

GOMOC NEWS

A New Way to Think of the Poor

When we consider the poor, we often think about people far removed from ourselves. "They" don't have the same work ethic that we have, or "they" have fallen on rough times that we never expect to experience. The advocate at the Ministry of Concern recently met a person who illustrates how "they" really are part of "us".

E. had a good job in Seattle, where she lived with her daughter. She was making good money, had family and friends around her, and was leading a good life. About three years ago, E.'s employer transferred her to this area. She and her daughter moved and began a new life 3,000 miles from everything they knew. After two years in their new home, E.'s employer laid her off.

Like many of us, E. looks back now, wishing she had saved more money in planning for her future. She didn't have enough cash to move back to Seattle. Like many of us, E. never planned on being let go and having her life change so drastically. She did not plan on searching for work for over a year and being unable to find a job. Her unemployment ran out, and she came to the Ministry of Concern after applying for public assistance.

We were able to help with the prescription she requested until her Medicaid went into effect. We were also able to suggest working as a volunteer to make job connections. But E.'s story is not unusual, and it is closer to all of us than we would like to believe. Perhaps when we think of the poor, we will remember how close we all are to being one of "them".



GOMOC WISH LIST

Soap, laundry and dish detergent, deodorant, shampoo, personal hygiene items, diapers, disposable razors, toilet paper, other paper products, and cleaning supplies.



Some Fun Changes at the Annual Dinner!

Music! Prizes! Food! The Ministry of Concern's Annual Dinner, held on Tuesday, May 17 at the American Legion Post #35 in Albion, included some fun changes that were not part of the roster in past years. The wonderful Kendall High School Jazz Band entertained us during the reception for about an hour. Tickets were sold for a silent auction that included many exciting donated prizes. Following the invocation by Pastor Morrell Washington of the Royal Church of God in Christ in Kent, we all enjoyed a delicious meal prepared by the American Legionnaires.

Words of inspiration were provided by Mr. Ramon Chaya who spoke of "Volunteer Magic" and then presented the Ministry with a plaque dedicated to all of our volunteers—past, present and future! Mr. Chaya, a native of Batavia and currently Director of Business and Employee Skills Training with the BEST Center at Genesee Community College, is no stranger to volunteering himself. He has been an active Rotarian for thirty years and has been involved in volunteer leadership positions for many organizations. At present, Mr. Chaya is the President of the Board of Directors for the Genesee Orleans Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse.

The Ministry's 2004 "Outstanding Support" Award was presented by Mr. John Cebula, Esq., President of the Board of Directors for the Ministry of Concern, to Mrs. Mary Grace Demarse. Mrs. Demarse is the Treasurer of the Board of Directors for the Ministry of Concern, and has almost single-handedly organized two of the Ministry's most productive fundraisers — a spaghetti dinner in 2004 and a chicken barbecue this past April. A heartfelt thank you to Mrs. Demarse and all of her hard work on behalf of the poor in Orleans and Genesee Counties.

Thanks to the efforts and donations of many area businesses and individuals, the annual dinner raised over \$1,400 for the clients served by the Ministry of Concern. Thank you to all who donated goods or gave of their time and talents.

An Apology to Pawlak's Save-A-Lot:

Sincere apologies to one of our most loyal contributors, Pawlak's Save-A-Lot in Albion, as they were inadvertently omitted from the program for the Annual Dinner. Pawlak's is always available to lend a hand, a gift certificate or whatever the Ministry of Concern requests. We are most grateful for their unflinching support.

FUNDRAISER

Look for used cell phone collection boxes that the Ministry of Concern has distributed at different sites in Genesee and Orleans Counties. Donate your old cell phones to us and we will turn them into revenue for our agency to use in serving the poor in our communities.



Thanks For Your Support!

The Ministry of Concern held a number of fundraising events over the past few months. Some events were new to us, and some were repeats, such as our Annual Dinner (see page one for more information). Thanks to all who participated in any way for your support!

On Sunday, April 17 we held a Chicken Bar-B-Q at St. Mary's Church in Batavia. B & R's Pig and Ox Roasting Service catered the event, and we held a silent auction. While we enjoyed the delicious food, we had lots of fun with the silent auction. Donations for the auction included everything from bags of onions to homemade quilts. All in all, we raised over \$1,300 which will support programs assisting clients of the Ministry.

We also held fundraisers at the Pizza Huts in Albion and Batavia during the months of April and May and in Medina in June. Customers were asked to present coupons when they dined at Pizza Hut, and a portion of their dinner costs benefited the Ministry of Concern. It was a good excuse to go out and eat at Pizza Hut on a Tuesday night!

Thanks again for all of your support during these events. If you have any ideas for potential fundraisers for the Ministry, please call Malika at (585) 589-9210.

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A gift was given to the Genesee Orleans Ministry of Concern in honor of Sister Marian Adrian, G.N.S.H., by Susan Locke.

A donation was given in honor of Saint Mary R.C. Church, Batavia, by Mary Grace Demarse.

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Dear Friends,

There are two ways of helping the poor. One is to offer emergency services to those in need; to provide food, clothing, housing, furniture and medical help to those who cannot afford them. The Genesee Orleans Ministry of Concern, with the help of generous people like you, has been doing this since its incorporation in 1968. Most of the work I have done with the poor has been in this area. It is known as band-aid services and is not to be underestimated. Anyone who has had one of these needs knows that receiving this service can be essential to living a truly human life.

The other way to serve the poor is to work for a society in which it is possible for everyone to achieve basic human necessities. To work to establish such a society is to serve the poor by seeking systemic change. To do this requires us to ask hard questions: "How can we provide a just wage for all workers?" "What needs to be done so that every young person can receive a suitable education?" "How can health care benefits become available to all families?" "Why is decent housing not accessible to all?" Then we need to answer the even harder question, "What can I do to achieve these goals?" Sometimes the answers to these questions are not popular.

Surely God has provided an earth that we can develop to provide for all its inhabitants. Let us join together to think and pray with these questions and the formulation of appropriate answers.

Enjoy the remainder of your summer.

Sincerely,

Marian M. Adrian, G.N.S.H.



Just Friends Activity Blow-Out!

This spring has seen our Just Friends program blossoming with activities for children still waiting for their special mentor.

In April, 17 children came together for a Spring Fling and a day of crafty fun. The kids made wind chimes and Hoopsters (geometric planes). With lunch and laughs, it was a great day. May found 25 children enjoying a Garden Party. Flower pots were decorated and seeds were planted to celebrate spring. The children decorated garden stones, played games and had a delicious lunch. In June, we had an exciting Living Legends reptile show. What more can a kid ask for than lots of creepy crawly things to look at!! A craft and lunch were also enjoyed.

Though we are thrilled to provide these fun activities, we know that the children would be even more excited to be matched with a one-on-one mentor—someone to spend time with on a regular basis who is there just for them! We currently have over 60 children waiting for their special friend. Chris Goetze, Coordinator of the Just Friends Program, is available to speak to your group. Whether a formal gathering or an informal get together for you and your friends, she is happy to come and talk to you about the program.

The difference you can make in the life of a child is immeasurable. Please consider becoming a mentor today!



Increasing Malnourishment in Children

Tuesday, June 7, was National Hunger Awareness Day (NHAD). During the entire month of June, events were planned around the country to bring awareness to the problem of hunger in the United States. According to the NHAD website, recent official figures show that increasing numbers of American children are subject to a greater prevalence of hunger in the United States.

According to figures released by the U.S. Census Bureau in December, over 5,000 people living in Orleans County and over 4,900 people in Genesee County were living in poverty during 2002. That averages out to be about 10% of the population for each county—quite a large segment of our population! Even more disturbing are the statistics from the Census Bureau that report 17% of children under the age of 17 in Orleans County and almost 12% of those in Genesee County are living in poverty. What can we do to help these neighbors?

In the words of Nelson Mandela, "Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings." Let it begin with us!

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From the desk of the Executive Director.....

CHANGE is inevitable, change is good, change is stressful. There are a lot of different ideas about change. Some rush toward it with great anticipation and excitement, while others agonize over it and dread it begrudgingly resisting it, still others take a little of each extreme response and thrive in it. Although we have regretfully accepted the resignation of our office manager, MaryAnn Salisbury, we appreciate all that she has contributed to the agency and wish her the best in her second retirement. (In case you did not know, she came to this agency as a retired nurse). MaryAnn has been responsible for keeping the office running smoothly. She has been a valued employee of this agency for over nine years.

Congratulations to Linda Morse, Coordinator of Program Development and most recently serving as Advocate in Orleans County. Linda completed her Masters Degree in Social Work from Roberts Wesleyan College this year and will be pursuing a career in social work. She has been with the agency for 4 years starting as Supervisor of Programs with diverse responsibilities in the agency. Both have been responsible for the publication of this newsletter and will be missed by all. As the newest staff member, both have helped me immensely in finding my way around the office and I would like to personally express my gratitude. We wish you both the very best of everything!

Another change has been in some of the funding that we receive. As you know, our Parenting Program lost funding last year and some other funds were reduced because of changes in the economy. In an effort to more efficiently utilize our limited resources, we will send letters of receipts for donations three times per year. They will be sent approximately one month after the newsletter is distributed. This process will allow us to use the bulk mailing rate which will cut our postage expense in half. In fact, some of our donors send us a self addressed stamped envelope to help us keep the administrative cost to a minimum. So if you do not receive your letter of acknowledgement in the usual timeframe, please be aware that it will arrive somewhat later than usual. We do appreciate your contributions to help us help the needy in our community and, without your support, we could not provide the much needed services.

What has not changed since its inception, is the purpose of this agency. It is known as the “agency of last resort” because it works with people who have nowhere else to go. Our two objectives are to provide emergency services for the economically poor and to assist and encourage members of the poverty community in becoming independent, self-sufficient and contributing members of society. Our newsletter continues to be a vehicle for communicating our progress towards achieving those objectives and we humbly apologize if any article appears otherwise.

Another vehicle that is used to communicate our progress is the Annual Dinner Meeting. This year’s and subsequent Annual Dinners will continue to be fund raisers. We are pleased to report that the changes in the Annual dinner were successful. We received many compliments and accolades regarding them and we are looking forward to an even better event next year! THANK YOU for supporting us through these changes as we anticipate new opportunities with excitement and optimism.

Malika Hill
Executive Director

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