

SICM NEWS

Year 45, Number 3, Summer 2013

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Niskayuna Co-op Hosts Summer Carnival, Raises Money for Food Pantry

On Saturday, July 20, there was a flurry of activity outside the Co-op on Nott Street in Niskayuna, as people of all ages came out on a beautiful summer day to partake in the many activities offered at the Summer Carnival. There

were food tastings, a Bounce House and even live musical entertainment to enjoy. The highlight of the day was a Silent Auction, featuring items and services donated by local businesses and individuals, including Ambition, SJCC, Union College, Star-



Ben Wallach, Co-op Marketing Manager, presents Rev. Phil Grigsby with a check for \$522.41.

bucks, Niskayuna Wine & Liquor, Manhattan Nail & Spa, Niskayuna Barber Shop, and more. Food Vendors included Tara's Kitchen, Olive Naturally, 3 Chicks and a P Hummus, Smart Chicken, Meesh's Marinara, Our Daily Eats, Gatherer's Granola, Buck's Maple Syrup and more. Proceeds from the Auction topped \$500, which helped to purchase over 3,000 lbs. of food for the Food Pantry.



SICM Summer Interns Peter Krauss and Devon Dare staff the SICM Outreach Table.

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This just in. . .
2013 Summer Lunch
Program Sets
All-time Record!

We served over **53,500**
lunches this summer, up
from 34,600 in 2012!
That's an increase of
**54%! See page 4 for the
full story.**

Thanks to all who helped support the cause!

Wider SICM News

In the fall of 2012, Rev. Phillip Grigsby was invited and he continues to serve on the Superintendent's Equity and Excellence Committee (SEEC) which is addressing policy issues in the City's School District through a data driven process. While the results are still in formation, Rev. Grigsby was part of the team that presented to the Superintendent and administrators on initial recommendations and findings. The mandate of SEEC is to review potential equity issues in the areas of race, poverty, and disability.

At the May Assembly, SICM welcomed CEO Jim Connelly of Ellis Medicine who spoke on the challenges facing the community and the health care system here in particular. The day he went for an interview they announced the Berger



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(cont'd on page 7)

Schenectady Inner City Ministry (SICM) celebrates the partnership of 54 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

SEEC and You Will Find



Last fall I was invited to serve on the new Superintendent of Schenectady Schools' committee – the Superintendent's Equity and Excellence Committee. When you get this kind of invite it is always an honor. But until you get into it, you have to see if it is worth the time. Will it make a difference? Is there a hidden agenda?

The short answers are yes and no. As we heard the Superintendent speak at our Assembly, he was very direct about the challenges facing the District. He is serious about addressing the equity issues. His invitation letter did not mince words: it said there are serious inequities. Our task was to use data to identify issues and make recommendations.

All of us came with our individual experiences and anecdotal information. We all had opinions about problems and solutions. We were challenged to look at the data. Since I majored in economics, I am comfortable looking at data. But we looked at data...and then more...and then more. We have binders of data.

It had to be a data-driven process

because we are dealing with very 'hot button' issues. Poverty is challenging; but then add race and disability to the mix. Sure, why not!

We looked first at the most difficult area: race. We found a template that provides some measurement of how the district is doing in terms of racial justice and inequities. We are recommending this template to be used every year. Because the recommendations are not yet public, I cannot say much here but we all know there is much work to be done. The committee is meeting again to refine templates on poverty and disability issues.

It was most interesting in that we were asked not only to present to the Superintendent but also to the group of 50 or so administrators. They are the group that will be most involved in accepting and carrying out the recommendations. FYI it was four of us – Diane Hermann, a former school board member and interestingly three clergy – Rev. Al Thompkins of Calvary Tabernacle, Rev. Valerie Ackerman and myself (about 10 stayed actively involved, we were 4 who could make the meeting with preparation). Our meeting coincided with the public discussion about the Tryvon Martin verdict, including the President's personal comments on race. You will not be surprised to know that we felt we were on the same page: race matters (to borrow the title of Cornell West's book and still worth reading).

The key challenge in addressing race is whether each one us, and our systems, believe that we can be color blind, or whether there is structural racism. We wish for the former because we want the difficult past to be over. We wish for the former because we now have an African American President. But alas when we look at data we find that with the best of intentions (or so we hope) the results are very uneven.

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SCHENECTADY INNER CITY MINISTRY

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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, 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 Community, 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 *(cont'd from page 2)*

They are still too separate and too unequal. So, for example, we have a school system that has majority students of color and a very small percentage of teachers of color (and the dimensions of that are very interesting but not space today for it).

Some recent articles locally focused on the relation of poverty and education. One of the areas I enjoyed with the committee was to read various research-based articles that identify 'best practices.' It is too easy to conclude that since most of the students are poor that they cannot succeed. It is too easy to see the barriers as too high. We looked at some other places – for example New Haven, CT, Cincinnati Ohio – that are developing high performing schools in high poverty areas. It can be done, and has been done. It is not simply a matter of money, but certainly funding helps. In most cases it calls for the use of best practices and a comprehensive strategy. All of them call for a vision that all students can succeed (one of the models in Harlem is described in Nothing is Impossible – the title describes it well, but check it out!).

In the Isaiah Vision it is God's intent that children do not die (check out Isaiah 65); not only physically, but to die emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, etc. As a people of faith, we cannot leave it well alone.

Rev. Phil Grigsby

SICM Staff Updates

In June we said farewell to longtime staff member Noralee Itchoak. Noralee worked at SICM for the past seven years as backroom coordinator at the Food Pantry. Noralee helped to guide the volunteers in their work assignments, and trained many people in "pantry volunteering!" She has headed northwest to reside in Alaska, where her children currently live. We wish you the best, Noralee!



Farewell,
Noralee!



Welcome, James!

We welcome James Frasier as the newest member of the SICM family. James has assumed responsibilities as the Food Room/Volunteer Coordinator at the Food Pantry, where he previously worked through the Experience Works program. James was born and raised in Rotterdam., and says he now is "in the right place at the right time!" Glad to have you on board, James!

Donations Needed!

The Emergency Food Pantry has an immediate and consistent need for the following:

- *paper products (toilet paper, paper towels, tissues, napkins)
- *diapers (especially large sizes)
- *personal hygiene items (feminine products, deodorant, shampoo, toothpaste, etc.)

Please consider holding a food or non-food drive at your church, school or civic group for the Pantry. Contact Shennan (346-4445) or Janet (374-2683) with questions. ***We hope you can help!***



SICM Program Updates

Summer Lunch: Expansion in 2013

Summer Lunch Growing and the Lunch Wagon a Hit! Collins Park Open Again Thanks to Campus Kitchens!

The SICM Summer Food Service Program (Summer Lunch) provides critical nutritional assistance to thousands of our community's young people 18 and under. This year with broad support we expanded to 23 sites, up from 16 previously. One of the sites is a closed site (Headstart), but all the rest are available to all.

Under the leadership of Allison Williams, literally hundreds of volunteers, staff, and interns work to provide nutritious lunches (1,500+ daily) to youth who otherwise would get a free lunch during the school year. 80% of the youth in the Schenectady City School District qualify for free or reduced price meals.



Congressman Paul Tonko joins Rev. Phil Grigsby (L) and Summer Lunch Site Coordinator George Warner (R) in a recent visit to the Summer Lunch Wagon.

The major development this year is the new Summer Lunch Wagon, a mobile site. With financial support from the United Way of the Greater Capital Region, SICM started a mobile site using a rented small school bus. This is a pilot program; we discovered it was also the first in upstate New York. Starting the first day with 42 lunches, the wagon has grown to over 300 on some days! The Summer Lunch Wagon makes a series of brief (10 minute) stops at various locations such as Zoller School, MacGathan Townhouses, etc. We also began using 'shelf able' meals. This year they are a choice of either a peanut butter and jelly sandwich or a tuna and crackers package. If not served on the particular day, they have a shelf life so they can be used, for example, later in the week. All summer lunch sites are using these on Mondays, offering a choice.

Another major development this year is the re-opening of the Collins Park site in Scotia. This was an eligible site about 10 years ago but changed when the administration of the summer lunch program changed to the site.

To be an 'open' site, i.e. any are eligible, the site needs to be adjacent to a school with more than 50% of the students qualifying for free and reduced price lunch.

We are very grateful to the Campus Kitchens at Union College who agreed to prepare and staff the site at Collins Park this summer. They are a project that has prepared meals during the school year for the City Mission of Schenectady. Initiated by Union College recent graduate Tori Chee, the program takes left over food from the campus and makes meals. The Collins Park site is not part of the vendored program through SICM and therefore has a different menu.

SICM this year has a number of new sites: Christ Centered Unity Church on Brandywine, Hamilton Hill Arts Center, New Consecration Temple on State Street, New Day Empowerment Center on Chrisler, MiSci, and State Street Presbyterian. New sites last year continued, including the Schenectady County Public Library, Faith Deliverance Tabernacle in Mt. Pleasant, and the Front Street Pool in the Stockade neighborhood.

A further development was the selection of a new vendor, Whitson's Food Service, through a prescribed competitive bidding process. Whitson's is the successor to Sodexo at the Schenectady City School District; the kitchen is at Schenectady High School. The new menu includes both hot and cold meals, with pizza each Friday.

In early July SICM hosted a Kick Off to the program, held at Jerry Burrell Park. Those speaking included the CEO of United Way, Brian Hassett, Mayor Gary McCarthy, Tori Chee of Campus Kitchens, Superintendent Larry Spring, Scott Stowell of Whitson's and others. The 'Bouncy Bounce' was a hit with big and small kids alike!

The special grant from United Way was granted to three summer



Rev. Grigsby receiving a citation from Yochanan Bertos of Assemblyman Santabarbara's office.

lunch programs in the region to help support expansion. In SICM's case, the grant provides funding for not only the Lunch Wagon but also for site supervisors, to encourage continuity at sites.



Summer Lunch at Central Park.

While we celebrate the 1,500 lunches given out each day over 10 weeks, our concern remains that at least another 6,500 qualify and do not get the nutrition they need in the summer. The SICM Food Program is always busier in the summer as youth are at home. As the October 2012 Times Union article indicated, 50.8% of the children in the city live in households below the poverty line. For too many of the young people who come, it is not only the first meal of the day, it is the only meal.

Summer Interns

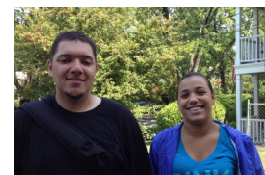
This summer, 15 high school and college students joined the SICM staff to perform a variety of duties. Some college students started in May to help get things organized for the Summer Lunch program, and most started with the onset of the lunch program in late June or early July. Interns assisted with morning prep work, working at lunch sites, cleaning up in the afternoons and assorted other tasks. They also assisted at the Emergency Food Pantry, and some helped out at the Home Furnishings Program, either in the office or at the warehouse, sorting donations and making deliveries. The interns had some amazing experiences and gained many skills which will be useful in their future endeavors. We are grateful to the sponsoring congregations and individuals who financially supported the interns, and they include: Austin & Marti Spang, First Reformed Church of Schenectady, Lynnwood Reformed, Niskayuna Reformed, Bellevue Reformed, St. George's Episcopal, Trinity

Presbyterian, Union Presbyterian, and St. Kateri Tekakwitha. We are equally grateful to the interns for all their hard work, dedication and incredible flexibility.

Thank you!!!



SICM Interns, Summer 2013-
Back row, L to R: Chris Murphy, Devon Dare, Peter Krauss, Matthew Kellish, Anna Winters, Eileen Ploetz, Rebecca Rose, Katherine Quinn
Front row, L to R: Emily Cogswell, Olivia Golden, Emily Massey, Elizabeth Gallagher, Anna Mattis



SICM Interns
 Corey Chaires,
 Cheyenne Clarke



Food Program

Sacred Heart/St. Columba's Pantry Transitions to SICM

The former Sacred Heart/St. Columba's Food Pantry featured home delivery monthly, a ministry led faithfully by Sr. Rosemary. Last year the program transitioned to SICM, and it currently provides help for approximately 30 individuals, including transportation home (call 346-4445 if you are in need of this service). At their most recent meeting, Fr. Hogan and parish members of St. Joseph's (who were responsible for the ministry) presented \$5,000 to Rev. Phil to help defray the costs of the program. SICM is deeply grateful for this partnership in ministry!

Food Pantry Statistics:	<u># of Individuals Served</u>	<u># of Meals Served</u>
Jan-June 2012	23,370	210,330
Jan-June 2013	25,586	229,824



Update on The Schenectady Damien Center

You Can Help with the Upcoming AIDS Walk on September 28

The Schenectady Damien Center (SDC), which is under the SICM umbrella and located at 615 Nott Street, continues in transition. The plan is to transition the program to become a satellite of the Albany Damien Center (ADC). Both serve individuals and families either infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS. The SDC came to SICM about 20 years ago in the midst of the AIDS pandemic. Originally the centers in Albany, Schenectady, and Troy were one program but then separated. In a way we are working on “back to the future.”



The SDC is open now only for special programming, including uses by the ADC, Mohawk Opportunities, and the AIDS Council. The ADC has hosted the PAWS Program, Pets are Wonderful Support. Mohawk Opportunities has hosted a regular support group. The AIDS Council has hosted several sessions of their Food4Life Program that teaches nutrition, and several support groups.

The ADC staff has formed linkages with local partners, most notably Ellis Health. Ellis has offered to focus on the SDC start up in their efforts in 2014. This could lead to support from other health partners. One major challenge for all involved with HIV/AIDS work are the major changes in the health care system due to the Affordable Care Act. The proposed changes have and will alter all the financing mechanisms for all the providers. HIV/AIDS is now seen increasingly as a chronic disease, and many of the special provisions either have been broadened or changed.

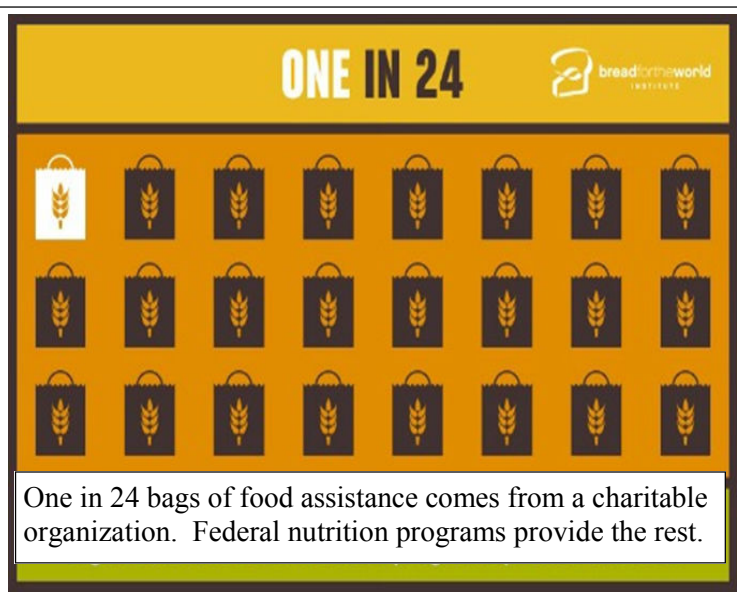
At this point, several new resources have been secured, and future plans will be announced. In the meantime, any in need of services are encouraged to join the Albany Damien Center, 12 South Lake in Albany, very close to several bus lines.

The AIDS Walk is set for **Saturday September 28** at noon in Washington Park in Albany. 100% of funds raised by the Schenectady Damien Center will be used for the new program; if we raise over a certain amount additional funds are matched. Last year's event also supported the transition, and all are invited. Information is available either through SICM or directly from www.caresny.org. CARES coordinates the AIDS Walk, now in its 17th year.

For updates on the transition, contact Rev. Phil at SICM or Perry Junjulas at the Albany Damien Center.

Did You Know. . .

This 1 in 24 graphic is reprinted from the WHY Hunger Clearinghouse but was first developed by Bread for the World in the 2013 Hunger Report “Within Reach Global Development Goals.” While we can be glad for the amount of emergency food provided in our country by faith-based and private groups (1 in 24 bags), this graphic addresses the belief that the private sector either does or can do it all. Good – bad – indifferent - or whatever your belief, “We the People” through various levels of government provide for the hungry in our nation. For more information, check out www.bread.org.



Commission Report that led to the consolidation into one health system from three locally. He spoke to delegates and guests from congregations (75+ attended) about the need to look more broadly through collaborations with community based groups such as SICM to address broader health issues. The SICM Assembly previously heard about the U Matters survey which will lead to a community health plan. Rev. Grigsby and Jack Sweeney are active members of the coalition. Mr. Connelly spoke about the development and path for the Medical Home with the use of navigators to help individual better access services. Ellis is also partnering with SICM for support of the Schenectady Damien Center.

Rev. Phil Grigsby was a panelist on a national webinar in July coordinated by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). FRAC is a leader in advocacy and information on all the federal food programs. This program was focused on the Summer Food Service Program, and was set up in the summer to focus on troubleshooting for sponsors. SICM's program was also listed on the FRAC site for our efforts with the new mobile site (Summer Lunch Wagon) and the innovative involvement of volunteers.

SICM is providing leadership for the End Poverty Schenectady coalition. Members of the Human Rights Commission were struck by the high rate of child poverty and are working with others to address the overall issue of poverty in our community. The goal is to cut poverty in half here in ten years. Councilwoman Marion Porterfield is very involved as well as Northeast Parent and Child Society. The coalition has sponsored three community forums/panels on the themes of the dimensions of poverty, jobs, and youth. The group is also working on an idea for a community café that would provide an introduction to the world of work. The main source of information is through their Facebook page; a showing of A Place At the Table is planned for this fall; please check www.sicm.us for details.

Several SICM members are involved in the effort to start Patty's Place which now operates 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. SICM is acting as the Fiscal Agent for this coalition, and all donations received will go 100% for this effort. 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.'



The Last Word *by Rev. Stacey Midge, SICM President*

Hillary Clinton famously quoted (and titled her book after) an African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." We saw this in action this summer, as hundreds of volunteers flocked to parks and churches to serve lunches to the children of Schenectady. Along with nourishing meals, they served up plenty of smiles, laughs, and hugs - signs of something even more important than food, signs that someone *cares*. A whole village of people care, and are in it together when it comes to making sure that none of our kids goes hungry.

It takes a village working together to make our community strong, and we are the village. Many of you are the volunteers who served Summer Lunch, or you are the people who staff the food pantry throughout the year, or you participated in a Day of Service or walked in the CROP Walk. Thank you for being the village, for raising the children, for improving life for those in need, and for us all.

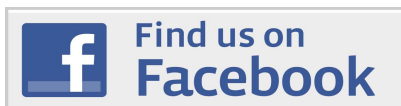
Continuing to meet the growing needs of our community will take a village as well, and so I invite you to consider how you might give your time and energy in the coming months. Will you walk in the AIDS Walk, or sponsor someone who does? Join the volunteers at the food pantry? Write letters to elected officials? Sell tickets or collect auction items for the Harvest for the Pantry dinner? There are numerous ways to participate in the ministries of SICM; feel free to contact me or Rev. Phil anytime to ask how you can get more involved. It takes a village, and together we can help our community grow and thrive.

Schenectady Inner City Ministry

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****SAVE THE DATES***SAVE THE DATES****



AIDSWalk

Saturday, September 28, 2013
Washington Park Lakehouse
Albany, New York

11AM Registration; 12PM Walk Begins
Register online at www.caresny.org



Harvest for the Pantry

A fundraising dinner for the Emergency Food Pantry

Sunday, November 3, 2013
4:00-7:00PM

First Reformed Church of Scotia
224 N. Ballston Avenue

