

The Echo

Inside This Edition...

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Letter From the President | 1 |
| Helping Hands Ministry | 2 |
| Helping Hands/Zero Poverty Project | 3 |
| CompuPlace | 4 |
| CompuPlace (continued) | 5 |
| Margaret Bock Housing | 6 |
| ECC Board of Directors | 6 |
| ECC News | 7 |
| Wish Lists | 8 |
| | |

Website

Check out our website at www.ecc-cr.net! Find out information on offices for rent, volunteer opportunities, upcoming events and general information about ECC.

**Office Space
for Rent at ECC
See Page 7**

Letter From the President

It's Spring and the seasonal sense of renewal fights winter's lingering grip. We are coming up on April, the month that poet T.S. Eliot called the 'cruellest month,' when a reviving sense of promise bumps against winter's impression of dread.

The past winter certainly brought us its share of dread. The weather was colder and snowier than what we have seen in many years. There were major earthquakes in Haiti and Chile with devastation, loss of life and suffering almost beyond comprehension. Closer to home, the economic downturn coupled with the impact of the 2008 flood has produced a lingering crisis for a large number of families.

But there is hope. We have seen the resilience of people facing desperate situations and the extraordinary generosity of strangers trying to help.

The Ecumenical Community Center (ECC) is a place of hope. People who have exhausted other means of financial aid can find someone to listen, advise them and, frequently, provide emergency financial assistance. Helping Hands is answering more calls and disbursing more aid than ever before. In 2009, HHM paid out over \$64,400 in emergency assistance from money provided by churches and individual donations. That assistance was in addition to \$71,000+ provided from first-month rent grant programs and over \$15,000 from flood relief grants.

ECC provides hope in other ways as well. CompuPlace continues to access to the world of computers for persons with disabilities. ECC provides space for several non-profit agencies including the Green Square Meals program as well as the meal program and activities of the Witwer Senior Center. In 2010 ECC will be taking on two programs formerly administered by Churches United.

I thank all of you for helping ECC provide hope throughout the year. In the middle of great need, sometimes surrounded by despair, hope triumphs. May God continue to bless us all as we enter Spring, 2010.

Jim Kennedy
ECC Board President

Helping Hands Ministry

Helping Hands Ministry

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

Lois Rude, HHM Director
Barb Kane, HHM Staff Associate



A total of 827 households/1,654 persons were assisted financially by HHM during 2009 at a cost of \$64,423.25. Another 2,900 referrals were made by HHM staff and volunteers.

New this year was the establishment of a Flood 2008 grant to help households with FEMA numbers with outstanding utility bills, rent or other miscellaneous needs not addressed elsewhere. A total of 59 households/222 flood victims were assisted with \$16,240.19 out of the \$25,000 grant from the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Grant in 2009.

Also continuing this year was the \$36,260 grant from the City of Marion to provide first month's rent to provide stable housing. Recipients must be able to pay their own deposit and show financial stability to pay ongoing rent. A total of 35 households/86 persons benefited from this Marion grant in 2009 at a total cost of \$15,332.37. Also continuing was the Housing Fund for Linn County where 128 households/320 persons were assisted financially with \$56,211.50 expended.

Therefore, a total of

**1,049 households/2,282 persons received financial assistance from
Helping Hands Ministry in 2009 at a total expenditure of
\$152,207.31!**

In addition, 786.25 hours of volunteer office support was provided. Thank you, volunteers! Volunteer training is offered the last Wednesday morning of each month. Seven new volunteers were added to the core of six that have been donating their services for many years!

HHM is a direct service of the Ecumenical Community Center. Whatever funds are donated from the faith community and individuals to Helping Hands Ministry are utilized directly for services and paid to verified vendors. The ECC supports any shortfall in donations for services and also provides the administrative costs (30 hours of staff salary; utilities; telephone; office supplies; office space). That is why it is so important that funds be directed to both Helping Hands Ministry and the Ecumenical Community Center so that these services can be provided.

Thank you for your continued support. In the words of one of the families helped last month, "Thank you for helping me this winter season. It was a blessing to know that we would have heat for the winter. A special thank you for the Walmart gift card. The day we met, I drove back to work and my gas light went on (I was able to buy gas). May God Bless all that you do!"

May God bless you for supporting HHM with your prayers, your time and your financial resources!

Lois Ann Rude, Helping Hands Ministry Director & Barb Kane, HHM Staff Associate

Helping Hands Ministry

Social Work Intern

ZERO POVERTY PROJECT (ZPP)

A direct service of the ECC



“Hello all!

I am Kristin Moore, Social Work Intern for HHM. I am a junior at Mount Mercy College, and have been here for approximately 6 weeks. I plan to finish my degree next year and begin working in the field, possibly pursuing a Master’s degree. In the past, I have worked with children who have emotional and behavioral disorders, and chose to intern at HHM for a new and different experience. I feel blessed to be a part of what Lois and Barb are able to do here, and I thoroughly enjoy our clients, staff, and volunteers. I am here 12 hours a week, and I have been able to see, learn, and do a lot, including learning about our funding streams and grants, meeting and interviewing clients, and attending various meetings with Lois. I am looking forward to attending the Zero Poverty Project’s classes, Getting Ahead, at Aid to Women with Lois. I am also looking forward to going to General Assistance, DHS, and Horizons to apply for rent assistance, food stamps, and do budget counseling in order to better understand our referral system and the processes our clients go through. Thank you all for this wonderful experience and opportunity to grow and learn!”

Kristin Moore, Mt Mercy SW Junior Intern

addresses the needs of low-income individuals in Linn County and engages the Linn County community in working towards the elimination of poverty.

The Project focuses on the causes of poverty, not its effects, and shifts the paradigm away from a service delivery model to a self-sufficiency model. The key difference is the ongoing relationship with allies, who have adequate time for the individual, are not afraid of holding him or her accountable for mutually-agreed upon goals, and can undertake a comprehensive approach to the family’s problems and strengths.

Beyond support to individual families, the ZPP Guiding Coalition involves business, government leaders, community organizations and individuals in an ongoing local and national discussion that results in the development of a long-term action plan to end poverty in the United States. Annual summits occur in the Fall.

Services

ZPP believes that individuals and families are best helped to arise out of poverty through close, personal, long-term support. Circles of Accountability and Support, composed of a small number of volunteer “allies” and a family unit in need, create informal networks that complement the publicly funded safety net and emergency assistance efforts.

For more info, contact Lois Rude at Helping Hands Ministry or AmeriCorps Member Teresa Hedgpeth at 366-2651.

Note This project had been under the umbrella of Churches United and was assumed by the Ecumenical Community Center when Churches United disbanded. Contributions to provide financial support to ZPP would be greatly appreciated. A “wish list” appears on the www.ecc-cr.net website.

(See Page 7 for Activities & Wish List)



CompuPlace

601 Second Avenue SE #3
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401

Phone: (319)-362-4284

Email: compuplace@ecc-cr.net

Robin Brunner, Director

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

In 2009, CompuPlace served 97 individuals who used at least seven different agencies in Cedar Rapids. Over 1880 total hours of computer-related learning services were provided. An average of 47 individuals received a total of about 157 hours of service per month. We assisted a few clients' agency staff and family members, because augmenting the computer confidence and skills of caregivers and mentors often benefits our clients at home and at work.

We request \$7 per hour, although many clients who cannot afford this attend anyway. In 2009, these donations only averaged \$420 per month. This is down from monthly averages of \$520 in 2008 and \$592 in 2007. Providing services costs \$21 per hour, so a rare few clients and families donate more than the requested amount, and we are grateful and honored to receive these donations. Some clients' staff also make heartfelt and gracious donations. CompuPlace recently received a donation of several USB hubs and an office phone battery from a private individual whose family member attended CompuPlace many years ago. THANK YOU!

If you would like to help CompuPlace with your time, we need some specific photos from nature and around the community and the home. Web games, based on the same building blocks from which web pages are constructed, have great promise and are being designed in-house. Also, we could use photos from grocery and department stores, and of appliances, tools, vehicles, community signs, farm animals, marine animals, and photos of things that go with "calendar" words and Dolsch sight words. Contact CompuPlace for more details on special groups of words. We are tailoring our spelling and trivia games to clients' particular needs, abilities and interests.

We also need collections of 20-second videos for cause and effect games. Animal and sports bloopers, amazing weather, cats, dogs, and horses in action, gentler slapstick comedy, and even some old TV shows like Mork and Mindy, and Alf. These could be e-mailed a few at a time, or shared via a flash drive. Some of our clients would also love sound clips of specific musical genre, or instruments such as a banjo, if you are interested in helping in this way.

Even some young PowerPoint users could make us games. What some individuals need most is not readily available, or is prohibitively expensive, yet not optimally suited to a given individual.

Learn from the CompuPlace Director's Frustrations and Experiences

Do you ever get stuck Scrolling in an odd way in Microsoft Excel?

Endeavor to Persevere! You may have accidentally hit the Scroll Lock key. Try tapping it once to "put it back." This special key is usually located in the center of a group of three keys above the group of six keys that include the Delete and Insert, Home and End, Page Up and Page Down keys. It toggles on and off like Num or Caps Lock. When the scroll lock is on and the arrow keys are pressed, they scroll the whole window instead of changing which cell is "selected" or ready to accept your entry or typing. Hopefully this tip will save you from computer-induced high blood pressure.

Do you ever copy and paste from one Microsoft Word document to another, only to discover that you have brought along some unwelcome infestation of formatting?

There is HOPE! **Do NOT** copy and paste directly from your old document to your new one. First, open Notepad from Programs, Accessories, and then copy and paste desired text into a blank Notepad document. Then, Select All text in this Notepad document and copy and paste it into your new Word document. Now you can format the new document as needed, unfettered by the old formatting. Afflicted with this frustration for years, Robin had nostalgia for DOS days and her old WordPerfect. Now, after discovering this trick in a fit of rage (well, **almost** rage) she rejoices in Restored Formatting Freedom!

Do you have trouble finding what you want on the web?

Just as all is not Yahoo anymore, all is not Google either. Don't forget about other search engines. Lycos and Alta Vista still exist! Meta-Search Engines like Dog Pile can be very helpful. You can find these at www.lycos.com www.altavista.com and www.dogpile.com

Also try these meta search engines: www.clusty.com and www.copernic.com

Don't forget to use other words for what you are seeking. Try being more general. Or, try being more specific. Read some of what you **don't want** for a little background or "lingo" or just to get an idea of where to search for related issues and / or the most reliable information. Keep your "baloney detector" on high!

Try putting a plus sign with no spaces or anything else between your 2 or 3 or even 4 keywords. Depending on the search engine, this can yield different results. Check out "Advanced Search" options offered.

E-Mail Robin with other Tips to Share in this Information Age. compuplace@ecc-cr.net

Do you see yourself in a position to volunteer for ECC? Serve on a steering committee? Volunteer office support to Helping Hands Ministry? Help out at CompuPlace? If so call Lois at Helping Hands (366-2651) or Robin at CompuPlace (362-4284) today!



Margaret Bock Housing Update

“A Home on Third”

1021 Third Avenue SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52403

Margaret Bock Housing (MBH) has a total of 34 single rooms. Six of the rooms have an adjoining bathroom (female residents) 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.

A few of the smaller rooms are available for immediate occupancy. The **minimum** requirements for acceptance are

- Must be single
- Must have a source of income
- Must make a \$130.00 security deposit
- Must pay current month’s rent in advance
- Must agree to a “background check”

Rent applications may be picked up at the Helping Hands Ministry office located at 601 Second Avenue SE #2 between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday..

A five member volunteer Board of Directors meets monthly and is very active between meetings as well. Recent facilities improvements consist of new electrical system, replacement of laundry appliances, and improvement of our security camera surveillance system.

A monthly Policy Meeting is held with committee members and tenants. Tenants are asked to air any concerns or general questions at that time. These are then taken to the Board of Directors for possible action.

Mike Williams has been hired as the new MBH maintenance person. Please call 361-6871 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Monday through Friday for any additional information.

Please see our “Wish List” on the Ecumenical Community Center’s website. Your continued support of the Margaret Bock Housing is greatly appreciated.

Hank Hernandez, MBH & ECC Board Member.

ECCF Board of Directors

Jim Kennedy, President, First Lutheran

Charles Scott, Vice President, At-Large

Peter Riley, Treasurer, At-Large

Lois Nosek, Secretary, Mound View Neighborhood Association

Gary Novak, Salem United Methodist

J.D. Combellick, Peoples Unitarian Universalist

Dale Crosier, At-Large

Jim Federer, At-Large

Henry Hernandez, Immaculate Conception Catholic

Ed Holstrom, St. Paul’s United Methodist

David Jiruska, Westminster Presbyterian

Robin Kash, Wellington Heights Neighborhood Association

Scott Olson, At-Large

Jean Oxley, First Congregational

Carolyn Schmidt, Echo Hill Presbyterian

Donna Fernandes Jiruska, At-Large

John vonLackum, First Presbyterian-CR

Mary Evans, First Christian

Mary Ann Stewart, Lovely Lane United Methodist

Claudia Whitney, Christ Episcopal Church

Vacancy, At-Large

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:

Office Space for Rent to Non-Profit Organization Suite #4

Size: 11 X 15 feet

The room is wired for telephone and Internet;

Receives diffuse natural light; and

Is equipped with office furniture including storage space.

The Ecumenical Community Center provides low-cost office space to nearly a dozen other non-profit agencies.

These agencies in turn provide a variety of services to the Cedar Rapids community. The reduced rent offered by the Ecumenical Community Center allows these non-profit agencies to focus more of their scarce dollars on direct help to the groups they serve.

All spaces for rent have full access to our break room, conference room (as available) and bathrooms.

If your agency/business is interested in renting space at the Ecumenical Community Center, please contact us at 366-2651.

The Ecumenical Community Center is pleased to offer Zero Poverty Project as one of its direct services in 2010!

The project is staffed by AmeriCorps Member Teresa Hedgpeth through August 31.

Another AmeriCorps Member will be recruited to begin September 1, 2010.

Supervision is provided by Helping Hands Ministry Director, Lois Rude.

(See article on page 3)

Zero Poverty Project Wish List

For distribution to clients:

- \$20 gift cards for auto gas to attend meetings
- School supplies (August & February)
- Gift cards to purchase food/beverage for big view meetings
- Hy-Vee gift cards (for special dietary needs)

For operating expenses, consider recycling beverage cans by donating to Zero Poverty Project.



The Ecumenical Community Center

601 Second Avenue SE #1
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401
Phone: (319)-366-2651

On the Web: www.ecc-cr.net

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage PAID
Cedar Rapids, IA
Permit No. 1017



Return Service Requested

HHM Wish List

For distribution to clients:

- Small bottles/boxes of laundry soap
- 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)
- Gift cards to purchase ink cartridges
- Financial donations for general support

CompuPlace Wish List

- Office-type chairs that can be easily cleaned
- One or two (4 port?) USB 2.0 hubs
- White Card or Cover stock (for clients to make nice greeting cards)
- A-2 (invitation sized) envelopes for quarter-fold greeting cards
- \$ for software designed for adults with disabilities
- 3 to 4 lightweight portable file boxes
- \$ to attend "Closing the Gap" conference in Minnesota this October
- White copy paper
- Scratch paper (clean, blank on one side)
- Postage Stamps (just a few each month)
- Financial donations for general support