



Autumn 2018

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

Ecclesiastes 3:1

WCM TURNS 50 THIS MONTH!!

Help Us Celebrate - Details on Page 7



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

As you know, beginning in the month of October 2018, we celebrate our 50th anniversary. We have a series of events planned in October, and after the holiday season, we will schedule additional events. This month we have the following:

- Sunday, October 14 - Pittsburgh East Church World Service CROP Hunger Walk
- Saturday, October 20 - 50th Anniversary Dinner. Tickets are now available and may be ordered using the form on page 7 of this newsletter.

In this issue, we have a short essay written by Mary-Almah Davis, our intern. Mary-Almah is a junior at Ellis School and she worked with us throughout the summer.

I wish to express special thanks to the organizations that assisted in our back to school collection program. In collaboration with the First Presbyterian Church of Edgewood, Mifflin Avenue Methodist Church, the Deacons of the 6th Presbyterian Church and Community LIFE, WCM distributed about 600 knapsacks and hygiene kits at the Back to School event in Wilkinsburg on August 24. Knapsacks included notebooks, drawing paper, pencils, erasers, crayons and other supplies for school. Hygiene kits included soap, shampoo, combs, toothbrushes and toothpaste, hand cloths and towels. These supplies helped the elementary-aged school children enrolled in the Wilkinsburg School District.

We look forward to seeing many of you at the dinner on October 20 as we celebrate 50 years of service to our community!

Cheers and joy!

Ruth Kittner

Executive Director, WCM

IN MEMORIAM

Reverend Cathryn Brundage

Former Executive Director of WCM (2013 - 2015)

Died on September 11, 2018

LIFE AT POVERTY LEVEL

Did you know: 81% of renters in Wilkinsburg are at poverty level and Wilkinsburg's poor adults are usually working two jobs? Most of Wilkinsburg's poor are females, under 34, children 0-18, or senior women.

Life at poverty is a hard cycle to break - some experts say it takes 20 years of cautious spending, scrimping and saving to break the cycle of poverty. For some adults, it's a life-time. For some children, it's an entire childhood.

Consider, for example, Ms. S., a 29-year-old mother of four children under the age of 11. She and her children fall statistically into the profile of a "typical" Wilkinsburg family in poverty. One child is diabetic, another has autism. She earns \$9.00 an hour in her job. Her average monthly income is about \$1440. From this, she pays about 18% in taxes (\$260). She needs a monthly bus pass: there's another \$100. Phone: another \$50-100. Medical expenses (\$120), clothes for her growing children (\$60), and miscellaneous expenses and crises (\$200) are additional monthly draws on her limited resources.

This is an impossible budget, but Ms. S. is luckier than most moms in her situation. She lives in subsidized housing, so her rent plus tenant-paid utilities are limited to 30% of her income, or \$432. If she didn't live in subsidized housing, she'd be paying over \$1000 (with utilities likely extra) a month to rent a 3-bedroom apartment. By the end of the month, if she's lucky, she has about \$168 to spend on groceries. For 5 people. Think about it! Could you live on this? With her SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - commonly referred to as food stamps) benefits, she barely squeaks by. If she or her kids get sick, and she misses a day of work, she is in desperate trouble.

Ms. S. Monthly Budget

| Item | Expense | Leaves her |
|--------|---------------------------|------------|
| \$1440 | Base monthly | |
| 260 | Taxes | 1180 |
| 100 | Phone | 1080 |
| 100 | Bus pass | 980 |
| 120 | Medical expenses | 860 |
| 60 | Kids apparel | 800 |
| 432 | Housing & utilities | 368 |
| 200 | Misc. expenses and crises | 168 |
| 300 | Food | -132 |

Ms. M. Monthly Budget

| Item | Expense | Leaves her |
|--------|---------------------------|------------|
| \$1440 | Base monthly | |
| 260 | Taxes | 1180 |
| 1129 | Housing & utilities | 51 |
| 100 | Phone | -49 |
| 100 | Bus pass | -149 |
| 120 | Medical expenses | -269 |
| 60 | Kids apparel | -329 |
| 100 | Misc. expenses and crises | -429 |
| 250 | Food @ 50/person | -679 |

Now, consider the case of Ms. M, earning the same income, also with four children, who does not live in subsidized housing. Instead, out of her \$1440 income, she could spend at least \$1000 on a 3-bedroom apartment for herself and her kids, plus tenant paid utilities of \$129. She still has her phone to pay for, and her diabetic son and her autistic daughter still need medications. Inevitably, one of her kids gets a sniffle and cannot go to day-care, so she misses work. Or she must pay a babysitter. Before the month is over, she's out of cash, and has not bought any food, or her bus pass. What's she going to do?

(Continued on page 6)

WCM PROVIDES FOOD FOR HUNGRY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

CHILDREN'S FOOD SERVICE

| | | At Risk | | Child Care (PLEA) | | | Outreach | |
|--------------|------------|-------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| | | Snack | Lunch/ Supper | Breakfast | Snack | Lunch | Forge Meals | Seniors Lunch |
| October | | 567 | 567 | 96 | 68 | 591 | 0 | |
| November | | 402 | 402 | 126 | 213 | 303 | 0 | |
| December | | 582 | 582 | 115 | 0 | 460 | 0 | |
| January | | 327 | 328 | 128 | 0 | 503 | 3 | 40 |
| February | | 266 | 274 | 123 | 421 | 421 | 80 | 40 |
| March | | 182 | 223 | 138 | 265 | 571 | 0 | 40 |
| April | | 250 | 356 | 155 | 599 | 608 | 160 | 40 |
| May | | 263 | 365 | 176 | 635 | 670 | 0 | 40 |
| June | 163 | 787 | 995 | 144 | 219 | 608 | 0 | 40 |
| July | 90 | 175 | 960 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 40 |
| August | 55 | 261 | 261 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 55 | 40 |
| Total | 308 | 4062 | 5313 | 1201 | 2420 | 4346 | 298 | 320 |

FOOD PANTRY

| 2018 | Jan | Feb | Mar | April | May | June | July | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Total |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Emergency Food | 42 | 42 | 83 | 52 | 116 | 50 | 70 | 56 | | | | | 511 |
| SNAP Households | 23 | 16 | 31 | 30 | 31 | 27 | 19 | 34 | | | | | 211 |
| Veterans | 6 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 7 | | | | | 49 |
| Disabled | 13 | 16 | 15 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 14 | 9 | | | | | 114 |
| New Households | 35 | 21 | 45 | 40 | 27 | 15 | 29 | 28 | | | | | 240 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Walk Thru 2018 | 130 | 118 | 183 | 133 | 164 | 183 | 199 | 296 | | | | | 1406 |
| Walk Thru 2017 | 129 | 113 | 92 | 124 | 144 | 125 | 120 | 148 | 110 | 133 | 144 | 110 | 1492 |
| % increase | .7 | 4.4 | 99 | 7.2 | 14 | 46 | 66 | 200 | | | | | |

EXPAND THE DIET!

The Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank has been providing us with 3-4 varieties of fresh produce every Tuesday. This is distributed in the Walk Through Shop, and includes sweet potatoes, greens, apples, peaches, lettuce, various fruits, fresh peppers, potatoes, onions.

Our collaborators at the Community Kitchen (Hazelwood) visited us in early September with some freshly baked zucchini muffins!

MY EXPERIENCE INTERNING AT WCM

By Mary-Almah Davis



The Dilemma of Food Security

The World Food Committee under the United Nations defines food security as the “condition in which all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food.”¹ Though morally correct, this definition is idealistic. Out of the 7.6 billion people in the world, around 795 million people are underfed.² In 2016, 12.3% of households in the United States were food-insecure. From 2015-2016, Allegheny County received, by the Pennsylvania government, \$1,211,232.41 worth of food, which is the second highest value of food collected in Pennsylvania. According to these statistics, food crisis is a problem that is still prevalent in our communities and around the world. The real question is not how Food Security is defined, but how to solve food insecurity.

My Experience

This past summer, I interned at the Wilkinsburg Community Ministry two days a week. I didn’t just learn about food distribution and intake, but I learned more about the community where I live. As a lover of community outreach, listening to people’s stories was my favorite part of the internship. Whether they were a newcomer or regular, someone always had something to say. They would talk about their families or just what they had in store for the day.

What I learned about food is that cautiously distributing it is most important for food security. If we gave a generous amount of food to one person, we couldn’t guarantee that the next person could get the same amount. Food regulation would vary on different days. One day we would not have a great selection of food, but the next we could’ve had many donations and be fully stocked. Overall, what I’ve learned about food security is that it is a hard process and you have to think carefully as you distribute it methodically.

How to Solve Food Instability

Food instability is a problem that occurs in every city; the question is how a city deals with that problem. It is essential for citizens to feel that food insecurity is a crucial issue for change to happen. The most important part of increasing food security is learning about the community you are helping. You can’t help people without involving yourself and listening to them. I believe that the most robust way we can make society more food secure is by forging connections with people.

References:

¹ “Food Security,” *International Food Policy Research Institute*, accessed August 27, 2018, <http://www.ifpri.org/topic/food/security>.

² “Hunger Statistics,” *Food Aid Foundation*, accessed August 27, 2018, <http://foodaidfoundation.org/world-hunger-statistics.html>.

EXTRA, EXTRA, READ ALL ABOUT IT!

- The Pittsburgh East Church World Service CROP Hunger Walk will be held on Sunday, October 14. The Walk begins and ends at South Avenue United Methodist Church. The course covers a 6 mile route and also includes a shorter 1 mile walk option. Of the total funds raised in the annual Walk, 20% has generally come back to WCM and 5% to East End Cooperative Ministries for local use. Contact Beth Simon at 412-953-6620 or by email at simon.mbs@gmail.com.
- WCM collects hygiene kits, warm hats, scarves and mittens and gently used or new coats throughout the winter. Please contact the office at 412-241-8072 if you have items to contribute!

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 for now!) The Qualified Charitable Deduction (QCD) may be made to a qualified 501(c)(3) non-profit, such as Wilkinsburg 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.

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

Life at Poverty Level (continued from page 3)

Even if Ms. S and Ms. M receive \$300-400 in SNAP benefits, these doesn't cover their needs. SNAP cannot be used to purchase paper products like toilet paper or napkins or tissues, and soap or laundry detergent is a cash purchase too. Several kinds of food items (e.g., prepared cole slaw, prepared potato salad) cannot be purchased with SNAP, and these are labor intensive preps, difficult after working two jobs.

In some cases, even for Ms. S, living in subsidized housing, she cannot get through the month and still have funds in that last week to purchase food. By the third week, inevitably, her SNAP benefit (food stamps) has run out.

This is where WCM enters their lives. We offer a daily Walk Through shop—people can participate 2 times a week and get basic staples to help them through the week: soup, fresh produce, veggies, breads, juice, eggs. We also offer emergency food, which provides enough for families for a week, including meat, cheese, and staples. But we have to limit the number of times families can use the emergency food service—only once every 3 months. Otherwise, we don't have enough to go around.

CHALLENGE: Track your own grocery spending. Can you get by on \$50 a person a month?

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF SERVICE!

You are cordially invited to the
***Wilkinsburg Community Ministry
50th Anniversary Dinner***

Saturday, October 20, 2018

6:00 PM to 8:00 PM

South Avenue United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall
733 South Avenue, Wilkinsburg

Tickets: \$50 per person (\$27 of which is a charitable donation)

Program: "Memories and Dreams"

Buffet Dinner - Door Prizes

- Chicken Cacciatore: Breast of Chicken baked in a chunky Garlic, Tomato & Bell Pepper Sauce, with Herb & Garlic Penne, Zucchini & Squash Medley, Garlic Bread, Dessert
- Lemon Herb Fish: Fish Fillets baked in a Lemon Herb Sauce, served with Rice Pilaf and Chef's choice Seasonal Vegetable, Dinner Rolls & Butter, Dessert

The dinner will be catered by Community Kitchen

Please use the mail-in form below to reserve tickets - must be received by October 10

Mail to: WCM, 702/704 Wood Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15221

OR call the office at 412-241-8072

PLEASE USE THIS FORM TO ORDER TICKETS

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email address _____

Number of tickets for Chicken Cacciatore @ \$50.00 per ticket ____

Number of tickets for Lemon Herb Fish @ \$50.00 per ticket ____

I cannot attend the event, but would like to buy a ticket(s) so a WCM client can attend.

Number of tickets @ \$50.00 per ticket ____

Total number of tickets: ____ Total amount enclosed for tickets: \$ _____

I/we would like to make an additional contribution to WCM which is enclosed.

\$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

Total amount enclosed for tickets and contribution: \$ _____

Wilkinsburg Community Ministry
702/704 Wood Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15221

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Pittsburgh, PA
Permit No. 870

RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED

**DATED MATERIAL -
PLEASE EXPEDITE**

Wilkinsburg Community Ministry Churches United - Serving Together

Wilkinsburg Community Ministry, a non-profit organization supported by area residents and congregations, responds to persistent needs of people of all faiths, addressing the human service crises in our community.

Autumn 2018



WILKINSBURG
COMMUNITY MINISTRY

Wilkinsburg Community Ministry

Phone 412-241-8072 FAX 412-241-8315

E-mail: [caring @wcm15221.org](mailto:caring@wcm15221.org) Website: www.wcm15221.org

Officers of the Board

President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer
Financial Secretary

Rev. Rita Platt
Jane Fox
Claudia (Kim) Viehland
Larry A. Viehland
Tom Ochs

Newsletter Editor / Webmaster
Contributing Editor

Roger Schneider
John (Jack) Peffer

Staff

Executive Director
Office Manager
Office Assistant and Driver
Kitchen Manager and Head Cook
Assistant Cook

Ruth Kittner, Ph.D.
Shirlee Pope
Robert Johnson
Marette Simpson
Ryan Joyner