

The Canticle

The newsletter of Santa Maria Urban Ministry, San Jose, CA December 2008

Bishop Visits SMUM

There she was—sitting on the mat with the children, reading and talking with them. She was enjoying herself as much as the children were enjoying being with her. Spending a few minutes in the ABC Playtime classroom was a highlight of Bishop Mary Gray-Reeves' visit to SMUM in October.



Bishop Mary Gray-Reeves at ABC Playtime. Photo by Mary Beth Gay

In a follow-up letter to SMUM Executive Director Lawrence Robles, the Bishop said, “I especially enjoyed reading to the preschoolers. Those are precious moments indeed for me now that I am not in parish ministry.”

But there were other highlights as she met and talked with volunteers about many of the other programs at SMUM. The Bishop also enjoyed a delicious lunch prepared by Carmen Robles and her helpers and shared with many of the volunteers on duty.

In her letter, Bishop Mary said, “I want to thank you for the wonderful visit I had with you...I was grateful for the very thorough tour, meeting everyone who is so committed to the ministry there, and just enjoying the very positive and focused energy of the commitment to the clients and community.”

As they were leaving school, many children were telling their parents about the Bishop and what

she did. An impressive and good time was had by all.

Give a Christmas Gift to Your Neighbor

Jesus commanded, “Love your neighbor.” When asked to define *neighbor*, Jesus expanded the traditional meaning of the word, defining our *neighbor* as anyone who is in need. The message is really very simple: **help the needy**. It’s not hard to understand, it’s just hard to do.

SMUM will make it easy for you to help our clients, whose needs are increasing as economic conditions grow worse. Listed below are some of the ways your contribution will be translated into addressing the needy. If you give:

- \$25.00 SMUM can buy 4 cases of canned vegetables.
- \$50.00 SMUM can buy 5 cases of peanut butter.
- \$75.00 SMUM can buy school supplies for ABC playtime for a month.
- \$100.00 SMUM can buy sleeping bags for 10 homeless people.

Write the check, send it to SMUM, and you will be “Loving your neighbor.”

Help the Homeless through the Warm Heart Ministry

Another way you can help is to donate items to SMUM’S Warm Heart Ministry. SMUM needs clean sweaters, jackets, blankets, and sleeping bags for its homeless clients. So as you look at items you no longer wear and are going to discard, keep Warm Heart in mind.

For other ideas about how you can help SMUM’s clients, see the story “Christmas, a Busy Time at Santa Maria Urban Ministry” on page 4.

Faithful ABC Playtime Teacher Moves to South of Wales

SMUM is losing a fine teacher and loyal volunteer as Gill Colloff leaves for a global tour and a move to the south of Wales. Lawrence Robles says of her, "We probably wouldn't have had ABC Playtime without her. She has been a stalwart, faithful teacher." To honor her, the Rev. Robles, Carmen Robles, and ABC Playtime teachers honored Gill with a farewell lunch.



ABC Playtime teachers with Gill Colloff (to the right of the roses) at farewell lunch

In a note to her SMUM colleagues, Gill wrote, "It has been a pleasure and a privilege to have been volunteering at Santa Maria over the last 10 years. The children are all so special as you all are too." Everyone at SMUM will all miss Gill, especially the ABC children, and her selfless service.

Answered Prayers

During the past months, a number of individuals and organizations have provided much-needed gifts and assistance to SMUM. We salute the following:

- **Food sources.** Each month SMUM receives food from Le Boulanger, PW Market, Safeway, and Trader Joe's from their extra or unneeded supplies. Their generosity helps provide varied and nutritious food boxes for SMUM's clients.
- **Sandwiches.** Martha's Kitchen prepares sandwiches each weekday that are distributed to SMUM clients who need food immediately.

- **Donation to purchase food.** The Wu Foundation contributed \$2,000 to SMUM for purchasing items for the Food Warehouse. This generous gift helps enable SMUM to meet increased demands and reduced food sources.
- **SMUM Finance Expert.** Lisa Gonzalez of San Luis Obispo has responded to SMUM's need for an accounting whiz who can prepare our financial statements and maintain our accounting records. Lisa is a tax preparer with considerable experience in working with nonprofit organizations. She has already prepared records for September and given the Executive Director and the Board of Directors in-depth, useful information. A God-send!
- **St. Tim's Gourmet Dinner.** On October 25, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Mountain View held its Gourmet Dinner, with proceeds going to SMUM. This annual event is well-supported by St. Tim's parishioners who have a wonderful evening for a very good cause.



Maly and Alan Hughes with Lawrence and Carmen Robles at the St. Tim's Gourmet Dinner. Maly is the Priest Executive at St. Tim's. Photo courtesy of John Harrison Photography.

SANTA MARIA URBAN MINISTRY EL MINISTERIO URBANO DE SANTA MARIA

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More Answered Prayers

ACE Hardware. Every year ACE Hardware invites individuals all over the country to write 100-word essays describing why a favorite nonprofit organization should receive \$10,000 in remodeling materials and volunteer labor from ACE. The essays are to specify what the materials and labor will be used for and why they are needed. Board member Tim Kohler of St. Timothy's Mountain View wrote an essay about SMUM which proposed resurfacing the ABC play area, improving the kitchen, adding storage for Studio 17, and remodeling the welcome desk area.



Tim Kohler, ACE essay writer and SMUM Board member, at the St. Tim's Gourmet Dinner. Photo courtesy of John Harrison Photography.

Santa Maria Urban Ministry was one of only 10 organizations selected for grants in the U.S., and the only one in California. To present the grant, Julia Vinyard, Senior Account Executive, and Christopher Boniface, manager of the ACE Hardware store at Meridian and Curtner, Willow Glen, visited SMUM and presented a cardboard "check" for \$10,000, symbolizing the supplies and labor to come. The grant will cover the materials needed for the work Tim proposed; ACE employees will provide volunteer labor. Work will be done early in 2009 and will make SMUM a much-improved place for serving clients.

Gale Hazen and Friends. For several years, Gale Hazen of Holy Spirit Campbell has directed a project that provides 500 stockings for SMUM's children. (Yes, **500** stockings!) Again this year, Gale and her friends have made the stockings and filled each one with a toothbrush, toothpaste and floss, crayons, pencils and erasers, several candies, and a \$5 gift certificate for McDonalds. Gale's dentist helps with the dental supplies. Thanks to Gale and her friends, stockings can be hung by the chimney with care....

Britannia Arms. Michael North, the owner of the English Pub/Restaurant, and his customers at the Almaden Road pub donated 277 frozen turkeys to SMUM—just in time for the holidays.

Santa Clara Deanery. This group served SMUM in several important ways recently. In August, the Deanery sponsored an **Open House** at SMUM that featured a tour of the facilities. During the Open House, members of the Santa Clara Deanery also assisted in adding school supplies to the backpacks that SMUM distributed to 500 students.

On October 11, the Deanery also carried out the **Barnes and Noble fund-raiser**, which designated a percentage of net sales of \$8,197 to SMUM, for a \$1,230 contribution. Good work, Deanery! And thank you to all who purchased books and other materials at Barnes and Noble.



Lawrence Robles leads a tour of the SMUM facilities. Photo by Phyllis DuBois.

STUDIO 17 Kids

Studio 17 is a SMUM-sponsored after-school homework program working with 5th to 8th grade students. The program is staffed by volunteers Katy Dickinson, John Plöcher, Stephenie Cooper, and Lewis Pollard.

A new project this year is a book club.

Students who participate have the opportunity to check out a book from the Studio 17 bookshelf, read it, and then give an oral report. Students receive prizes for completing the assignment. Some of the books currently being read are: *The Bunnica Collection*; *A Wrinkle in Time*; *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*; *Eragon*; *Alanna*; *First Test*; and *Holes*.

Grade- and interest-level reproducible materials are always welcome by the staff. If you are able to help, you can do so by sending a check to SMUM with a "Studio 17" note on the memo line. If you would like to purchase materials yourself, most book stores or teacher supply stores have appropriate **reproducible** materials. A few caveats: books should not be in color, they should be of interest to the age and grade level of the students, and they should look like they are fun. Suggested topics are handling money, puzzles, and mazes.

Christmas, a Busy Time at Santa Maria Urban Ministry

December is an especially busy time at SMUM. Client registration for Christmas items began on November 10, and distribution will take place between Monday, December 8, and Saturday, December 20. During that time, SMUM will see lots of activity.

For children and youth, ages infant-17 years, SMUM offers gift packages. Area churches have been generous about helping with these packages; for example, St. Luke's Los Gatos has provided gift cards for teenage clients, with bus tokens to help them travel to stores. Others bring gifts for

children to SMUM, which are gratefully received *unwrapped* so that appropriateness can be ensured.

For adults, gifts are given if contributions make this possible. Again some area churches help make this possible. St. Francis Willow Glen, for example, adopts 12 SMUM families (identified by Lawrence Robles) and provides gifts for all of the adults and children in the family.

For families, SMUM provides food boxes with generous amounts of food for their holiday meals. Currently the warehouse freezers contain enough turkeys and chickens to meet the anticipated need; however, the number of individuals coming in for assistance is growing each week. Supplies of other foods, especially protein sources and canned fruits and vegetables, are limited.

What can you do? Here are some ways to help our clients have a joyous Christmas:

- Bring new, unwrapped gifts for children or adults (or both) to SMUM.
- Bring some friends (or come alone) to SMUM to help wrap gifts some time between November 24 and December 20. Arrange the time with Lawrence Robles.
- Sort through your clothing and pick out clothing that you no longer wear or will be replacing with Christmas gifts, and bring the items to SMUM.
- Pick up some extra items such as peanut butter, canned tuna, canned fruits and vegetables next time you're grocery shopping. Bring the items to SMUM for the food warehouse.
- Get a group together and hold a Christmas party at SMUM for clients. All you need is food and Christmas spirit.
- Send a contribution to Santa Maria Urban Ministry, or become a Friend of SMUM, pledging a regular contribution to help meet needs all year, not just Christmas.



SANTA MARIA URBAN MINISTRY
OF SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA
CHARITABLE OUTREACH OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE DIOCESE OF EL CAMINO REAL
Meeting Immediate Needs and Supporting Long-term Transformation

December 1, 2008

Dear Friends,

We wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a joyous Holiday Season! At this time, we wish to express our gratitude for the wonderful and steadfast support that we have received through the year. To date, we have served over 13,300 individuals through our Emergency Food Pantry program. It is important to note that about 50% of those we serve are children. As many of you know, we would not be able to serve these numbers of working-poor people without your valued assistance. Further, this program would not be possible without our faithful volunteers. They shop at the Second Harvest Food Bank, load and unload trucks and shelves, and prepare hundreds of food boxes every month.

Our educational programs, ABC Playtime and the STUDIO 17 (after-school) ministries have continued to develop. The ABC has hosted an average of 11 students in 2008, while preparing children age 3 and 4 for success in kindergarten. Due to increased fundraising and grant resources (Barnes & Noble book sale, and grants from Ace Hardware, the Junior League of San Jose, and the Wu Foundation), our ABC play area will be resurfaced and supplied with new play structures and toys. In addition, the STUDIO 17 project has expanded to 23 students per session. Leaders of the STUDIO have planned to create a renewed program with focus upon the student's particular area of study needs.

And, due to the prayerful generosity of our supporters, SMUM has been able to improve its Seasonal ministries. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program was available to assist more than 100 local families file their tax forms. In addition, over 500 children received backpacks and school supplies for their return to school in August. Finally, individuals and local churches demonstrate their Christmas spirit through giving to the most needy families and children in the region, year after year.

Let us be mindful that the people who benefit from your compassion and kindness are the more than 20,000 clients that seek and obtain services through the ministry of SMUM. For, our mission will continue to be "Meet immediate needs and support long-term transformation." Again, we thank you for your faithful and valued support. May God bless you for your loving care this Christmas and Holiday Season.

Rev. Lawrence A. Robles, Executive Director

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