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We accept credit cards and electronic fund transfers directly from your account to ours. The process is fast and secure. Visit our website and follow the instructions on our donation page to get started today.

Prayer Support

We believe that our ability to do what we do comes from the grace of God, providing our team with wisdom in making decisions and guiding our daily activities. Praying for us daily would be a great encouragement to our team.

Caring for the Community –by Rob

It can be very easy to misunderstand the community in which we live and serve. By many appearances, Rogers Park might resemble some of the more “desirable” neighborhoods on the north side of Chicago like Andersonville or Lakeview. We have an organic community garden in Schreiber Park that has just ended its fifth season, and Loyola University continues to expand with new buildings and green spaces. However, we also have high poverty rates, gangs, and the occasional violent act that reminds us that we are still living in a major urban area.

This is a difficult road we try to walk as differences in economic strata are becoming as, or more, charged than racial and ethnic boundaries. Please pray for us as we walk with the mother who is struggling with feeling like her son being hit by an 18 year-old driver, who fled the scene of the accident, is not being taken seriously by the courts. Pray for us as we walk with the homeowners down our street who are trying to cope with a shooting that happened directly outside of their house. Pray for us as we walk with those who have been struggling with addictions for the majority of their lives and truly want change, but cannot see a way out. Pray for us as we grieve with those who mourn the loss of loved ones who were too young to have lost their lives. Pray for us as we bring the presence of the Living God into all of these circumstances, and pray that we would clearly hear His voice each and every day we are present here.



INTERNSHIP & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

If you are a student in high school, college, university, or seminary looking to complete volunteer hours or an internship, give us a call.

Many opportunities exist for hands-on experience!


Please contact Susan: 773.262.0760

Celebrating a Milestone

In 2014 Family Empowerment Centers will reach a milestone: we're turning 10 and we plan to celebrate all year long! Be on the lookout for news in the upcoming weeks and months on the planning of celebrations, special events and featured stories of lives changed!

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**The Official Newsletter
of the
Family Empowerment
Centers**

November 2013

Serving the Poor because it Matters to God –by Rev. Scott Manke

I was reading from Isaiah the prophet a few weeks back and I was once again reminded of what matters most to God. Sometimes we forget that he is the creator and we are the creation, and in so doing, we move and act as if we were the creator. We make decisions that are motivated by what appeals to us, or what will provide for us the most comfort. Much of the time that is fine and an acceptable part of the process of decision making. However, sometimes we forget to invite God into our decision making, and often times that is when we drift away from God's better desire for our lives, look more to what benefits us, and less at what benefits others.

In Isaiah chapter 58, the people were doing the right things religiously (in this case fasting) but it was more a show than an actual representation of the heart. God calls them out and it says this in verses 5b-9:

^{5b} *Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the LORD?*

⁶ *“No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people.*

⁷ *Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.*

⁸ *“Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind.*

⁹ *Then when you call, the LORD will answer.*

We do not always get it right in our journey, but we have purposed our lives to live out that which we value and believe personally and organizationally. We value all people and we recognize that God has a burden for the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed, the hungry, the prostitute, the addict, and those that society would rather overlook because they make us feel uncomfortable. We also recognize that the power to transform lives is God's responsibility, but he calls people like you and I to be the messengers and the conduit by which he brings comfort and freedom to those who are less fortunate. Our suffering in service to others is nothing compared to the suffering of Christ for us. Even in our suffering in service, however, there is a promise that God will answer us when we pray, that we will heal quickly, and that our salvation will come like the dawn.

This holiday season, we recognize that not everyone can personally and physically do something to help the poor and needy; however, let me suggest that you consider partnering with us financially as we are the hands and feet of the Lord serving a broken and oppressed people in Chicago all year long.

Staff Contacts

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S.A.Y. Yes! Afterschool Program:
Dania Castillo, Program Director
Danielle Alvarado, Assistant Program Director

Schedule of Events

Bible Club (for youth)
Mon. 4:30-6:00pm

English as a Second Language Class
Tues. & Thurs. 6:30-8:30pm

S.A.Y. Yes! Afterschool Program
Mon. 3:45-4:30pm
Tues.-Thurs. 3:45-6:00pm

Women's Bible Study
Wednesday 6:30-8:00pm

Worship Service
Sunday 10:30am

S.A.Y. Yes! Happenings: Potluck Fundraiser & Harvest Party

Session 1 of the S.A.Y. Yes! afterschool program was jam-packed with activity. In addition to the usual emphasis on Life Skills, character development, and academic reinforcement, the students were treated to their share of fun-times. A Harvest Party was the highlight of the session (see Danielle's article below) along with an International Potluck fundraiser, and a visit from Chicago police officer, Brian Smith, who spoke about bullying.

As an outgrowth of gratitude for the presence of the Center in her life, Brenda, a single-mom connected to the Center's church community, has committed to raise \$10,000 for a few projects around the Center: to replace the carpet in the classrooms, to provide new rubberized flooring in the Multipurpose room, and a down-payment on a new 16-passenger van for the Center.

Through rummage sales, candy sales, potlucks and the like, Brenda and her son have worked steadily to accomplish this goal. Through Brenda's dedication and promotion of the Center, she has raised nearly one-third of the funds, realizing the first phase of her goal: replacing the old, worn and stained carpet in the classroom with new, vibrant flooring.

In early November, Brenda, along with Center staff, organized a potluck fundraiser featuring international cuisine, provided by many families in the afterschool program. The program featured a talent show showcasing various skills from students in the program, as well as magician Tomas Medina, who captivated the audience, both young and young-at-heart alike.

Raising nearly \$800, this event marked the most successful "Brenda's Special Project" fundraiser to date. Thank you to all the volunteers and families in the S.A.Y. Yes! afterschool program who prepared food, purchased tickets, and helped to promote this event!



Magician Tomas Medina amazed the audience of nearly 100 guests with many tricks!



S.A.Y. Yes! Harvest Party Extravaganza! - by Danielle



As time goes by, I appreciate working with the children in the S.A.Y. Yes! afterschool program even more. I enjoy being part of special events such as the Harvest Party that took place on the 31st of October. Many things went on this particular day. We had stations set up for different activities such as crafts, a donut eating contest, musical chairs and even a petting zoo! Many pictures were taken. Some of the parents joined us on this day. They all brought in candy to share with us, and even treated us to a pizza dinner as well! They all walked out with a huge smile on their face! It's an enormous blessing to be part of these children's lives and watch how they continue to grow academically, socially, and in their faith.



Relationships Forming in E.S.L. Class -by Brandie

The second month of Family Empowerment Centers' English as a Second Language program is coming to a close, and what an amazing two months it has been!

We have around 25 students who are regularly attending the program. Not only are students learning the basics of the English language, but friendships have been formed between students and teachers within the program. A teacher in the Beginner class commented, "I feel like we are becoming a little family with our students." One of the students in the Advanced class mentioned, "Coming to ESL class is my favorite part of the week. The rest of my week isn't exciting, but I love to come to English class." Teachers are doing their best to really connect with their students in a number of ways, including planning potluck dinners for their class, or visiting their students at their places of employment to say hi and support them. Students, teachers, and staff alike all seem to be benefiting from the relationships that are being formed through the ESL program. What a blessing it has been!



Expanding Partnerships to Increase Program Sustainability -by Susan

I can hardly believe that a year has passed since the time I transitioned to Family Empowerment Centers to help launch the Development & Donor Care position. It seems like the year has flown right by. As we move into the Center's busiest season, the end-of-year has some wonderful events and partnerships in the works, which I am quite excited to share.

The Development Office has been busy the past few months building inroads with Illinois Action for Children and the Safe Haven program, run through Chicago Public Schools' Office of Faith Based Initiatives. Through the issuance of financial stipends, both of these partnerships will enable the Center to expand the S.A.Y. Yes! afterschool program, while at the same time strengthening the programs financial sustainability. Please pray with us that as we continue in conversation and action to comply with requirements set before us that the Center will find favor to be selected as a partner site.

Another exciting development is the Center's movement to contract Work Study students through Loyola University's Lake Shore campus. The closing of a peer agency's afterschool program, due to lack of funding, presented us with the opportunity to accept up to half of the agency's 15 work study students, along with our offer to absorb some of the students in their afterschool program. This Work Study partnership will enable the Center to expand the S.A.Y. Yes! afterschool program through increased enrollment, while allowing the staff-to-student ratio to remain 1:6. After a very successful site visit, we submitted a contract to transition up to 8 of the agency's 15 Work Study students in the upcoming weeks. Pray with us that our contract is approved, and for a smooth transition for workers and the displaced program students who will transition to our afterschool program.

As efforts continue to build a solid base of volunteer support for the Center's programs, we are grateful for recent partnerships with Wheaton In Chicago, Loyola University, Northwestern University, and North Park University who have formally registered Family Empowerment Centers as an intern host site. While Moody Bible Institute continues to remain a long standing partner with the Center, we are moving in the direction of strengthening our programs by cultivating a consistent and stable volunteer base.