

Wilkinsburg Community Ministry

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Wilkinsburg Community Ministry

Churches United - Serving Together

The Well – Spring/Summer 2007

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Spring/Summer 2007

“For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1

SPRINGTIME 2007 BRINGS EXCITING CHANGES FOR WCM

As you'll read in the next pages, there have been a number of significant changes occurring at Wilkinsburg Community Ministry since our last issue of "The Well." WCM is now emerging from this very challenging period with great hopes for the future. Although WCM has been changing, the continuing needs of the residents of Wilkinsburg have not changed, so there's plenty of work to be done. We're extremely pleased to announce that we will be welcoming a new Executive Director on May 14.

Mrs. Robyn Aguzzi will be moving to Pittsburgh to join WCM's staff as Executive Director. Robyn obtained her Bachelor Degree in Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh where her studies focused on children and families, and her Masters Degree in Social Work from Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, where her focus was administration, policy and planning. She was on the Dean's List at both schools.

Her work experience includes being managing director of a Trenton, NJ agency that specializes in job training and housing assistance; case manager for Big Brothers, Big Sisters in a large town in New Jersey; and Assistant Director of Youth Ministries at a Pittsburgh church. Please welcome Robyn to WCM and help her in any way you can.



AN UPDATE FROM THE WCM BOARD OFFICERS

WCM Board President:

As my first official act as President I want to thank the Officers and Executive Committee of WCM for their faithful service over the past five years. You have been overwhelming in the execution of your duties and in your belief in WCM and its goals and objectives.

In moving forward, I would like us to concentrate on part of our recently revised bylaws, Section II - Purpose. "The purpose of WCM shall be to provide an effective and meaningful community ministry to all of the families and individuals residing in the borough of Wilkinsburg ... with the primary concern being to mediate the saving grace of God as revealed in Jesus Christ..." Friends, to me this is the Mission Statement of WCM! We have a job to do! Pray with us that God will grant us the strength, determination, and faith to carry out this His Mission.

I am also very grateful to the Search Committee for their tireless, and successful efforts in finding a new Executive Director for WCM. The Chair was Gail Gratton. The other committee members were: James Garner, Veronica Lucious, Rev. David Keller, Kathy Sweeney, and Larry Viehland. Our New Executive Director, Robyn Aguzzi is to start on Monday, May 14!!!

Jack Peffer

Acting Executive Director:

In January 2007, WCM was left without an Executive Director. It was an unexpected event and the Executive Board appointed me as Acting Executive Director while a search committee could be formed and a new Executive Director selected. The Board discovered in January that we were substantially behind in the updating of our certification required by the government, and we were behind in submitting requests for payments for Meals-On-Wheels and the Food Program. The operation of WCM depends on the generosity of individuals and churches, but we also receive substantial government funds to operate both programs. These programs provide food to over 100 senior citizens and youth per day so they require volunteer and WCM employees for preparation and delivery of meals.

Since January 2007, the WCM staff with volunteer help has worked very hard to correct these deficiencies while maintaining service to our clients. Anita McKeithen has worked diligently with the Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging to collect money for previous months services performed and to re-establish our monthly billing cycle. We continue to pursue some unresolved payments with the Pennsylvania Department of Aging portion of Meals-On-Wheels.

Ed McDonald of South Avenue United Methodist Church volunteered to review and re-establish WCM's agreement with the State Food Program. The Food Program provides lunch, snacks and/or dinner to PLEA (Parents League for Emotional Adjustment), Boy & Girls Club and First Presbyterian Church of Edgewood After School Program. The meal cost is paid by the State. Ed has done an excellent job of working with the State to get this program re-established and we are again receiving State funds. The Board sincerely thanks Ed for his efforts.

The Food Program is separate from WCM's Hunger/Urban Survival Program, Emergency Food Pantry and Angel Food Ministry. Raymond Tolbert continues to operate these programs as is reported in this newsletter. Raymond has been a great help during this period with the day-to-day office operation.

The core programs at WCM are operating well, but as always, there is much room for improvement. I have been a Board member for several years, but I got a different perspective as Acting Director. I'm more encouraged than ever at the potential for WCM to help those in need in Wilkinsburg. Without question, the member churches can amplify their mission outreach by acting as a group through WCM, instead of as an individual church. I hope everyone will continue to generously support the Wilkinsburg Community Ministry.

Tom Ochs

Former WCM Board President:

It's been an exciting six months around WCM. You can find information about our programs, staff changes, and other exciting things in the other reports in this issue of The Well. Here I want to focus on the negotiations involved with where our offices would be.

Mulberry Presbyterian Church decided in October 2006 that they would not be able to remain open, and we were given an official letter indicating that WCM and the other programs housed in their building would have to leave by November 30. We had several meetings of the Executive Committee about this, and there was both a special WCM Board meeting and a regular Board meeting in November devoted primarily to the issue of where we would go. Rev. Payne, Aaron Mickens and I toured four possible sites where we could relocate and reported our findings to the Board. The final decision was that 815 Wood Street was the best site available, given our needs and the state of our finances.

With the assistance of Gail Gratton, who is an attorney, I set out to negotiate a lease for the new site, which some of you may know, because at one time it housed the magistrate's offices. We reached agreement on many terms, including the rent, but not on all items in the lease that they offered us. Thus, we had not signed an agreement even as late as the week after Thanksgiving. Fortunately, we had been informed that there was a potential purchaser of the church and that we didn't have to leave until December 15.

Rev. Marcus Harvey, the CEO of Strength, Inc., which is purchasing the church, contacted Aaron Mickens and indicated that he wanted us to remain where we are. We had yet another meeting of the Executive Committee, which Rev. Harvey attended. He left after making a long presentation to us, and we spent another long period of time trying to decide what to do. The final decision was to quit negotiating with the owners of 815 Wood Street, remain where we are until at least the end of January, and use January to try to negotiate a long-term lease with Strength, Inc.

It took a bit longer to negotiate a new lease than either party expected, but effective April 1 our rent has been increased slightly and we have moved out of some of the space that we had previously occupied. The loss of space is not significant, because at the present time we don't have as many staff members as in years past. The new lease runs through June. The reason for such a short lease is that Strength, Inc. has to make a final, very substantial, payment to Mulberry Presbyterian Church in May. Once that payment has been made, things will be much clearer for both of us.

I'm writing this report at the end of April, so that's the situation at the moment. If you want an update about the situation, please call the WCM Office at 412-241-8072 or call me at home (412-362-0220) in the evening. With God's help, we hope to continue providing services to the people of Wilkinsburg from our present location on Mulberry Street.

Larry A. Viehland

SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMS HELP MEET ON-GOING LOCAL NEEDS

Food Pantry Statistics from Raymond Tolbert

	Oct. '06	Nov. '06	Dec. '06	Jan. '07	Feb. '07	Mar. '07
Households served:	8	11	8	12	25	5
Individuals served:	14	28	24	35	39	9
Age of individuals:						
0-17	4	12	8	14	18	3
18-34	3	5	7	4	7	1
35-59	7	11	9	17	14	4
60+	0	0	0	0	0	1

The WCM Food Pantry continues to offer assistance to the needy in Wilkinsburg, serving an average of 12 families a month.

Participation in the monthly Angel Food Ministries program has been steadily growing. The “menu” for May includes 17 items for the low cost of just \$25.00. Distribution day is Saturday May 26, 2007 at South Avenue United Methodist Church between 9:30 AM and 12:30 PM. Participants must bring a large box to hold the food. South Avenue United Methodist Church is located at 733 South Avenue.

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR ‘SERVICES FOR SENIORS’ PROGRAM



Ms. Anita McKeithen joined the WCM Staff on November 30, 2006 as its new part-time coordinator of our long-standing Meals on Wheels Program, which supplies a lunch and a hot dinner five days, a week to shut-ins and others unable to prepare their own meals. She is responsible for registering applicants, assigning them to a route, and notifying Life Care Hospital (the preparer of the meals) of changes in the routes. Anita is a native of Atlanta, Georgia, has taken classes at CCAC, and now resides in Wilkins Township. What she likes most about her position are the opportunity for social service in the community and the pleasant working conditions.

Meals on Wheels has continued to serve the needy through a difficult winter season, with nearly 5000 meals being delivered in the past 5 months. **Drivers are still desperately needed for Meals on Wheels Routes.** It usually takes 8 volunteers per day to deliver meals, so we’re always looking for new volunteers. For more information, please contact Anita at 412-241-8072.

Special thanks to a long-time Meals on Wheels volunteer. Sam Harper, from Mifflin Avenue United Methodist Church will resign as Treasurer of the Meals on Wheels Committee on June 30, 2007. He’s been a faithful and tireless volunteer for many, many years and WCM greatly appreciates his dedication and thoroughness toward this vital ministry.

SPECIAL EVENT COMING UP SOON!

Many of you have no doubt participated in WCM's annual musical celebration "Wilkinsburg Sings at Christmas." This year we're inviting everyone to an all-new "Spring Sing." Plan now to join us at the Christian Church of Wilkinsburg on Sunday, May 20 as we praise God in music!

Spring Sing
sponsored by
Wilkinsburg Community Ministry
at the
Christian Church of Wilkinsburg
748 Wallace Avenue
7:00 P.M. Sunday, May 20, 2007
Choirs from six area churches will
PRAISE THE LORD!
Come and lift your voices with them.

YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER

You have read in this and past issues of "The Well" about the many wonderful things we are doing to help those in need. A large portion of our support comes from area individuals and businesses and we hope you'll consider making a new or additional contribution at this time. Please use the form below and send your tax-deductible contribution to WCM, 710 Mulberry St., Pittsburgh, PA 15221. WCM also participates in the Contributor Choice program of the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania. To designate WCM at work, simply fill in part D-1 of your pledge form. Our agency code is **242**. Please be sure to check "yes" at the bottom of the form so that your gift can be acknowledged.

I/We want to join in your efforts to help others and give those who are less fortunate an opportunity to live with dignity, and will subscribe the following amount:

\$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 \$200 Other \$ _____ Date: _____

Payable: Enclosed \$ _____ Monthly \$ _____ Quarterly \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

____ No thank you is needed
____ Please consider this
gift to be anonymous.