

## Wilkinsburg Community Ministry

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*Wilkinsburg Community Ministry*

*Churches United - Serving Together*

## The Well – Spring/Summer 2006

Wilkinsburg Community Ministry  
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Pittsburgh, PA 15221-2914

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**Spring/Summer 2006**

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

Ecclesiastes 3:1

A message from the WCM Board President:

In the last issue of *The Well* I reported that we were coming to the end of a long process of developing a strategic plan for WCM. I'm happy to report that the strategic plan has now been adopted and we have formed committees to work on each of the six main goals of the plan.

The first goal was to reorganize the Board of Directors. Gail Gratton headed a small committee that put together a new set of By-Laws, which were adopted at the Board Meeting in March. The biggest change was to decrease the number of Board members, which could have exceeded 100 under the old By-Laws. The Board will now consist of between 20 and 25 individuals, which should allow us to keep the communication lines flowing more readily and to be able to respond more rapidly to new opportunities and challenges.

Two other goals are going to always be with us: to consider ways to expand our operations to more effectively meet the needs of the community and to plan for how we may phase out operations that are no longer necessary or cannot be carried out with the available financial resources. A small committee has met to work on these goals, and the Executive Committee has also been involved. As a result, we have begun a new program called Angel Food that is described elsewhere in this issue of *The Well*. We have also closed the Day Care Center, converting it into a "group home" that allows us to provide care for the infants of mothers participating in the recovery programs of ZOAR, which has recently opened a new site about two blocks from WCM.

A fourth goal was to look for a new site for WCM. We have decided not to work on this, because our relationships with Mulberry Presbyterian Church have improved and because the changes just mentioned mean that there is no longer a pressing need for more space.

*Continued on next page*

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends:

I recently came across some pictures that showed the agency back in the sixties, seventies and eighties. As I looked at these pictures, two aspects of our agency came to mind - continuity and change.

We have been serving the Wilkesburg community for more than 38 years. It seems to me that hard-working, caring and thoughtful people have been concerned for so many years, that this agency now bears the fruit of their labor and support. But times are changing drastically every day. That is why we try and seek the support of so many individuals who care about the well-being of others. We believe in the value of helping others. Simply by your giving you help us to help others.

Our long history is a tribute to you, because it is your generous gifts and prayers, which have allowed us to be successful in doing God's work in our community.

As always we thank you for your continued support for WCM.

*Aaron*

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### *Board President's Message, continued from page 1*

The last two goals will also be with us always: finding more funds and new funding sources to support the ministry and improving communication. We have a small committee working of obtaining funds through grants, and some new gifts have been received. The Well is a part of our efforts to communicate with you about the activities of WCM, but we will soon put into place a more intentional, reliable and systematic procedure for improving communication. Please help us by spreading the news of how we are attempting to help God's people in Wilkesburg and how funds are sorely needed in order for us to begin new efforts.

Yours in Christ,  
Larry A. Viehland, WCM Board President

## KAMILAH WARD JOINS THE WCM STAFF



Please join with us in welcoming Kamilah Ward to the WCM Staff as our new Meals On Wheels Coordinator. Ms. Ward recently graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work. Before graduation she served as an intern at WCM. Her new duties include the administration of WCM's "Meals on Wheels" program.

## AN ANGEL COMES TO TOWN

### *Introducing a Wonderful New Program That's Both a Bargain and a Blessing!*



Wilkinsburg Community Ministry has recently partnered with Angel Food Ministries, Inc. out of Monroe, Georgia to provide a food ministry for any and all who wish to participate. Angel Food Ministries is a non-profit, non-denominational organization dedicated to providing grocery relief to communities throughout the United States. The program began in 1994 with 34 families in Monroe, Georgia (between Atlanta and Athens), and has grown to serve thousands of families every month across 17 states. Angel Food Ministries crosses denominational lines and has spread the good news of the gospel of Christ through salvation tracts that are placed in each food order.

Our social service director, Raymond Tolbert, coordinates orders and distribution. Payments are collected during the first part of the month and food is distributed later in the month at South Avenue United Methodist Church.

#### **Blessings by the box**

Angel Food's groceries are sold in a quantity that can fit into a medium-sized box at \$25 per unit. Each month's menu is different than the previous month and consists of both fresh and frozen items with an average retail value of approximately \$50 (i.e., about twice the value). Comparison-shopping has been done across the country in various communities using a wide range of retail grocery stores and has resulted in findings that the same food items cost from between \$42 and \$78.

Generally, one unit of food assists in feeding a family of four for about one week or a single senior citizen for almost a month. The food is all the same high quality one would purchase at a grocery store. There are no second-hand items, no damaged or out-dated goods, no dented cans without labels, no day-old breads and no produce that is almost too ripe.

Also offered are specialty boxes such as steaks, chicken and pork. Many participants in this bonus program appreciate the expanded choices. Additionally, there is no limit to the number of units or bonus foods an individual can purchase, and there are no applications to complete or qualifications to which participants must adhere. Angel Food Ministries, like most all other retail grocery stores, also participates in the U.S. Food Stamp program, using the Off-Line Food Stamp Voucher system (EBT). Also accepted are cash, money orders and cashiers checks. (Personal checks cannot be accepted.)

#### **How the program works**

Food sales and distribution are handled by church and social service host sites such as Wilkinsburg Community Ministry. Orders are collected by WCM and are then sent in to the Angel Food main office in Monroe, Georgia, on a pre-determined date. Within about a week, food is delivered by a pre-arranged delivery mode to a distribution center located in McKeesport. Raymond Tolbert then makes arrangements for the pick-up and delivery to Wilkinsburg.

### Sample Menu

1 package chicken nuggets	4 8-oz hamburger steaks	4 6-oz pork chops
1.5 lb. thick bacon	1 dozen eggs	5 bagels
2-lb bag of frozen French fries	2-lb bag of onions	4 Delicious Apples
5 Bananas	1 Dessert	

In addition, each month Angel Food offers one or more specials that are available with the purchase of a regular unit. For example, a recent special was a Combo Box that featured 8 4-oz. Bacon-wrapped pork filets and 4 8-oz. T-bone steaks for \$18.00.

### **Blessings at Work**

Distribution Day, includes the presence of church and community volunteers who come together to perform duties ranging from setting up and filling boxes and containers to clean up or assisting disabled or elderly customers with carrying their containers to their cars. Most sites do not deliver to their community. Customers are urged to pick up their food at the host site location, bringing **their own boxes or baskets** to be filled. Distribution Day is where everything comes together. People are working with each other for common goals, they meet new friends and perhaps life-changing conversations take place. Socio-economic distinctions are forgotten and the church begins to regain its God-ordained presence as the centerpiece of the community. Those picking up food will be at South Avenue Church for a short time; while others, the volunteers, can expect a longer time of reward, working with one another and helping others. Distribution Day then becomes for many the one day in the month when a sense of fulfillment through service and a life of purpose becomes a reality. Providing quality food at significant discounts offered on a regular basis is a real and practical way to say clearly that we care. It also infuses a reminder of the value that God places on humans everywhere and that they deserve every opportunity that can be offered them in the name of love and friendship.

Organizations that participate in Angel Food Ministries benefit in many ways:

- Giving church members hands-on experience and training with rewarding service to others.
- Providing discounted food not only for those who need it, but also for any others who appreciate deep discounts on quality groceries.
- Giving churches and organizations an effective outreach to the community to meet real needs in a genuine way -- often times drawing new participants and visitors into the mission at hand.

### **Upcoming final payment and distribution dates:**

July 18 - - - July 29  
August 15 - - - August 26  
September 12 - - - September 23  
October 10 - - - October 21  
November 7 - - - November 18  
December 5 - - - December 16

Distribution time is 9:30 AM to 1:30 PM  
South Avenue United Methodist Church – 733 South Avenue in Wilkinsburg

### **How you can help:**

As with all WCM programs, volunteers are always needed and appreciated. You can also help us by getting the word out about this program to your church and within the community.

**To volunteer or for more information, please call Raymond Tolbert at 412-241-8072, ext. 13.**

## SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMS HELP MEET ON-GOING LOCAL NEEDS

<b>Food Pantry Statistics</b>	<b>Sept</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>March</b>	<b>April</b>
<b>From Raymond Tolbert</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>Number Served:</b>								
Families served:	9	14	12	7	14	14	9	13
Individuals served:	33	28	25	13	40	35	15	29
<b>Ages of Individuals:</b>								
Children 0 - 17 years old:	22	13	9	3	23	18	4	16
Adults 18-59 years old:	11	15	15	9	16	16	10	12
Adults: 60 yrs. and over	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Demographic information:</b>								
Male	13	13	7	7	13	16	5	12
Female	20	15	18	6	27	19	10	17
African-American	33	23	23	12	37	31	14	20
Caucasian	0	5	2	1	3	4	1	5
Hispanic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Families using Food Stamps	6	10	7	5	6	6	5	9
<b>Commodity Supplemental Food Program</b>	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
Number of boxes distributed								
(Through Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank)								

The **WCM Food Pantry** continues to offer assistance to the needy in three important ways: Emergency, Walk-Thru and Special Holiday Food Programs.

It was a busy winter for the **Dollar Energy Fund**. A total of 150 grants were processed in the amount of \$49,540 for an average grant of \$312. As of this date both the Duquesne Light and Equitable programs are out of funds. The Dominion People's Gas program is open to termination/offers only.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR 'SERVICES FOR SENIORS' PROGRAM

#### **Volunteers delivered 1,444 Meals-on-Wheels in April 2006!**

- Volunteers served over 8000 meals to Wilkinsburg residents in the past 6 months.
- It usually takes 8 volunteers **per day** to deliver 70 or more meals.
- We currently have 55+ dedicated volunteers, but are in need of more due to continued high demand.

#### **Other services provided:**

During the winter months, WCM provided several additional services to local residents. Over 70 "bad-weather boxes" stuffed with non-perishable foods were delivered to homebound seniors, to be used in the event of inclement weather. Many seniors also received baskets of fruit and candy wrapped in cellophane with a festive bow to help them celebrate the Christmas holiday season.

Voucher checks for use at the Wilkinsburg farmer's market will come in during the next few months so that seniors may obtain fresh produce from our regional farmers.

**Please contact Kamilah Ward at 412-241-8072 ext. 15 for more information.**

## LET'S HEAR IT FOR RAYMOND TOLBERT!



Raymond Tolbert, Director of Social Services, has the longest tenure of any WCM staff member. In July 1987 he came to WCM on a part-time basis after having spent several years in the Public Works Department of the Borough of Wilkesburg. His first charge was to administer the distribution of surplus cheese from Calvary Lutheran Church. He became a full-time employee of WCM in 1990 and was promoted to the position of Director of Social Services in July 1991. He has taken on many responsibilities in these 19+ years:

- He helped to implement and then directed **Emergency Food Distribution**, one of WCM's longest-running programs.
- In the comparatively new **"Walk-through"** Program, about twenty people per day walk through the WCM office to get food. No documentation is needed.
- He manages the new **"Angel Food"** Program in which a national organization sells a monthly basket of food at low cost to those who apply.
- He is in charge of the WCM **Dollar Energy Fund**, which helps those who are in danger of losing their electricity, gas, and water service.
- During the winter of 2005-6 the Fund secured grants for 150 clients that averaged about \$300 each. Almost \$50,000 was disbursed to needy recipients.
- About ten years ago Ray implemented and still administers **"Furnish a Start"**, a Pittsburgh-based program that distributes repaired furniture to needy families.

Raymond serves on or has served on several boards such as the Advisory Boards for Hosanna House and Dominion Peoples Gas Company, the Dollar Energy Fund, and a social service network that refers needy people to various agencies.

Raymond's door is always open and he demonstrates daily his compassion for the people of Wilkesburg with the candy on his desk, his ready smile, and his willingness to listen. We're all very thankful for Raymond's continued dedication and generous service to our community.



A young staffer back in 1989

Dropping off a load of furniture

Raymond in the food pantry

## SUMMER CHURCH CAMP ENROLLMENT IN FULL SWING!

Wilkinsburg Community Ministry is now accepting applications for children from the ages of 7 to 16 to experience a week at one of four camps administered by churches in the Pittsburgh area. The four camps are: **Agape** near McDonald, PA run by the Lutheran Church in America; **Crestfield** near Slippery Rock run by the Pittsburgh Presbytery; **Jumonville** near Uniontown run by the United Methodist Church; and **Laurelview**, near Seven Springs run by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Pennsylvania.

Our goal is to have forty Wilkinsburg children attend church camps this summer. Scholarship aid is available, all of these camps are accredited and all are committed to instilling children with Christian values through the camp experience.

## 2006 CROP WALK SET FOR SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8



Plans are already underway for this year's walk, which will be held Sunday afternoon, October 8 over a 10K course through the East End of Pittsburgh. Funds raised in the Crop Walk go to help fight hunger around the world and 15% of the money raised locally goes to WCM to help support our local hunger-fighting programs. The East End Cooperative Ministry is also a recipient of the local funds. This past October 115 walkers from 17 groups and congregations raised a total of \$10,560.

If you or your group/congregation would like to participate in the 2006 walk, please contact Roger Schneider in the evenings or weekends at 724-327-4864.

## YOUR INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION IS NEEDED NOW

You have read in this and past issues of "The Well" about the many wonderful things we are doing to help those in need. A large portion of our support comes from area individuals and businesses and we hope you'll consider making a new or additional contribution at this time. Please use the form below and send your tax-deductible contribution to WCM, 710 Mulberry St., Pittsburgh, PA 15221. 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**. Please be sure to check "yes" at the bottom of the form so that your gift can be acknowledged.

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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:

\$25  \$50  \$75  \$100  \$200  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Payable: Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Monthly \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Quarterly \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ No thank-you necessary.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Please consider this

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

gift to be anonymous.