

VINEYARD OUTREACH MINISTRY

November

A Holiday Newsletter

2010

It is cold and rainy. Our battery operated doorbell rings continuously. The hundred year old door swings open and closed multiple times. Children enter. They need hats, gloves, pajamas and blankets. Adults enter. They need socks, underwear, extra large coats, soap, deodorant, shampoo, toothpaste.

Few who enter our Center have been here before now. They wait for us to ask them for ID. We don't do that. We just ask them to take what they need and to "pass it on" when times are better for them. They smile and agree.

We see the upturned faces of a young boy and his sister who are happy to try on new hats and gloves. We hear a tired grandmother remark that blankets for her granddaughters who have no beds right now will be good. We feel the desperation of the man who can't find a winter coat that fits him. We notice his gratitude to receive two scarves, a warm hat and some good gloves to wear.

We watch young men and women try on coats, hats and gloves. We hand out hotel sized shampoos, conditioners, soaps and toothpastes. We regret having to tell one young man that we have no deodorant or underwear for him. We delight in the joyous expressions of two young girls when they receive new pajamas that are brightly colored with girly cupcakes or hearts on satin and fleece fabrics. Heavy new socks are passed around to adults and children, too.

Although our ministry staff and some volunteers have worked through multiple winters in this gentrifying neighborhood where we are based - we never get used to the sufferings of people who are aged, homeless, mentally ill, sick or tormented.

We never get used to the steady stream of misery that comes in and out of this Center's old door when the Midwestern weather turns bitterly cold, the shelters fill up, and the utilities get turned off for people who just can't make ends meet.

We never get used to being stand-in parents for homeless young adults or stand-in grandparents for fragmented parents or neighborhood friends for children who have no idea of the odds against them in this life.

We never get used to listening to the cries of the poor as they reach the end of their human limits or resources. We never cease marveling at their courage under fire or their willingness to remain faithful to their children or their children's children when running away from it all might appear to be the best way to eliminate the fear and the pain from their lives. We never stop reveling in their joy when some realize that it is God who cares about them and God who provides for them.

Most joyfully, we never get used to the privilege of seeing God's faithfulness at work through the donors and program volunteers who help secure justice for the oppressed, give food to the hungry, and raise up the spirits of those people we meet who are bowed down. We delight in God's love for the just among you who give what you can to protect strangers, sustain the widow and the fatherless, and thwart the way of the wicked.

There may come a time when some of us who are writing or reading this holiday newsletter will be bowed down with financial worries, grief, poor health or unexpected tragedy. We might find ourselves standing in the shoes of the very persons we are here in God's grace to assist and encourage now. Perhaps some of us will be looking for a warm blanket, a used winter coat, cupcake covered shiny pajamas, or a tube of toothpaste one day? Isn't it good to know that the same God who provides through you for the needs of the people we welcome into this ministry's warm and homey Center will be present to save and uplift us, too?

May the Lord of us all reign forever in your minds and hearts. May He bless you and your families through all generations. May you be privileged to forever witness God's saving grace at work in your lives and in the lives of your neighbors whoever and wherever they might be.

**Catherine Dance
Director/Pastoral Worker**

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**"...for I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a
stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked
and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited
me. I was in prison and you came to me."
(Mt.25:35-36)**

MINISTRY ACTIVITIES, PROGRAMS & SERVICES YOUR DONATIONS EMPOWER:

Bridge Group

Daze Away & Hope for Moms Programs

Emergency Assistance Programs

Family Outings & Holiday Celebrations

Tuesday Kids Klub Supper Hour

Wednesday After School Tutoring

Wednesday Hope for Teens Program

Thursday Kids Evening Playtime

Fun in the Sun Summer Afternoon Recreation Program

Kids Summer Arts & Crafts Program

Outreach, Resource Referral, Pastoral Services & Visitation

Recovery Writers Group

Sunday Dinner & Prayer Program

Transportation to doctors, programs, job interviews, etc.

Women Faith Writers

MATERIAL NEEDS

Blankets

Heavy winter coats for men and women, sizes 1,2,3X

Heavy gloves for men and women

Toys

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR DONORS

Vineyard Outreach Ministry is a charitable, non-profit corporation. Regular donations, memorial contributions and gifts of stock are tax deductible. Credit card donations can now be made through Pay Pal by accessing our website at www.vineyardoutreachministry.org and clicking on Donations.

2010 MINISTRY BOARD

Chris Middleton, President; Margaret Fleckenstein, Vice President; Casey Blair, Treasurer; Reverend Simon Tuin, Secretary; Kay Carter, John Huizinga, Bruce Shurtz

BOARD MEMBERS NEEDED!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

If you are considering a way to give back in life, please consider being a board member. Please call Catherine Dance, 269-349-2388 for more information about this volunteer opportunity. Board members for this small local charity are primarily responsible for fund-raising and staff support. Average time spent per month as a working board member is generally about 3 to 5 hours a month.



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