

The Echo

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Letter From the President

As I prepared to write this letter, I read in the newspaper that the average adult American would spend about \$72 on Halloween this year. That figure apparently includes costumes for people and pets, decorations and of course, candy. I had just finished reading an article that talked about hunger in America. The article stated that one in six households in the country faced hunger insecurity. These households either lack sufficient food or face the imminent prospect of insufficient food due to family finances. What a dichotomy: substantial spending on Halloween while one in every six households struggles simply to put food on the table.

While many of us are happily making plans for fall holidays, others struggle simply to buy food and pay utility bills. The Helping Hands Ministry of the Ecumenical Community Center has seen a significant increase in requests for emergency financial help. Phone calls that were averaging 700-800 per month recently reached 2,000 in a month's time. More people are being pinched between reduced income and the expenses of daily living.

Likewise, fewer of the clients of CompuPlace are able to pay for the specialized computer equipment and programming that is offered to persons with disabilities. The interest and need for the program continue, the ability to pay has declined.

The Ecumenical Community Center is committed to finding and providing help to those in need. In addition to the Helping Hands Ministry and CompuPlace programs the Ecumenical Center furnishes space for the meal programs of Green Square Meals and the Witwer Senior Center. The Ecumenical Center also provides reduced rent office space to several nonprofit agencies so that those agencies can devote more of their funds to their programs.

We have much to be thankful for in Cedar Rapids. We have a large, caring community. We also have a growing number of people in need of help. I thank you all for the generous support that you provide to the Ecumenical Community Center. I ask that you consider making an additional donation to the Center now. Let's share the blessings!

Jim Kennedy, ECC President

ALTERNATIVE GIFT MARKET:

Help support the ECC, Helping Hands and CompuPlace by purchasing "shares" at this year's Alternative Gift Market!

The market will take place at Coe College on Saturday, December 3rd from 9 AM-2 PM. Displays of over 45 charities locally and world wide for you to choose to support in honor of family, friends, coworkers, etc.

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 Ann Rude, HHM Director
Kristin Moore, HHM Staff Associate



Helping Hands Ministry (HHM) continues to receive many requests for assistance. Incoming telephone calls average 1,040 per month compared to 703 per month in 2010. The continued impact of a soft economy is sending more people than ever in search of resources to deal with a variety of problems. Financial assistance since the last issue of *The Echo* has been provided as follows:

	<u># Households</u>	<u># Persons</u>	<u>Total Amount/Avg per HH</u>	<u>Funds Exhausted Date</u>
July	54	116	\$ 5,985.01 (\$110.83)	07/25/11
August	50	122	\$ 5,875.03 (\$117.50)	08/22/11
September	<u>50</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>\$ 4,837.05</u> (\$ 96.75)	09/23/11
	154	359	\$16,697.09	

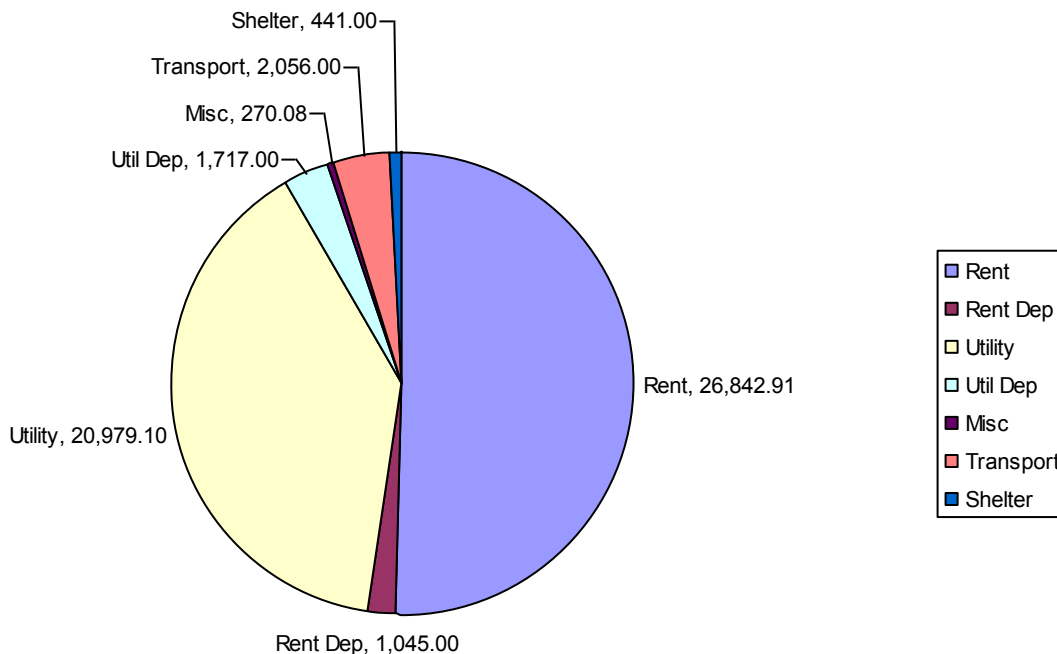
The majority of requests are for help with rent, rent deposit, utility or utility deposit. Typically the amount of financial help ranges between \$75 and \$100 per household with a maximum of \$150. Being good stewards of the funds donated, HHM ascertains if households are eligible for other local agency help. HHM also serves as an advocate with service providers to work with the households. Unfortunately, the donations this past quarter have decreased. When this happens, we reduce the number of households assisted or the amount of the award. (See “ECC News” on how you can help.)

Change = to undergo transformation, transition, or substitution! The past few months have brought about changes at HHM. We welcomed a new staff member, Kristin Moore, as Staff Associate and said goodbye to Kiersten Onanga who found full-time work in her area of Social Work training. Kristin was a Mount Mercy Junior Intern a couple of years ago; she is an excellent addition with a passion for those we serve, a desire to make a difference in our client’s lives and an eagerness to lead us forward in our mission. Welcome, Kristin! If you would like to meet Kristin, invite her to speak about Helping Hands Ministry. Call the office at 366-2651.

One change we never like to see is a decrease in donations and loss of grants. Due to several months of decreased donations, the month of October will only be able to help 30-35 households to remain within a \$4,000 budget (down from average of \$5,950/month). We were also notified that the Housing Fund for Linn County will not be awarding a grant to us. If you have any fundraising ideas, please contact us. At a time of increased demand, we could use your help!

Helping Hands Ministry = providing assistance & support to persons in Linn County through collaboration with the faith community and local agencies.

HMM Y-T-D Funds Distribution



During the first nine (9) months of 2011, Helping Hands Ministry distributed \$53,351.09 in financial assistance or an average of \$5,927.90 per month. All payments go directly to vendors. If you have any questions, please contact the HMM staff at 366-2651.

Helping Hands Ministry Volunteer

Eldon Pugh Volunteer extraordinaire—doing data entry since 2001

High School friend, John Vonlackum on ECCF Board, told Eldon about Helping Hands Ministry and encouraged him to volunteer. Eldon has been a life-time resident of Cedar Rapids. He is married to Margaret. They have a son, Greg & wife in Des Moines with two daughters, and a daughter, Lora in San Antonio, TX.

He became an Insurance Underwriter at Iowa National after graduating with a degree in Economics from Coe College. Eldon was employed for 37 years at Amana Refrigeration, retiring as Vice President of International Sales. He traveled to over 150 countries in connection with the job. Margaret and Eldon enjoy traveling following retirement. When asked what he's been doing since retiring, Eldon shared that he has 18 years as volunteer at Grant Wood Chapter American Red Cross, 18 years as a counselor at SCORE and 5 years at Linn Community Food Bank in addition to an average of 3 hours per week at Helping Hands Ministry.

Eldon is an active church member at First Congregational and currently serving as Treasurer (15 years) plus 32 years in the church choir! When not volunteering, you may catch him playing bridge or golf. We know he is a great person to know and have as a volunteer. This year the KCRG-TV9 recognized Eldon as one of the nine "Show You Care" volunteers! Thank you, Eldon!



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 and / or Needs for Assistive Technology

The third quarter of 2011 has been a busy one. An average of 65 CompuPlace “Stars” worked hard to let their skills shine for an average of 188 hours per month! Using our own HTML-based game template, several clients now work diligently each week, spelling their own **Most Important Words**. An on-screen QWERTY keyboard can be used with the mouse or Touch Screen. A regular or adaptive keyboard can also be used to type in the letters. The only thing a client can do to proceed in this spelling game is to click or press the correct letter. Recently, a volunteer helped scan photos clients brought in. Most of the time required to make and update a new game involves taking, saving, sizing and uploading photos. Many thanks to Miles, our new volunteer who edited two sets of client photos now used for spelling. Quick editing of HTML code individualizes games!

A new free Speech program has been identified and used recently at CompuPlace. It will read the screen and keystrokes aloud. We have also identified a free Large-Print program with Speech incorporated into it. Installations for each of these are fairly quick and straightforward. Call or e-mail CompuPlace about these and other Assistive Technology resources.

CompuPlace functions via computer donations and expertise from the REACT Center, funds from the faith community and individuals, and a Community Development Block Grant. We seek grants and invitations to speak/train groups to leverage ECC operational support.

The CompuPlace Director recently attended an Aging & Disability Resource Fair, and spoke at the Abilities in Action Conference & Expo, both at the Kirkwood Training & Outreach Services Center in Marion. Robin will also speak to a Web Development class at Mt. Mercy University about accessible web design. Please e-mail CompuPlace with any local events we could list on the ECC web site. Contact Robin if your group would like to hear about CompuPlace activities, or how and why to make a web site more accessible across different browsers and devices.

Agency Housing Highlight: SERRV

FAIR TRADE GIFTS FROM SERRV

Are you looking for a great gift? Stop by the SERRV Store in the Ecumenical Center and browse our selection of beautiful handmade gifts from around the globe. We carry Divine chocolate bars; lovely jewelry, scarves and purses; intriguing wood puzzle boxes; unusual nativity sets; carved onyx sculptures; games and musical instruments; and many other items. A mission project sponsored by Church Women United, the SERRV Store is open on Wednesdays from 11:30 to 1:30 or by appointment. Call Judy at the swim club office (247-2722) to set up an appointment. We are also willing to host a sale of SERRV items at churches for women's gatherings or between worship services. Call Karen (396-4798) to set up a sale.

What is SERRV? SERRV is a nonprofit fair trade and development organization. SERRV works with thousands of small-scale artisans and farmers in Africa, Asia, Latin America and other developing regions of the world by marketing their handcrafts and foods. Through their work with 75 community-based organizations in 36 countries, they create economic opportunity so these artisans and farmers can support their families and themselves.



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 ECC allows these agencies to focus more of their precious dollars on direct help to the groups they serve. If your agency / business is interested in renting space at the Ecumenical Community Center, please contact us. All spaces for rent have full access to our break room, conference rooms (as available) and bathrooms.

Margaret Bock Housing Update

“A Home on Third” = Margaret Bock Housing 1021 Third Avenue SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52403

The 34 single occupancy rooms at MBH continue to be used by needy individuals. Currently, we have one vacancy with one reserved for occupancy starting Nov 1. The list of tenants continues to change from month to month, as some tenants gain better control of their money and move to better equipped housing. Others are forced to move because of non-payment of rent or continued lease violations. It is the MBH Board of Directors goal to provide a secure, safe facility to live, while paying rent at below current market prices for similar housing. We continue to receive applications for tenancy. To qualify, a prospective tenant must have a source of income, pay a \$130 deposit and first month’s rent, and not be a felon or sex abuser. A criminal check is made on each application. If you have questions, please contact MBH Manager Mike Williams (361-6871).

Reaching out to the Community...

“In the month of September, Kristin Moore and I went to speak at the Abbe Center for Community Mental Health about what services Helping Hands Ministry (HHM) offers. We gave a presentation to about 25 people that followed with their questions.

I really enjoyed traveling into the community and making people aware of the services we offer.

If you are interested in having a presentation conducted for your group, contact Lois Rude or Kristin Moore at 319-366-2651 (Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.).

I have really enjoyed working with the staff, clients and volunteers at HHM!”
Whitney Boyenga

Whitney Boyenga is a Senior at **Mt. Mercy University** and is doing her **Social Work internship** at HHM. She plans on pursuing a Master’s Degree. HHM is pleased to have Whitney 24 hours a week for a total of 312 hours during the Fall semester.

In addition to becoming fully trained on the Helping Hands Ministry Program, Whitney will also be involved in a small group for the Zero Poverty Project’s “Getting Ahead” program. Stop by and introduce yourself. Welcome, Whitney!

ECCF Board of Directors

Jim Kennedy, President, First Lutheran

David Jiruska, Vice-President,
Westminster Presbyterian

J.D. Combellick, Secretary, Peoples
Unitarian Universalist

Conrad Baumler, Treasurer, At-Large

Peter Riley, At-Large

Vacancy, Mound View
Neighborhood Association

Gary Novak, Salem United Methodist

Dale Crosier, At-Large

Jim Federer, At-Large

Don Boland, At-Large

Henry Hernandez, Immaculate
Conception Catholic

Ed Holstrom, St. Paul’s United Methodist

Vacancy, Wellington Heights
Neighborhood Association

Scott Olson, At-Large

Jean Oxley, First Congregational

Darlene Schrimper, Echo Hill Presbyterian

Donna Fernandes Jiruska, At-Large

John vonLackum, First Presbyterian-CR

Mary Evans, First Christian

Mary Ann Stewart, Lovely Lane United
Methodist

Meet: Last Thurs/mo @ 7:00 pm



ECC News:

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

St Pius X Catholic
 First Baptist Marion
 First Congregational
 Oakland Church of the Nazarene
 Echo Hill Presbyterian
 First Lutheran
 Salem U/Methodist
 St. Paul's U/Methodist Women
 Living Water U/Methodist
 Buffalo U/Methodist
 Lutheran Church of Resurrection
 St. Stephen's Lutheran
 Prairie Chapel U/Methodist
 People's Church Unitarian
 St. Paul's Lutheran

St. Ludmila Catholic
 Immaculate Conception Catholic
 Kiwanis Marion Sunrisers
 First Presbyterian, C.R.
 Echo Hill Presbyterian Deacons
 Our Savior's Lutheran
 Asbury U/Methodist
 Westminster Presbyterian
 Lovely Lane U/Methodist
 Christ Episcopal
 Gloria Dei Lutheran
 Mission of Hope
 Peace Christian Reformed
 Westminster Presbyterian Women

If your church or organization has donated and is not listed here, please call the office at 366-2651. We do not want to miss recognizing anyone!

What can you do to further the mission of the ECC?

- 1) Consider a year end donation. ECC is a 501 (c) 3 organization!
- 2) Ask your employer to match your donation.
- 3) Place ECC in your congregation's annual budget (Increase amount from previous year).
- 4) Compose a legacy. When planning your estate, assets that have increasing importance are retirement accounts which build tax-free income. They may become quite sizeable over the years and will be included as part of your estate. Beneficiaries will be subject to federal income tax upon receipt. By designating the Ecumenical Community Center a beneficiary, you may reduce income and estate tax liabilities.
- 5) Instead of a holiday gift exchange, donate \$\$\$ to ECC (First Lutheran staff has been doing this annually for Helping Hands!)
- 6) Have a "virtual poinsettia" collection with donations dedicated to ECC. List name of donors and amounts in your bulletin.
- 7) Continue supporting us with your prayers.

We are constantly in need of funds to support the Ecumenical Community Center and its programs (Helping Hands Ministry and CompuPlace). Any help you can provide would be very much appreciated!



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

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

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)