



Autumn 2017

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

Ecclesiastes 3:1

WCM FOOD PROGRAMS HELP LOCAL CHILDREN YEAR ROUND



This summer, WCM provided about 3100 meals (lunches and/or suppers) for Wilkinsburg’s children. Programs supported included *Park It!*, the premier season of the Wilkinsburg Parks Program, Wilkinsburg Youth Project, Summer Food service at the South Avenue United Methodist Church, programs at the Christian Church of Wilkinsburg and First Presbyterian of Edgewood Church, the PLEA summer camp, and the Wilkinsburg School District’s Pre-K Boot Camp. This is a drop from last year’s 8,800 meals, accounted for by the closure of Wilkinsburg’s Boys and Girls Club. South Avenue United Methodist Church also served as a feeding site for the Children’s Food Network, sponsored by Church Union, and provided meals for 50-80 children three times a week.

Moving into the new school season, a number of program improvements are already underway. Heinz Endowments have invested \$20,000 in the WCM children’s food program. These funds go to upgrade training and certifications for kitchen staff, improve kitchen equipment, and to develop outreach programs to bring together the families of children we serve for group meals. We’ve already started serving breakfasts and snacks to the children in the PLEA school that operates in the South Avenue United

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Greetings from Wood Street!

A client—let's call him "John"—came in earlier this week. He used to have a great job as a caretaker at one of the cemeteries, and he and his dog lived on site, but he was laid off because the cemetery was unable to meet its bills. "John" now makes \$7.25 an hour (minimum wage) at a part-time job stocking shelves. By the time he cashes his check at one of the payroll stores (they take a cut of his small check), and pays his utilities, he has \$50 left. A friend gave him an old house in the East Hills; he has shelter, but he has taxes to pay. His furnace has been red tagged, so he's always cold now. "John" was so hungry he nearly fainted in the office. He and his dog have been sharing a bag of kibble that he got at one of the animal shelters.

A recent study by the United States Department of Agriculture found that about one-quarter of households with income below the Federal poverty level (with annual income of about \$45,000 for a family of four) reported food insecurity among children, compared to 3 percent of households with income above 185 percent of poverty. Wilkinsburg's median household income is about \$33,000. Typical rent is \$780 a month (\$9,360 a year). Additional expenses such as utilities can run \$400-500 or more a month. For a one bedroom apartment or a 2 bedroom house, a small family could pay \$18,000 a year in rent. If your income is \$33,000, after you pay your taxes, you haven't got much left over for food. And 12% of Wilkinsburg's residents like "John" make *less* than \$10,000 a year. Here are some more things you might like to know about Wilkinsburg:

Wilkinsburg has just over 8,152 households.
17% of these have children under the age of 18.
49% of households are made up of individuals.
Average household size is 2 - family size is 3.
16% of the population is 65 years old or older.
The median age in Wilkinsburg is 41 years old.
Median household income below state average.
Median house value below state average.
Unemployed percentage below state average.

Black race population percentage significantly above state average.
Hispanic race population percentage significantly below state average.
Foreign-born population percentage significantly below state average.
Renting percentage above state average.
Length of stay since moving in above state average.

This is why we do what we do. Children are hungry. Adults are hungry. Hunger is with us daily—several times a day. And when the last thing you can afford is food, it suddenly becomes all you can think about. We sent "John" home with a few bags of food.

Cheers and joy!

Ruth Kittner
Executive Director, WCM

FOOD PROGRAMS *(cont'd from page 1)*

Methodist Church. In addition to cold cereal and oatmeal (plus fruit and milk), children will have at least one hot breakfast a week. We've added snacks to their daily menu items as well. The snacks and available breakfasts were tested in 2016-2017 year and proved successful. Many of the children show up without having had a good breakfast. This will help them start the day right!

To improve the food program, the First Presbyterian Church of Edgewood donated a commercial refrigerator; we'll be buying a commercial freezer as well.

Summer Food Program

Month	Lunches	Snacks	Dinners/ Suppers	Total
June	732	0	50	782
July	1301	499	101	1901
August	426	0	0	426
	2459	499	151	3109

Last year was considerably higher: no longer feeding at the Boys and Girls Club which has closed.

MEET THE NEW KITCHEN STAFF



Ryan, Marettte and Bernard at work in the SAUMC kitchen

Marettte Simpson is a mother, grandmother and great grandmother. She's been working with WCM since early 2017, first as an AARP trainee, and since July, as the Head Cook and Kitchen Manager. She enjoys cooking for the children; her specialty is chicken pot pie, but she's made some wonderful other dishes. We are especially looking forward to trying her famous oatmeal raisin cookies. Marettte just passed her Food Manager course and is proudly displaying her certificate on the kitchen wall.

Ryan Joyner, Assistant Cook, is a mother of four small children. She loves to make pasta dishes and she sees this job as an opportunity to acquire some solid skills in cooking, kitchen management and nutrition planning. Ryan will be taking her Food Handler certification course next month. She has plans: maybe she'll be managing a school lunch program some day!

Bernard "Bieno" Harless is a trainee from AARP. He has 30 years' experience in the restaurant industry as a line cook. He likes to fish, and his favorite dish to cook is fish.

HOLIDAY FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS PLANNED

This year's Thanksgiving and Christmas box donations will occur on November 17 and December 21 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 noon in the dining room of the South Avenue United Methodist Church. Distributions occur on Fridays. We will be setting up the day before, and the sites must be cleaned up after distribution so that events can continue over the weekends. This year, we'll be providing meals on a "walk through" basis, rather than the assembly line of meal-in-a-box: families will sign up ahead of time and based on their family size, they will select food they want to cook for their holidays. We hope to hand out Giant Eagle gift cards for meat entrees. We need volunteers for this project to set up on Thursday morning to distribute on Friday, and to clean up on Friday! Please contact the office at 412-241-8072 and tell Shirlee or Debbie that you want to volunteer!

RMD CHARITABLE GIVING TO WCM - A WIN, WIN SITUATION

If your retirement finances consist of an individual retirement account (IRA), then starting at age 70 ½ you are required to take minimum distributions from your IRA and declare it as income. This was tax-free money when invested in the IRA and the Internal Revenue Service wants to start collecting the taxes, so the amount you must withdraw (required minimum distribution, RMD) will be declared as income on your tax return and taxes paid. There is a formula to determine the RMD and it works to have the complete IRA taxed by age 85.

The good news is that a qualified charitable deduction (QCD) is available to reduce the tax on the RMD from your IRA. (Enough three letter acronyms.) The Qualified Charitable Deduction (QCD) may be made to a qualified 501(c)(3) non-profit, such as the Wilksburg Community Ministry, and for tax filing the QCD can be deducted from the RMD which reduces taxable income. In fact, if the whole RMD is contributed to a qualified charity then there is no taxable income. The limit is \$100,000 per year.

If you make a QCD tax-free transfer from your IRA to charity, you cannot also deduct that money as a charitable contribution. But the tax-free transfer is better than a charitable deduction because it may give you extra benefits. You don't need to itemize your deductions to get a tax benefit from the gift (and many people who no longer have a mortgage don't itemize their deductions). Making the tax-free transfer also keeps the money out of your adjusted gross income. That could help you avoid the Medicare high-income surcharge, which boosts your Part B and Part D premiums if your adjusted gross income is more than \$85,000 if single or \$170,000 if married filing jointly. Keeping the money out of your adjusted gross income could also make less of your Social Security benefits taxable.

Of course, talk to your tax accountant or financial advisor to make sure you are getting the greatest benefits. Remember, a QCD from your RMD is good for WCM and good for you.

WCM BENEFITS FROM MAY 2017 DAY OF GIVING

The May 2017 *Pittsburgh Gives: Critical Needs Alert* was a great success. WCM's 27 generous donors contributed \$5,100: with the match from the Pittsburgh Foundation, we received a check for \$9,601! This is a record for WCM!

County-wide, over 3,000 donors participated, and their gifts were matched by the Pittsburgh Foundation and several private donors. The online giving event set a record for donations, raising \$1.3 million for Allegheny and Westmoreland county nonprofits to provide basic needs – food, housing, health care, child care and transportation – directly to economically struggling populations!

EXTRA, EXTRA, READ ALL ABOUT IT!

- 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. On average, we assist 250 walk-in clients each month.
- As this issue of the WELL was going to press, contributions were being collected and tabulated for the 44th annual Pittsburgh East Church World Service CROP Hunger Walk that was held on Sunday, October 8. This year's Walk was dedicated to long-term participant and Walk organizer, John (Jack) Peffer. He has participated for many years as BOTH a member of the Christian Church of Wilkinsburg and as a past President and now Director Emeritus of WCM. Many thanks go to Jack for his years of dedicated efforts to fight hunger locally and around the world. Of the total funds raised in this year's Walk, 20% will come to WCM and 5% to East End Cooperative Ministries for local use.
- The former Johnson Elementary School is being renovated as a community center.

WOULD YOU PREFER TO RECEIVE THE WELL ELECTRONICALLY?

Beginning with this issue, we will start offering the WELL electronically in a PDF form by email and on our website, in addition to the paper edition. Funding is an on-going challenge and these new offerings will help save on postage and printing costs. There are two ways you can sign up for an electronic copy of the WELL: (1) Click on the "Info" tab and then the "Contact Us" tab to sign up on the WCM website and future copies of the WELL will be delivered to your email address or (2) you can send us the form at the bottom of this page listing your name, address and email address and then checking the box at the bottom. If you do neither of these, you will continue to receive a paper copy. You can also update your street address, phone number and other contact information online at www.wcm15221.org.

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 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 Wilkinsburg Community Ministry, 704 Wood Street, Wilkinsburg, 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:

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

- \$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
- Other \$_____ Please use my contribution where it is most needed

Name *(please print)* _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email address _____

- I/We would like to receive the WELL electronically.

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704 Wood Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15221

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Wilkesburg 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 - Autumn 2017



WILKESBURG
COMMUNITY MINISTRY

Wilkesburg Community Ministry

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