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

Ecclesiastes 3:1

**WCM RECEIVES GRANT TO FEED AND CLOTHE NEEDY WILKINSBURG CHILDREN**

Toward the end of last year, Wilkinsburg Community Ministry received a marvelous holiday blessing in the form of a $50,000 grant from the Heinz Endowments for winter outerwear for Wilkinsburg School District middle and high school students in need, for support of student food programs and for overall operations. These funds will be used throughout 2015 to support this important work by WCM.

**Some Background Information**

Did you know that almost 40% of the school-aged children in Wilkinsburg are technically considered to be homeless? They have no permanent address, no regular place to call home. They live in shelters or at the houses of friends or family, sometimes for only one or two weeks at a time. Their stories are appalling: they know hunger, bone-chilling cold, fear, anxiety, and depression. Their parents usually have jobs, but are counted among the working poor, those at too low a wage to make enough to pay regular rent and utilities, and are forced, for one reason or another, to rely upon family, friends, and “the system” for assistance.

It’s easy to say that these children should go home and mow the lawn, clean the house, or do their regular chores, but this sweeping statement often found on social media implies secure homes and neighborhoods, yards to mow, and houses to clean. The reality is far different. Wilkinsburg is not the town it was in the 1960s. Block after block of derelict and abandoned houses have yards choked with weeds. Many children live in apartment houses, duplexes, or with other family members. In some cases, housing is locked after parents leave in the morning, and unlocked when they come home at night; children

(continued on page 3)
Welcome to our first newsletter of 2015. As I write this late-winter note to you, I am grateful for a brand new year. Through a grant from the Heinz Endowments, we were able to provide winter coats, hats, gloves and scarves to many children who would otherwise not have appropriate clothing for our sub-zero weather. This grant enabled us to provide these basic necessities.

I do want to make mention of our Volunteer Luncheon that was held on December 18, where we were able to say “thank you.” Certainly, you are aware that much of what we do depends on individuals who want to share whatever they have to benefit others. In this case, we have a core of people who are interested in “hands on” service to others. Without them, we would not be able to deliver the necessary food for our Meals on Wheels program. This is done through the work of our volunteers. Drivers and helpers go out each day and bring lunch to senior citizens.

We look forward to new partnerships where we can continue to be a blessing to those who stand in need of our help. Here we are, established in the 21st century, and it’s hard to imagine that there are people who don’t have enough food to eat for themselves and their families. Our emergency food pantry eliminates the anxiety that goes along with not being able to feed a family. As long as these needs continue, we can’t afford to be complacent. Therefore, I hope that you will continue to share what you have been blessed with, with those who stand in need. You can do that by contributing to WCM. Please see the listings in the “Thank You” section of this issue for names of individuals, businesses and civic organizations, foundations and churches and church groups who supported the Wilkinsburg Community Ministry in 2014. We could not provide our programs for those in need in our community without their ongoing generous financial support.

Let me also extend a special thank you to Ruth Kittner, our Development Specialist, for the amazing work she did preparing the successful grant proposal to the Heinz Endowments. In addition to that, she worked with Mrs. Laura Knoop Very, the owner of Knit One, a yarn shop in Squirrel Hill, to develop the “Warm Hearts” program, which provided knitted clothing for homeless children to supplement the coats already being distributed. Ruth continues to work on additional grant proposals for other aspects of the WCM program.

As the year progresses, we look forward to making our presence known even more. Come and join us in this endeavor. Thank YOU for your continued confidence in our important work.

Grace and peace,

Cathy
NEEDY CHILDREN (cont’d from page 1)

have no access after school. Several neighborhoods in and around Wilkinsburg are fraught with threats to a young child’s safety and security: gangs and street violence pose a real danger to these children. Although unemployment in Wilkinsburg is slightly lower than the state average (7.8% in July 2013), 57% of the population lives at or below poverty level, making this a community of the working poor. What does it actually mean to be poor? It means knowing what everything costs, sleeping on a lumpy futon, or on the floor, a heater in one room of the house. Being poor is not enough space, not enough light, not enough food, not enough heat and glued-on soles that come off your shoes in the gymnasium. For children, and their parents, it is a demoralizing life. The challenge for parents becomes, then, not only finding a way to feed themselves and their children, but to offer these children the possibilities of a way out of the poverty trap, and the opportunity to have a better life.

WCM Provides Vital Help For Children and Youth In Need

WCM’s partnerships with area agencies provide a safe environment for students to study, play, and eat their dinners. These programs provide educational and positive youth development opportunities. The healthy meals that WCM provides to youngsters in these programs are fundamental to their well-being.

The clothing distribution component of the program funded by the grant was primarily implemented in the period of February 12th to 18th for all students in the Wilkinsburg School District in grades 7 to 12. A total of 159 students received purchased winter coats during the initial distribution. Ms. Velma Parker, the homeless liaison person for the school district, distributed these items on a needs basis. Some students graciously declined coats, so that others in need could receive them. Everyone received knitted items. She is also using some of the grant monies to provide underwear, socks, and sanitary products for the children. In a thank you letter to WCM, Ms. Parker stated: “Most of our students were wearing hoodie type sweatshirts to school and the arrival of the coats came at the most appropriate time.”

To supplement the purchased items, Ruth Kittner, WCM Development Specialist, worked with Mrs. Laura Knoop Very, the generous owner of Knit One, a yarn shop in Squirrel Hill. Together they organized the “Warm Hearts” program, which encouraged local knitters to make hats, scarves or mittens for the children. By Thanksgiving, knitters had donated over 900 items to the program. These items were also distributed by Ms. Parker, who states that the children were ecstatic. A note of thanks to her from a 9th grade girl sums up the impact of this program. The young girl writes: “Thank you for my new coat. I really appreciate this because no one else would do this for a school like this. Now we see that there are really people out there who really care. And again, thank you so much.”

The generous grant from the Heinz Endowments, combined with the close working relationship between WCM and the Wilkinsburg School District and other agencies, is helping to make life a little bit better this winter for needy youngsters, one hot meal, one coat, one scarf or a pair of mittens at a time.
SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMS HELP MEET ON-GOING LOCAL NEEDS

The WCM Walk-through program continues to be very busy. The Emergency Food Pantry provides bread, sweets and cans of soup and a variety of other food as these items come in from donations. In the past 4 months ending in January, WCM has assisted 625 walk-in clients.

Food Pantry Statistics:

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Holiday Food Distribution:

The December Holiday food distribution provided 100 families with a full bag of groceries and a turkey certificate.

Dollar Energy Program:

WCM is helping meet the needs of those experiencing energy crises during this especially frigid winter by processing applications for energy assistance. Since October 1, the beginning of the current grant season, 77 applications have been processed. The total paid to date to WCM clients is $21,942.00.

MEALS ON WHEELS SEEKS MORE VOLUNTEERS

This program serves more than 60 Wilkinsburg residents who are unable to prepare a meal for themselves. Meals on Wheels uses volunteers to daily provide a kind, smiling face in addition to a hot meal. We are grateful to our volunteers for their faithful support of this program.

If you’d like to volunteer to make a difference in someone’s life, please contact Raynette Millsap at 412-241-8072 or email her at volunteers@wcm15221.org.
THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

Many thanks to the following individuals, businesses and organizations that made contributions to support WCM in 2014.

Individuals

Steven Alschuler
Doris Anderson
Karen S. Auclair
Edgar W. & Elizabeth A. Benedum
Lisa J. Benz
Virginia Benz
Peter & Janice Bishop
Mike & Sarah Bogie
J.O. & M.M. Bolvin
Ronald A. Brand
Cathy Brundage
D.J. Buckoski
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Stephen Evrard
Cyril A. Fox & Jane Taylor
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Donna & Ralph Hansen
Frances E. Hardic
Leon J. & Gail E. Harper
Francis G. & Mary Judith Hartley
D. Karl & Carolyn Hartner
P.A. Hauser
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Cora Ingrum & Harry Andrews
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Erla Jean Reeves
Lillian F. Rice
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David & Mickie Richardson
Rachel Riggle
Adrian Roe & Susan Apel
Gregory A. & Beth M. Ross
Roger L. & Victoria L. Schneider
Paul & Norma Schroeder
J.S. & A.C. Schrysen
Jerome J. & Vivienne P. Selia
Paul & Diane Shepard
Marcia G. Smith
John D. Snyder
Pamela S. Sovich
Virginia S. Starr
Frederick W. Steinberg
Samuel Taylor
William R. & Ann A. Taymans
Karen & Brian Teaman
Robert M. Thaw & Barbara Cooley
Mary K. Thoma
Robert M. Thompson, Sr.
Clemons Tolbert
Erika Van Sickel
Individual Contributors, cont’d.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Larry A. &amp; Claudia Viehland</th>
<th>Cathy A. Wilkie</th>
<th>Michael J. Witherel, Esq.</th>
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<td>Michael T. &amp; Shelby Wherry</td>
<td>Lois M. &amp; Harry C. III Winslow</td>
<td>Chester &amp; Peggy Young</td>
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Businesses and Organizations

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<td>Pittsburgh Dry Cleaners &amp; Furriers, Inc.</td>
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Foundations

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Churches & Church Groups

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A LOOK AT THE 2015 WCM BUDGET

The budgeted income for WCM in 2015 is $273,600, with about 25% coming by donations from individuals, churches, businesses and fund-raising. An additional 19% is projected to come from foundation gifts, which is an income area that we have worked hard to improve in the last several years. This combined 44% of income from friends of WCM enables us to leverage funds from Allegheny County, the Federal Food Program and Dollar Energy to pay for materials for programs such as Meals on Wheels, Youth Food Partnership and support for residents who cannot pay utility bills. This accounts for an additional 44% of the budget. The remaining 12% of the 2015 budget comes from Heinz Endowments funds (see the cover article in this issue) that were received in 2014, but were for grant commitments in 2015. Expenses in 2015 are projected to match income.

WCM has no endowment or escrow fund, so we must be very careful to manage expenses in relation to income. We are grateful for the gifts from all supporters of WCM and proud of being able to bring over a quarter million dollars to Wilkinsburg to help the residents needing daily support.

Tom Ochs, WCM Executive Committee
MEET JACK PEFFER: A VERY SPECIAL WCM VOLUNTEER

Wilkinsburg Community Ministry operates several ministries, and they all depend gratefully on the volunteers to help make them successful in serving the community. This issue, John R. Peffer (Jack) is our “Featured Volunteer”. Jack has been serving as a volunteer with Meals On Wheels since he retired in 1988 from PPG. Jack says after he retired he wanted to use his time to be useful and to be of service. Jack generally delivers Meals on Wheels on Tuesdays, but he has often helped at other times when called upon. Jack’s motto is “Help Somebody Today”. He has done just that and has faithfully served the community for over 35 years. Jack has also been on the Board of Wilkinsburg Community Ministry since it started in 1978 and has served numerous times as an officer of the Board.

Throughout the years Jack has had many interesting experiences delivering Meals On Wheels. One such experience occurred several years ago when Jack was delivering meals to a woman at an apartment. She had fallen down and could not get up. He immediately called 911. The emergency squad got there and helped the woman. She turned out to be OK. That experience just goes to show you the importance of Meals On Wheels; we not only feed those in need but we are often the daily contact for people we serve. We serve a dual role of checking to ensure that they are OK. If any of our seniors do not answer the door, we will follow up with their contact person to check on them.

Jack has said it has been a benefit to him to help others in need through Meals On Wheels. There is no better way to serve the great mission than to feed those when they were hungry.

YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED AGAIN THIS YEAR

Please consider making a new or additional contribution to WCM at this time. Contributions may be made at ANYTIME by going to http://www.wcm15221.org and clicking on the “Donate Now” button, where you can donate by credit card or PayPal.

You may also use the form below. Please send your check to Donations Administrator at Wilkinsburg Community Ministry, 704 Wood Street, Wilkinsburg, PA, 15221. Your support will go directly towards the programs WCM provides to the community – emergency food, meals on wheels for seniors, meals to at-risk youth programs, food bags for the holidays, and other urban survival programs.

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. Your donation is tax-deductible.

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:

O $25  O $50  O $75  O $100  O $200  O Other $_______  Date: _________
Payable: Enclosed $_______ Monthly $_______ Quarterly $_______
Name ____________________________________________
Address ___________________________________________
City ___________________________ State ______ Zip _______
Email Address _______________________________________
Telephone ________________________________
Wilkinsburg Community Ministry
704 Wood Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15221

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIAL - PLEASE EXPEDITE

Wilkinsburg Community Ministry Churches United - Serving Together

The Well - Spring 2015

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Vice President Rev. Rita Platt
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