelves, conducting intake interviews and serving pantry guests. On average, 90 volunteers a week (or about 22 per day) help serve 100 families a day. Without their dedication and commitment, SICM would not be able to provide the service we do, to as many people as we do. Some have been volunteering for more than 20 years, and their ages span many decades, from youth to age 90+.

Thanks to Shop Rite of Niskayuna for their donation of flowers for each volunteer, and many, many thanks to ALL our volunteers!!



Annie and Annie celebrate their years of volunteering at the Emergency Food Pantry.





For nineteen years, the SICM free Summer Lunch Program has helped hungry children. Without this program, many kids would not have a regular midday meal throughout the summer. Lunches are served at locations specifically targeted to reach the largest number. At the sites, nearly 100% of the children qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. The NYS Education Department and the US Department of Agriculture fund SICM's summer lunch program by reimbursing SICM for each meal served. Lunch is available to youth 18 and under, and we expect to feed 1,000+ children each day.

SICM serves at several of the city's parks, including Quackenbush, Jerry Burrell, Central, Hillhurst, Wallingford, Steinmetz, and Front Street Pool this summer. Lunch is also provided at two of the city's municipal housing locations: Yates Village and Steinmetz Homes. Our church sites include Faith United Methodist Church (Eastern & Brandywine), Trinity Lutheran Church (Central State Street cluster, Furman Street), Friendship House (955 State Street), Mt. Olivet (Strong Street), Faith Deliverance Tabernacle (Ostrander St.), and two new church sites: Christian Empowerment Center (Chrisler Ave.), and State Street Presbyterian Church (Catherine and State Streets). Our remaining sites are: The Schenectady Public Library (Clinton St.), and the Hamilton Hill Arts Center (Schenectady St.) All sites are open to anyone age 18 and under, and there is no enrollment required. Also new this summer is a site at the Schenectady Museum (miSci) on Nott Terrace.



Summer Lunch at Jerry Burrell Park

This year, the program runs five days a week from June 24th - August 30 (not July 4), the entire duration of summer vacation. In case of rain, each site has a sheltered area. Last summer, over 34,000 meals were prepared and distributed. The food is a variety of hot lunches and cold lunches, following a menu which closely mirrors that of the meals children receive in school. All sites will be closed for the 4th of July. SICM is also working in conjunction with other programs running at sites during the summer that provide activities for children. For example, the Boys and Girls Club of

Schenectady has a program at Quackenbush, Hillhurst, and Steinmetz Parks, and the YMCA runs a day program at Jerry Burrell Park. The Hamilton Hill Art Center runs summer camp. The YWCA runs programs at the pool. In addition, we are working in conjunction with the County SCORE Camp at Central Park.

At two of the park lunch sites in Schenectady (Hillhurst and Steinmetz Park), SICM will offer its "Safe Parks/Edible Playgrounds" program, teaching children the basics of growing, cultivating, and harvesting a garden (an "edible playground"). Children will be able to participate in this program before or after summer lunch, depending on the site. More information and registration materials are available online at http://sicm.us/Parks_Playgrounds.html or at each site on the first day of the program.

SICM Summer Interns

SICM is pleased to hire college and older high school students for the Summer Internship Program. Internships are sponsored by local congregations and individuals. Interns spend up to 10 weeks working either part-time or full-time in SICM's various programs such as the Emergency Food Pantry, Edible Playgrounds, in the SICM office and—primarily—in the Summer Lunch program. In the past two summers, SICM has partnered with Home Furnishings to provide some "people power" to help them out, and we plan to do the same this summer. The

Summer Internship Program is a win-win-win-win experience: for the interns, SICM, the community, and the congregations. Interns meet as a group on a regular basis with the Internship Coordinator to discuss and reflect upon their experiences. Without our summer interns, we would not be able to accomplish all that we do.



Thank You to the interns and Thank You to our congregations and individuals sponsoring them!

The Schenectady Damien Center Transitioning

The Albany Damien Center, with SICM, continues to work on the transition of the Schenectady Damien Center to become a satellite of the Albany Damien Center. The overall plan remains to seek support (community and financial) so that the Schenectady Damien Center can open as a satellite with as many programs of the Albany Center coming to Schenectady as possible.

The goal is to secure funding so that a program manager and site coordinator can provide for a Community Center and other appropriate programs. Members currently at the Albany Center and then members joining from Schenectady would participate in the new initiatives. The Albany Damien Center utilizes a membership system which enables the program to show specific outcomes for the various programs.

The programs most likely to become part of the satellite program include the Community Center, Smart Meals, and PAWS. The Community Center, resembling the prior center, is a non-judgmental space where members can come for informal socialization and also to connect with various services. Smart Meals is conducted by a nutritionist and provides not only meals but training in better nutrition to address the reality of HIV/AIDS. PAWS stands for Pets Are Wonderful Support. The Center assists members already with pets (they do not provide new ones) for their care and well-being. Some former Schenectady participants currently take part in the PAWS program.

Currently the Schenectady site is used several times weekly by programs from Mohawk Opportunities and the AIDS Council for nutrition programs and various support group meetings.

If you would like to help with this transition, or for more information, contact SICM or Perry Junjulas at the Albany Damien Center.



SICM Staff Update

SICM is happy to welcome Debbie Visco as our new Office Administrator. Debbie is no stranger to us or our location—she has been the Office Manager for Union Presbyterian Church (our current location!) for the past 12 years. As of now, Debbie is working part-time for the church, and part-time for SICM. Welcome, Debbie! We're glad you're here!



Barbara Paul, our previous Office Administrator, has departed from SICM to pursue other opportunities with another organization. We wish her well!

We are glad that Allison Williams has returned as SICM's Summer Lunch Coordinator after the winter break.

**Mark your calendar
for the**

**6th Annual
Harvest for the Pantry*
Sunday, November 3
4-7pm**

First Reformed Church of Scotia

**Silent Auction items now being accepted!*



In the fall, Rev. Phillip Grigsby was invited and he continues to serve on the Superintendent's Equity and Excellence Committee (SEEC) which is looking at data and policy issues in the City's School District. The group, which has a diversity of membership, is looking to develop a form of a 'report card' for the district that can be updated each year. SEEC will report to the Superintendent before the summer.

At the April Assembly, SICM welcomed Superintendent Larry Spring who spoke on the range of challenges facing the district. Scheduled to talk for 20 minutes, he was engaged over an hour later! After many challenges of leadership in the district, Superintendent Spring brings an important vision and message. He spoke to delegates and guests from congregations (100+ attended) about the need to address the funding formulas and to work together on the issues of 'majority minority districts.' For further information, you are encouraged to check out his material available through the district's internet site: www.schenectady.k12.ny.us.

In February, SICM welcomed Erin Bruckenmeyer who presented on the 'U Matter Schenectady' campaign. This effort sprang from the earlier group convened around the Medical Home, which began in part with SICM's efforts in the Community Crisis Network. Saying that "collaboration is the norm of the day," CEO Jim Connelly brought back from a conference a survey and method that strengthened community wellness in some Chicago neighborhoods. It is not just another survey; the results will be used to assess potential wellness and neighborhood initiatives.

A number of SICM members were involved in late 2012 and early 2013 in the reform of the Schenectady Civilian Review Board ordinance. Rev. Phil Grigsby was involved in setting up the original one with the late Public Safety Commissioner Charlie Mills and Dr. Carl Taylor, among others. It had been updated once previously. The current revision updates the membership of the committee, streamlines some of the processes, and addresses some recent issues. The Board, which came from police-community issues in the late 1980s, is an effort to provide a mechanism to provide civilian oversight of the police and complaints. In addition to providing an objective review of police response to civilian complaints, it also makes recommendations for improving police and community relations. Both the Mayor and new Police Chief have expressed strong support for the board.

Rev. Phil Grigsby also testified before the NYS Food Policy Council that had one of its twice yearly meetings in Kinderhook. He asked that the council look at ways to enhance summer lunch programs, and to see if the benefit card available to those on public assistance and food stamps (now called SNAP) could be used for WIC as well.

Several SICM members are involved in the effort to start Patty's Place which is now or soon will be operating two evenings a week to provide a safe place from the streets for sex workers. The group began from a group of clergy asking what could be done for those working on the streets but beyond the age range for Project SAFE. For further information, contact Rev. Stacey Midge or Rev. Phil. Contributions for this effort, which is largely a volunteer one, can be made through the SICM office and marked 'Patty's Place.'

MAZON Renews and Expands Support for SICM Advocacy Efforts

SICM recently was awarded \$12,000 from MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger to support the various food related advocacy work that SICM provides leadership for. They support hunger-fighting advocacy efforts (usually not relief) through voluntary contributions related to weddings and celebrations in congregations. Efforts this year include, for example, SICM's participation in the NYS Lobby Day in March. SICM, with many others coordinated by the Hunger Action Network of NYS, provided information to policy makers on the need to retain the funding for the Hunger Prevention program as a separate item, increase the minimum wage, and other concerns. SICM is very grateful to the local synagogues that participate and for the confidence of the national group to expand funding in the midst of great need. MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger is a national nonprofit organization working to end hunger in the United States and Israel (www.mazon.org).

Through My Eyes *by Jack Sweeney, Assistant Director*

Child Poverty a Major Concern in Schenectady

Two articles in the Times Union (TU) late last year focused a harsh light on childhood poverty in Schenectady. An October piece showed Schenectady being near the top of a national list of cities based on the rate of childhood poverty. Our “Place Beyond the Pines” was listed with a child poverty rate of 50.8% and was ranked number 13 nationally. It’s difficult to accept the fact that over half of Schenectady’s children (age 17 or younger) are living in poverty.

A December TU article looked at the changes in poverty rates for school-age children between 2010 and 2011. A number of local school districts experienced disturbing increases in poverty rates just in that one-year period, with Schenectady going from 28.8% in 2010 to 40% in 2011 – a huge jump.

The recent economic downturn hit Schenectady families and children hard. The long-term unemployed and families living in poverty before and during the recession have not shared very much, if at all, in the recovery. Agencies operating food programs such as SICM’s and other support services for low-income and poverty families and individuals have been doing as much as possible to meet these needs and will have to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

However, it is important to recognize that operations like our Pantry are plugging gaps that are day-to-day in nature. People have to eat. People need shelter. Struggling working parents need child care support in order to hold on to what work they can get. It is equally important (if not more so) to also examine the long-term impacts of this devastating poverty, especially on children.

Many of you are aware of the federally-funded free or reduced cost lunch support provided by our schools to low income children. The percent of children receiving such assistance is often used as a measure of the degree to which a district is serving low-income families. That percentage for the Schenectady schools is over 80%, again a dramatically high figure. At our March Assembly, we were moved by a talk given by Schenectady’s new Superintendent, Larry Spring, on equity and excellence in Schenectady’s schools. Superintendent Spring states this free and reduced cost lunch measure in a much more meaningful way. He indicated that each and every school day over 80% of the children are coming to school not ready to learn. These kids often are hungry and look to the food provided at school as nutrition they rely on. This lack of sufficient nutritious food, the concern caused by uncertainty over what they will have to eat, and their very real hunger all contribute to a reduced ability to concentrate and perform well, resulting in kids coming to school not ready to learn. The long-term consequences of this day-to-day reality are predictable and include increased likelihood of a continuing poverty cycle.

SICM will continue to operate our Food Pantry and increase our support there anytime we can. We will also continue to operate our Summer Lunch Program where we provide free lunches in parks and other locations throughout Schenectady to the children who receive such lunches during the school year. We are all too aware that our best efforts at these Summer Lunch sites are not reaching all kids who are served by the school district during the school year. We estimate that we serve approximately 1,000 children daily. But there are probably close to 8,000 children who receive these lunches every school day. Ask yourself, “what are these children getting for lunch all summer?”



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You can find lots of information about SICM on our website? Check it out!

www.sicm.us