



Spring 2017

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

Ecclesiastes 3:1

WCM BRIGHTENS THE LIVES OF LOCAL FAMILIES IN NEED



WCM distributed holiday food baskets

Knit One provided handmade hats

Special WCM distributions of food and clothing made the holidays a bit nicer for many Wilkinsburg residents. Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets were a huge success. Families signed up in advance for either Thanksgiving or Christmas. A meeting room at South Avenue United Methodist Church was used and volunteers assembled boxes with appropriate amounts of food per family size. A total of 250 appreciative families received baskets. Additional families attended a walk-through shop.

At Thanksgiving everyone received a gift card for Giant Eagle, ranging from \$10 to \$25, depending on family size, and we served 99 meal boxes plus 55 walk-through participants. Meals included: sweet potatoes, fresh potatoes, veggies, canned fruits, onions, stuffing mix, cranberry sauce and dessert mix.

At Christmas, the boxes had the same content, plus instant oatmeal or box(es) of cereal, and had the choice of a meat entrée in place of a gift card. Meat entrée choices included chicken, duck, turkey breasts and some cuts of beef. We also had fresh fruit, puddings and Jell-O mixes. Families were also offered eggs.

Winter clothing items came from the knitters and crocheters at Knit One again this year. Coats and winter outerwear were donated by the Waverly and Forest Hills Presbyterian churches. Waverly's program, *Seats and Feets*, also provided socks and underwear for school kids! In all, several hundred children received warm clothes.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Greetings from Wood Street!

We have had a busy several months. In addition to 130-150 hungry families a month, we served food baskets for 250 families for Thanksgiving and Christmas. The Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank has been a valuable partner in this effort; it is the most cost-efficient place to buy groceries for our hungry families. The largest single service group is children under 18 years old (40%). Almost 36% of our service population is 35-59 years old, 20% are 18-35 years old, and 8% are seniors.

We've realized that seniors have trouble getting to the pantry, and even more trouble getting home again with food, so we're developing ideas about how to get food to them efficiently. The Food Bank actually delivers "senior boxes" to some of the buildings in Wilkinsburg where there are a lot of seniors in residence; in the next few months we will be developing ways of identifying the people who are "missed" by the GPFB program and see if we can get boxes to them directly. The boxes have cheese, meal kits, pasta, milk, bread, and other necessities, but they weigh about 20 pounds, so these can be difficult for seniors to carry. We've already arranged to have a few boxes here.

The knitters and crocheters at Knit One sent us more than 1,000 handmade hats, mittens, and scarves this year. Coupled with coats and winter outerwear donated by the Waverly and Forest Hills Presbyterian churches, we were able to protect several hundred children from the cold weather this winter! Waverly's program, *Seats and Feets*, also provided socks and underwear for school kids!

Although Wilkinsburg makes slow progress from its difficulties, it does make progress! We gathered on Martin Luther King Day for a prayer and rally in front of the Wilkinsburg Train Station. Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation reports good progress on the fundraising for the Train Station renewal project, although there is still a way to go. We hear encouraging news from the Westinghouse/Wilkinsburg school alliance; it will take several years to measure the progress of this, but initial reports suggest the teens find wider educational choices than the Wilkinsburg High School could offer them. Sheer numbers DO make a difference!

Speaking of making a difference, we've included in this issue of the Well a list of people who have made a difference. Be assured that gifts to WCM help us to make food available to Wilkinsburg's hungry. Thank you for your generosity!

Cheers and joy!

Ruth Kittner
Executive Director, WCM

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

Many thanks to the following individuals, businesses and organizations that made contributions to support WCM in 2016.

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WCM STRUGGLING FINANCES IMPROVE

WCM's budget is \$151,800 for 2017 and this amount is very close to 100% used to serve those in Wilkinsburg who need help with food and social survival. Overhead is very low, with volunteers providing services such as accounting/bookkeeping, preparation of The WELL, IT services and donor administration. The 21st century has been a challenge financially due to Wilkinsburg community problems, the increase of community needs and the closing of several major denominational churches that not only founded WCM, but were the major financial supporters.

The Executive Director and the Board have confronted these problems by trying to find new sources of income and by restructuring our client services to reach where there is the greatest need. In 2016 we began to see the results of some of these changes. Debt has been reduced for the first time in many years and we have a plan to continue reducing debt. This will enable us to confidently plan for how to best serve the community in the coming years. 2017 will be a year of re-evaluation and planning for the future.

We all know from our personal church experience that individual church programs to serve the community come and go, and often are marginally effective in serving the community because of the lack of continuity of members to sustain programs, funding problems and the lack of volunteers during weekday hours to service clients. By churches joining together to serve those needing help, we can be available every day of the week with staff to meet client needs and provide services not possible individually. WCM has been doing this for over 40 years and this is testament to what churches can accomplish working together.

Tom Ochs, Financial Secretary

EXTRA, EXTRA, READ ALL ABOUT IT!

- WCM has received a grant from the Forbes Fund to help us build our operational and service capacity.
- Mifflin Avenue United Methodist Church held its annual Souper-bowl on February 4, offering delicious chicken noodle soup and Kim Viehland's famous gazpacho. Attendance was great.
- The Wilkesburg Chamber of Commerce sponsored a holiday breakfast at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf. The students provided music, including signing. Bill Hillgrove, announcer for the Panthers and Steelers, gave a short address on Wilkesburg and his deep roots in the community.
- Biddle's Escape, a Wilkesburg coffee shop, sponsored a Wednesday evening informal supper, complete with a food truck offering some of the best hamburgers around: Steer 'N Wheel donated \$500 of the proceeds to WCM and Joe Davis, proprietor of Biddle's Escape, matched their gift. The coffee shop was also the collection point throughout the Fall for food and hygiene products.
- The children at Ethnan Temple donated 30 hygiene kits to the children at Wilkesburg schools (Turner and Kelly). They filled kits with items they would have liked to use, including hair ornaments and soap. One of the deacons also had an extra washer and dryer that he donated to Kelly School.
- Kelly and Turner schools can always use craft supplies, hand lotion, first aid items, uniforms (Walmart variety), socks and underwear, feminine hygiene products and especially . . . tissues!
- The Pittsburgh East CROP Hunger Walk that was held on October 9, 2016 raised a total of \$25,242.00 of which 15% has come to WCM. There were about 100 walkers (+ dogs!) from 13 congregations.
- Summer Programs. We still have room to cater some of the summer programs for Wilkesburg kids. We can probably handle another 50-75 children per day. If you know of summer programs that need food for kids, please let us know or have them call us.

PLEASE USE THIS NEW FORM FOR YOUR MAIL-IN CONTRIBUTION

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. The website also has a special link to "GoFundMe." You may also use the form below. Please send your check to Donations Administrator at Wilkesburg Community Ministry, 704 Wood Street, Wilkesburg, PA, 15221.

WCM also participates in the Contributor Choice program of the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania. To designate WCM at work, please reference our agency code **242**.

I/We want to join in your efforts to help others and will subscribe the following amount:

- \$10 supports after-school snacks and meals for 3 children
- \$25.00 provides a turkey or ham for a family of 5 at Thanksgiving or Christmas
- \$45.00 is 3 days of emergency food for 2 adults and a child
- \$95.00 is 4 days of food for a family of 5 \$500.00 pays the WCM milk bill for a month
- Other \$_____ Please use my contribution where it is most needed

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

Name (*please print*) _____

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- I would like to receive electronic communications - such as the WCM newsletter and acknowledgements.

Wilkinsburg Community Ministry
704 Wood Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15221

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Wilkinsburg Community Ministry Churches United - Serving Together

*Our mission is to follow Christ's command by providing help to those who are hungry, thirsty, or unclothed,
welcoming the strangers in our midst and caring for those bound by the unjust systems of the world.*

The Well - Spring 2017



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COMMUNITY MINISTRY

Wilkinsburg Community Ministry

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