

The Echo

Inside This Edition...

Letter From the President	1
Helping Hands Ministry	2
Helping Hands Fundraiser— Please help! Volunteer!	3
CompuPlace	4
Agency Housing Highlight	5
Margaret Bock Housing	6
Returning Prisoner Simulation Invitation	6
ECC Board of Directors	6
ECC News & Recognition & Development Director's Corner	7
Wish Lists	8

Letter From the President

We have had a long winter and spring seems overdue. It was wonderful to see the sunlight on Easter morning! The season of Easter is a time of reflection as well as hope and joy. On behalf of the Ecumenical Community Center I want to thank all of you who make possible all that the Ecumenical Center does.

The ECC leases kitchen, dining and meeting space to Greensquare Meals and the Witwer Senior Center for \$1 a year. The hundreds of thousands of meals served annually and the social opportunities they furnish are made possible in part because of your support of the Ecumenical Center.

Likewise, your support helps ECC provide reduced-cost office space for several other non-profit organizations, including Foman infant care, The Tapestry program, the SERRV store and Cedar Rapids Aquatics.

CompuPlace is working on expanding its computer opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Ecumenical Center is excited about serving more people and working with more local agencies to provide the individualized access CompuPlace provides.

The first and largest program of the Ecumenical Center continues to grow. Helping Hands Ministry receives 800 calls a month for assistance and, thanks to you, provides some \$6,000 in monthly financial aid. In addition, HHM provides information, referrals and counseling. Helping Hands Ministry continues to administer 'first month's rent' programs for Linn county and the city of Marion. Your support makes possible the staff time HHM provides to administer these critical rent assistance grants.

Sometimes the winter seems long and dark. Easter reminds us that the Ecumenical Community Center is blessed with a dedicated staff, volunteers, and wonderful support from the churches and community of the Cedar Rapids area. I thank all of you! I thank God for the work the Ecumenical Center is able to do and the many hands willing to help. May we all reflect God's sunshine as we serve those around us.

Jim Kennedy, ECC President

Mark your calendar :

Saturday, **June 25, 2011**

Returning Prisoner Simulation 9:30 a.m.—1:30 p.m.

St Pius X Fellowship Hall

Registration at 9:15 a.m.

Call 366-2651 to pre-register

Cost: \$10 Adults; \$5 Students
(includes light meal)

Appropriate for anyone age 16+ **There are over 3000 individuals in our six county area who are in jail, prison, parole, probation, or residential placement. 95% of these individuals will return to our community. Learn ways to make their return to society successful.**

Helping Hands Ministry

601 Second Avenue SE #2
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401
Phone: (319)-366-2651
Email: helpinghands@ecc-cr.net

Lois Ann Rude, HHM Director
Kiersten Onanga, HHM Staff Associate



In the last issue, it was noted that over 3,000 referrals are made each year in addition to providing services with the donations from churches, individuals and grants received by HHM. We were asked “what type of referrals” by a reader. In response, HHM makes referrals to

- 1) Temple Judah Disaster Relief for households needing furniture. This service began following the Flood of 2008 and continues today. Applicants must come in to the HHM office with photo identification and complete a request for assistance. HHM staff verify that the household does not have the furniture they are requesting (i.e. bed, couch, kitchen table/chairs). Once approved, HHM staff initial the referral and have the household call Tom Hill to make arrangements to see the furniture located in the lower level of the Ecumenical Community Center. A \$25 processing fee is collected by Tom Hill plus a transportation fee if delivery is a considerable distance from the ECC.
- 2) Salvation Army for households needing more financial assistance than HHM is able to provide and the household has not been to Salvation Army within the last 12 months.
- 3) Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP) for energy assistance for heat.
- 4) Resources located on the Community Resource Sheets for such items as hot meals, food pantries, clothes, shelters, child care assistance, family and/or budget counseling, etc.
- 5) Churches for households that are new to the community and are looking to find a faith community.
- 6) Free or reduced cost medical clinics for care when households indicate that they do not have medical insurance or that their co-pays are too high.
- 7) County programs (General Assistance and Veteran Affairs) when households are potentially eligible for their financial assistance and unaware of the help.
- 8) United Way’s 211 referral system when a question is raised that we are unaware of any help.

There are undoubtedly more referrals that have not been itemized in this space, but it does show that staff and volunteers provide valuable referrals to those who contact our office. We work with others to provide caring support to people in need and preserve dignity by helping them manage their own lives. Our staff and volunteers offers someone to talk to; someone to share concerns with; someone to encourage reaching goals and then rejoice in those accomplishments! If you would like more information, please call Lois or Kiersten at (319) 366-2651

Helping Hands Ministry

A “Fun”draiser:

We have a great fundraising opportunity for Helping Hands Ministry at no cost to you. Yellowbook is launching their Weforia website locally per Melissa Wagner-Kingery who serves on the HHM Steering Committee. This website will bring you discounted deals from local businesses (one e-mail per day). You are not required to purchase anything. For every subscriber we sign up, HHM will receive a \$3.00 donation from Yellowbook. You must continue as a subscriber through August 2011 at a minimum.

It is as easy as:

- 1) Go to <http://signup.weforia.com> and sign up
- 2) Enter in **helpinghands** in the sign up Code Box and we get \$3.00 just for you signing up.

Please sign up beginning May 1st through June 30, 2011. Share this with your Cedar Rapids area family, friends and on your Facebook page. Thanking you in advance,

HHM Steering Committee



Consider being a Volunteer:

Jessica Stamper has been a volunteer for Helping Hands Ministry since June of 2010. Other than a brief maternity leave, she has worked 30 hours a week in the front office.

“I like to help people and this place was a good fit for me.” says Jessica. She is the proud mother of Alyssa (age 2) and Bentley (age 5 months). Office work has been a big change from the type of factory work she had done before.

Greeting those who contact HHM takes up the majority of her time. Scheduling appointments, calling with reminders, distributing bus tickets, writing “thank you notes”, filing and answering the over 700-800 incoming phone calls per month is a challenge, but one that she really enjoys.

Jessica is also working on furthering her education. Just recently she has taken on entry of statistical information on the HHM data base. She’s not afraid to try new things.

We at HHM are fortunate to have her. She has such an upbeat, friendly attitude and it is a pleasure working with her.

When you come to visit HHM, say “hello” to Jessica.

If you would like to volunteer:

Contact Lois Rude or Kiersten Onanga at (319) 366-2651

We look forward to hearing from YOU!

CompuPlace



CompuPlace

601 Second Avenue SE #3
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401

Robin Switzer Brunner,
Director

Phone: (319)-362-4284

Email: compuplace@ecc-cr.net

COMPUPLACE: A Specialized Computer Learning Lab for People with Intellectual Disabilities

Individuals come to CompuPlace to gain, develop, maintain and augment basic skills through computer related activities. Although often highly motivated to continue life-long learning after public school ends at age 21, many of our clients have few, if any, other appropriate post-secondary learning opportunities. In the first quarter of 2011, an average of 53 individuals spent 160 hours per month at CompuPlace. 165 hours of staff time per month were required. CompuPlace utilizes standard computer games and games designed for adults with disabilities, along with, for example, Touch Screens and Trackballs, Speech output, Switches and an Over-sized Keyboard. Since most CD's designed for adults with intellectual disabilities cost around \$100 per disk, and are often condescending, or boring, and since many standard computer games are either too hard or too easy, we have developed our own homemade HTML-based games. Funds are sought to help support a portion of salary costs while we further develop our personally relevant HTML-based learning games. These games are epistemic, revealing knowledge. We demonstrate and develop reading, math and problem-solving skills. Different tasks can be appropriately isolated for a given individual. In this way, we can highlight people's strengths so they may use them to work on what is more difficult.

CompuPlace is seeking volunteers to help with development of these games. Individuals or groups (summer youth?) could help with photography and perhaps sound recording as well. This is the portion of making the games that can incur the most time, though it can also be fun and even instructive. Our clients are interested in a wide variety of subjects, maybe even one of your favorites!

In addition, as a fundraiser for CompuPlace, we are offering training to groups of more typical computer users about how to manage and move around files on your computer. We are requesting \$20 per person. CompuPlace also seeks donations for training on designing accessible Information Age materials such as web pages and office-type documents. We plan on offering other classes too, for instance, on protecting your computer from viruses and other malware, and on using a free office suite called OpenOffice. Call or e-mail Robin to set an appointment for a group to tour or train!

THE TAPESTRY mission: to strengthen community spirit, maximize human potential, and respectfully address social and environmental issues.

The Ecumenical Community Center provides low-cost office space to nearly a dozen non-profit agencies. The newest agency to join the Ecumenical Community Center is The Tapestry. It was founded by Marti Gray and Paula Land with support from Matthew 25 Ministry Hub, AmeriCorps VISTA, and Block by Block.

How the Time Bank Works: It catalogs the strengths, skills, and interests of individuals and organizations in our community. Then the Community Weaver (web-based exchange site) links these together to help meet their respective needs. Time Bank members receive a time dollar for every hour of service, which can then be spent for needed goods and services from individuals or organizations in the network. Every member's time is equal and there is no monetary equivalent associated with time dollars. "With Time Banking, you will be working with a group of individuals who are joined together for the common good. It brings out the best in people, because Time Banking is a system that connects unmet needs with untapped resources." says Marti.

Core Values of Time Banking:

Assets

We are all assets. Every human being has something to contribute!

Redefining Work

Some work is beyond price.

Building community is real work that needs to be honored, recorded and rewarded!

Reciprocity

Helping works better as a two-way street.

"How can we help each other build the world we both will live in?"

Community

We need each other.

People helping each other reweave communities of support, strength, and trust.

Respect

Every human being matters!

Respect underlies freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and everything we value.

Join us for a monthly orientation or social! Call: 319-310-4045 or 319-573-1744

Email: TheTapestry@thetapestry.us



Margaret Bock Housing Update

“A Home on Third”

1021 Third Avenue SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52403

Our community is fortunate to have the Margaret Bock Housing (MBH) program. It continues to serve low income single adults with affordable housing. It continues to be at full capacity with a waiting list for acceptance. Thirty-four (34) single rooms are available to be occupied. Six of the rooms have an adjoining bathroom whereas the remaining 28 share one of several community bathrooms. Rent varies according to the size of the room from \$235 to \$255 per month including utilities and cleaning of all common areas.

The minimum requirements for acceptance are: must be single, have a source of income, pay a \$130 security deposit, pay one month rent in advance and agree to a “criminal check”. Rent applications may be picked up at the Helping Hands Ministry office located at 601 Second Avenue SE #2. **Wish list:** twin sheets & pillows

ECCF Board of Directors

Jim Kennedy, President, First Lutheran

David Jiruska, Vice-President, Westminster Presbyterian

J.D. Combellick, Secretary, Peoples Unitarian Universalist

Peter Riley, Treasurer, At-Large

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Mary Evans, First Christian

Please take the time to participate in the

Returning Prisoner Simulation on 06/25/11

Presented by: Ecumenical Community Center

“Do not be afraid any longer...your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.” Jesus said this to his disciples and to us today, but how do we live as **“kingdom people”**? A suggestion for this is happening Saturday, February 5 in St. Pius X Hall from 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. A brief explanation follows. At the simulation, you are provided with a new identity as a parolee released from prison that morning. The session guides you to try to accomplish all the tasks facing returning prisoners in their first month back in the community, such as obtaining housing, a job, paying restitution and child support, while trying to avoid being sent back to jail. It is an eye opening opportunity. A debriefing is held afterwards, so participants can exchange reflections on your own role in prisoner re-entry – a chance to live as **“kingdom people”**. This simulation is open to the public and is appropriate for adults and high school students. A \$10.00 donation is requested from adults and \$5.00 from high school and college

ECC Board Meetings are held the last Thursday of each month beginning at 7:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.

If you would like more information on serving as a member at-large, please contact President Jim Kennedy at 366-2651.

ECC News:

Contributions received between January 1 & March 31, 2011 (not including private donations and agency rent)

Asbury United Methodist

Christ Episcopal

First Baptist—Marion

Mission of Hope

Salem United Methodist

Living Water United Methodist

Oakland Church of the Nazarene

Lovely Lane United Methodist

Prairie Chapel United Methodist

Buffalo United Methodist

Echo Hill Presbyterian

1st Congregational

St. Paul's United Methodist Women

St. Ludmila Catholic

St. Pius X Catholic

Westminster Presbyterian

Our Savior's Lutheran

Rockwell Collins Employees' United Fund provided a technology grant to CompuPlace!
The Housing Fund for Linn County provided a \$70,000 grant to Helping Hands. The
Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation & Brimmer Foundation also supported
Helping Hands during this period.

If your church contributed during this 3-month period and is not recognized above, please
contact the ECC office at 366-2651.

Development Director's Corner: Gratitude is the Attitude

God is Good. His Goodness is everywhere. I see His Goodness in the pastors and lay people I meet; in the testimonies of the people we serve; and in the "thank you" and "God bless you" and the "I don't know what I would have done without you" that help us remember why ECCF is here.

Helping Hands Ministry must still turn away so many qualified requests for help and yet, the good news is that monthly budgeted funds now seem to be lasting into the 24th of the month instead of the 15th! Thanks be to God AND to you for your faithful giving.

Our special thanks to the churches of Our Savior Lutheran and Echo Hill Presbyterian who toured The Ecumenical Center Foundation in April. (St. Paul's Lutheran in Marion, we expect to see you very soon!) We are grateful for their (and your) interest and the insightful questions asked of our various ministry staff and volunteers. If a tour seems right for your group, (or if you just need information of what ECCF does) please call me, 319-491-4523, or, e-mail me at vuichard9364@msn.com. You'd especially like meals at the Witwer Center...we save these for the tours' grand finale!

We serve for the Glory of God. We give thanks for His Goodness in embracing us even though we fall short of His Glory; we give thanks for the ways we can serve His "children"; and we give thanks for you who have given of your time and treasure to the Ecumenical Center.

Marvalee Vuichard
Development Director



The Ecumenical Community Center

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Phone: (319)-366-2651

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
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Cedar Rapids, IA

On the Web: www.ecc-cr.net



Return Service Requested

HHM Wish List

For distribution to clients:

- Shampoo/Conditioner
- 4-roll packages toilet paper
- Feminine hygiene products
- Hy-Vee gift cards (special dietary needs)
- Quarters for laundry needs
- \$ for local bus tickets

For office:

- Postage Stamps
- Colored 8-1/2 x 11 copier paper
- White 8-1/2 x 11 copier paper
- Avery labels (style 8160)

CompuPlace Wish List

- White Card or Cover stock (for clients to make nice greeting cards)
- Office-type chairs (easily cleaned)
- A-2 (invitation sized) envelopes for quarter-fold greeting cards
- White copy paper (any weight)
- Internet hubs (maybe 4 port?)
- Volunteers for PowerPoint and/or Photo projects making learning games for clients
- \$ for software specially designed for adults with disabilities
- \$ to attend "Closing the Gap" conference in Minnesota just once (held each October)