

SICM NEWS

Year 42 Number 3, Fall 2010

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Back, By Popular Demand!

SICM will host the 3rd annual **Harvest for the Pantry Dinner** on **Sunday, November 7, 4-7pm** at **St. Helen's Church** in Schenectady! See back page for details. . .

Project SKIP: Schenectady Kids Imagine & Play



Building a playground, one step at a time

Project SKIP held its "Build Day" on Saturday, May 22, at Jerry Burrell Park in Schenectady. Over 140 volunteers came together to build the playground, plant flowers and trees, paint a mural, paint lines on the basketball court, serve food, and cheer everyone on! The day was a huge success, with the 'build' finishing up more than 3 hours ahead of schedule!! Thanks to community residents, Union College students and faculty, Air National Guard members, representatives of local con-

gregations, City of Schenectady employees, County Public Health members, and many others who gave of their time and talents to make this dream a reality! Food was provided for the volunteers, courtesy of local vendors, and trees were donated by ReTree Schenectady. Cornell Cooperative Extension coordinated providing flowers and supervised plantings for the gardens. A fundraising



Sprucing up the park



The mural in progress

goal of \$80,000 (just for the equipment) was set to see the project through completion, with another \$80,000+ worth of in-kind work donated. This funding has come from numerous sources, including the Union College Class of 2010, the Carlilian Foundation, Schenectady County Alliance for Health, The Schenectady Foundation, Price Chopper/Golub Foundation, Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church, Fraternal Order of Police, Albany Street United Methodist Church, Niskayuna Reformed Church, Albany Street United Methodist Church, the Schenectady Free Masons, Stewarts', and others. The playground design features two different structures, one for 2- to 5-year-olds, and one for 6- to 12-year-olds, and includes handicapped-accessible swings. The design utilized CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) guidelines to help prevent the new play space from being easily targeted by negative activity. The new playground's impact has been felt by kids beyond the immediate neighborhood. Several non-profit organizations utilize the park for different activities, especially in the summer. The park is used by the YMCA for a day camp program, the tennis program, 15Love, and is the most heavily used site for the SICM's Summer Lunch program.

Jeremy Taglieri and Joe McCarthy spearheaded Project SKIP, deemed a success by all! Both AmeriCorps members, Jeremy began Peace Corps service and Joe wrapped up the project.



Jeremy (left) and Joe (right) are pleased with the day's results!

Schenectady Inner City Ministry (SICM) celebrates the partnership of 58 member congregations "relating the resources of the congregations to the human needs of the city," which means ministries of social service, education, witness and social action. The SICM newsletter and more detailed financial and program information is available from SICM at 930 Albany Street, Schenectady, NY 12307 or (518) 374-2683. FAX: (518) 382-1871. Email address: information@sicm.us. Website address is: www.sicm.us. SICM's finances are audited annually by an independent auditing firm.

Ministry Notes

I remember once that Fred Buechner wrote about the experience of talking with friends on a beautiful mountain view and someone turned to him and asked: "Why do you leave this place?" He responded: "To be a saint."

Buechner, a Presbyterian minister and prolific author, went on to say that he did not mean that to be a saint meant to be an extraordinary person, but as in the New Testament references, meant that we journey as people of faith to become the people that God intends. The Apostle Paul would write to "the saints at" We are all called to be saints.

Since the last newsletter, we celebrate the lives of a number of saints who are no longer with us. Our lives have been enriched by the gifts that they shared. At the food program, we miss Malcolm Provost, Bob French and Jim Ramsay. Malcolm volunteered as a packer for more than 10 years and was a strong link to the former Immaculate Conception Church in Bellevue. Bob volunteered as an early riser to pick up at Price Chopper for 10+ years. Jim volunteered with income tax assistance and was an early riser to pick up at the Regional Food Bank.

We also celebrate the lives of several SICM delegates and volunteers. Joe Early, from St. Helen's in Niskayuna, was a faithful delegate who first became involved at the start of Bethesda House and then the food program. Joe always had a story to share and also used to send along leads for supporting programs. Steven Munson, from Prince of Peace Lutheran in Clifton Park, became involved more recently especially with the summer lunch program. He organized teams from his congregation and also would attend the Assembly as his schedule permitted. Ralph Paccico was an active volunteer not only with the food program but also with his wife and the mailing crew who would periodically get out this newsletter.

"The communion of saints" is one of those older notions in the faith that we don't pay too much attention to these days. Besides the call, as Buechner indicates, for all of us to be saints, the communion of saints that we can affirm every All Saints Day (November 1, a lesser festival of the church year I confess) includes not only those who are no longer with us; but also all who are here now and all who are yet to come. "For we have such a great cloud of witnesses" as Scripture affirms.

Henri Nouwen in Bread for the Journey once reflected that "as we grow older, we have more and more people to remember, people who have died before us. It is very important to remember those who have loved us and those we have loved. Remembering them means letting their spirits inspire us in our daily lives. They can become part of our spiritual communities and gently help us as we make decisions on our journeys. Parents, spouses, children, and friends can become true spiritual companions after they have died..." (August 29).

We give thanks to God for all the saints who have gone before us, sustain us, and have brought us to this time and this place; and encourage us. We are reminded that each one is called to be a saint.

Rev. Phil Grigsby



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The Assembly of SICM includes one clergy and two lay delegates from all member congregations: Albany Street United Methodist, Alplaus United Methodist, Altamont Reformed, Bellevue Reformed, Bethel AME, Burnt Hills United Methodist, Carman United Methodist, Christ Church Episcopal, Church of St. Adalbert, Duryee Memorial AME Zion, Eastern Parkway United Methodist, Emmanuel Baptist—Friedens UCC, Faith United Methodist, First Baptist, Sch'dy, First Baptist, Scotia, First Reformed, Sch'dy, First Reformed, Scotia, First Unitarian Society, First United Methodist, Friendship Baptist, Good Shepherd Lutheran, Grace Lutheran, Grace Temple Church of God in Christ, Immaculate Conception, Sch'dy, Immaculate Conception, Glenville, Immanuel Lutheran, Koinonia Christian Ministries, Lynnwood Reformed, Messiah Lutheran Church, Mount Olivet Missionary Baptist, Niskayuna Reformed, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Redeemer Lutheran, Refreshing Spring Church of God in Christ, Rotterdam United Methodist, St. Anthony's, St. George's Episcopal, St. Helen's, St. John the Baptist, St. John the Evangelist, St. Joseph's, Sch'dy, St. Joseph's, Scotia, St. Luke's, St. Paul the Apostle, St. Paul's Episcopal, St. Stephen's Episcopal, Scotia United Methodist, Society of Friends (Quakers), Stanford United Methodist, State Street Presbyterian, Tabernacle Baptist, Trinity Presbyterian, Union Presbyterian, Woodlawn Reformed, Zion Lutheran.

Food Pantry Hosts Luncheon for Volunteers

On Tuesday, June 8, the volunteers at the SICM Food Program had the tables turned—instead of being on their feet and helping other people, they were treated to a delicious luncheon to acknowledge and honor all their hard work and hours of dedication. Of the 150 active volunteers, 120 attended the luncheon.



Pantry friends, L to R:
Marilyn Essman, Carol Slaterrick, Carolyn Canova

In recognition of volunteering for 25 years and being over 90 years old, Hilda Winbauer received a bouquet of roses. Marian Wade also received roses, in recognition of volunteering for 15 years. Thank you to all of our volunteers! We could never accomplish all that we do without your time, effort and dedication! To become involved, contact Gail VanValkenburgh at 346-4035 or 346-4445.



Volunteers mingle at appreciation luncheon

Thank you, volunteers!

SICM Summer 2010 Interns

Once again, SICM was blessed to have had high school and college students serving as summer interns. 15 interns helped to achieve the goals of the Summer Lunch program, the Damien Center, and the Emergency Food Pantry, as well as Safe Parks/Edible Playgrounds. We very much appreciate all their hard work—we certainly couldn't accomplish all we do without them! They are: Samantha Brooks, Rachael Cox, Amity Higgins, Brian Kimmey, Morgan Schmitt, Josh Mason, Abby Foster, Adam Sloan, Becky Rose, Megan Ports, Alex Restina, Julianna Cogswell, JJ Moran, Sam Wengrovius, and Anna Mattis. The interns were sponsored by Albany Street UMC, First Reformed (Sch'dy), St. George's Episcopal, Union Presbyterian, and Bechtel. The interns had some insightful things to say about their internships:



"It is an amazing program that SICM provides to the community. I have laughed at jokes, smiled with children, shed tears, sang the alphabet song, danced with vegetables, and most importantly garnered a greater awareness of the world surrounding us. I am so thankful for SICM allowing me to come back for a second time and truly making my summer one to remember."



"Throughout my time as a SICM intern, I have done a lot, taught a lot, and learned a lot, about others as well as myself."



"One of the most important things I have learned this summer is the need of a role model in the growth of a child."

"Working in the garden was fun and educational; it was especially amazing to work with children who had never seen a garden before, to see how vegetables grow and to help grow them."

"It was important not just to me, but to my relationship with each kid to let them teach me something. It was so wonderful to know that kids came to lunch looking forward to seeing me as much as I looked forward to seeing them; I really felt like I was able to make a little difference in their lives just by being there and showing that I cared about them."

Summer Lunch 2010, by Crys Hamelink

Most people spend their lunch break, well, eating lunch. But this summer, over 650 volunteers decided to serve lunch, instead. These volunteers helped serve lunch to hungry children across the city of Schenectady, as part of SICM's Free Summer Lunch Program, now in its 15th year. The groups came from area congregations, GE, ARC, and several other non-profit and business groups. In addition to serving food, volunteers interacted with children through various activities such as story telling, playing games, doing arts and crafts, coloring, or playing with bubbles. One July noon hour at Jerry Burrell Park, kids enjoyed a delightful puppet show performed by Poppytown Puppeteers, sponsored by Catholic Charities in partnership with SICM.

In Schenectady, over 70 % of the students qualify for free or reduced rate lunches during the school year, and many do not have regular meals when school is not in session. That's where SICM stepped in, offering free and healthy lunches at 13 locations including 6 city parks (Central Park, Jerry Burrell, Hillhurst, Quackenbush, Wallingford and Carrie Street), 2 municipal housing complexes (Yates and Steinmetz), and several church fellowship halls (Friendship House, Faith United Methodist, Trinity Lutheran, Mount Olivet, and New Creation in Christ). All sites were open to anyone age 18 and under, with no enrollment required.



Poppytown
Puppeteers

Savannah was one of the kids who depended on SICM for food this summer. The day we met her, she was clutching her five oranges as she prepared to leave the SICM site where she ate her free lunch every day. "I love fruit," she said, "and we don't have it at home very much". She enjoyed all the lunches, and the free program gave her and hundreds of other children nutritious food during the school break. SICM provided the food through a government grant from the USDA and the NY State Education Department, and a local food provider – JR Proprietor's – prepared and delivered the food. Fifteen SICM student interns, led by summer lunch coordinator Amity Higgins, helped with the program. Volunteers packed the meals, fed and entertained the kids. One volunteer team brought boxes of donated books, and smiling children rapidly grabbed them. One young boy, with 5 books in tow, said these would be his first books to have at home. Two teams made paper airplanes with all the kids at their sites, while many others brought games and craft/school supplies.

In addition to help from the volunteers, site supervisors and interns, SICM is appreciative of other groups that partnered with us over the summer. These groups offered educational and recreational activities while SICM provided the meals. Partners included the Boys and Girls Club at Quackenbush Park, the County's SCORE camp at Central Park, and the YMCA and Hamilton Hill Arts Center at Jerry Burrell.

Nearly 28,000 lunches were served through this SICM Program. This number is lower than last summer, when the economy experienced a severe downturn. Participation at Jerry Burrell Park was significantly lower than in 2009, largely due to fears over the violence in that area at the beginning of the summer. Attendance at other SICM sites was comparable to 2009. Parents, grandparents and caregivers across the city thanked us repeatedly for the importance of summer lunch for their families. The kids just smiled and told us that lunch was good!

Volunteers across Schenectady helped make this a happy and healthy summer for the kids, and we are grateful.



Thank you for Summer Lunch 2010!

Warm Celebrations!



On one of the hottest days of the summer, 80 of our dedicated summer lunch volunteers joined us at the Central Park pavilion on September 1, to enjoy ice cream sundaes and to celebrate the end of summer lunch. Our SICM President Peter Notch served the ice cream, along with summer interns Rachel Cox and Sam Wengrovius. Volunteers and SICM staff shared stories of the summer lunch experience and new friends they met along the way. We presented Certificates of Appreciation to the volunteer teams and to our hard-working site supervisors. Rev. Grigsby presented special plaques to Carl Olsen and Bill Macejka from the City of Schenectady, for their outstanding support of the Summer Lunch and the Edible Playgrounds Programs. They provided pavilions and other support at Wallingford and Carrie Street Parks so we could offer summer lunch and gardening programs there for the first time. Plaques were also presented to the Niskayuna Consumers' Cooperative for donating 2,000 bottles of water for our volunteers at the lunch sites, and to Richard Homenick, Virginia Santiago and Tom Bellick from the Municipal Housing Authority, for their support of the summer lunch programs at Steinmetz and at Yates Village. We also shared stories and reflections from several of our summer interns, regarding how their summer experiences at SICM had affected their lives. Many thanks once again to all who helped feed the kids this summer. Next year we promise to celebrate on a cooler day!



Our Lady of Fatima
volunteers



SICM could not function without the help of hundreds of volunteers including for the Summer Lunch program, which is made possible by groups of volunteers from the congregations and community. 66 teams fed the kids this year!

Special thanks to the congregations who hosted and/or staffed the summer lunch program for the *entire summer*: Faith United Methodist Church, Friendship Baptist Church at Friendship House, Mount Olivet Missionary Baptist Church, Trinity Lutheran Church, with volunteers from the Central State Ecumenical Cluster, Union Presbyterian Church at Yates Village, with help from Christ Church of the Hills.

Congregations who served lunches over one or more weeks included:

First United Methodist Church	Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
First Reformed Church, Schenectady	Our Lady of Fatima
Immanuel Lutheran Church	St. George's Episcopal Church
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church	Burnt Hills UMC
St. Paul the Apostle Church	Niskayuna Reformed Church
Our Lady of Grace RC Church	Messiah Lutheran Church
Tabernacle Baptist Church	Emmanuel Friedens Church
Trinity Presbyterian Church	First Unitarian Society
St. Luke's RC Church	Rotterdam UMC
St. John the Evangelist RC Church	Church of the Immaculate Conception
Bellevue Reformed Church	Zion Lutheran Church
Lynnwood Reformed Church	St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
St. Helen's RC Church	St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Congregation Agudat Achim	Stanford UMC
Eastern Parkway UMC	New Creation in Christ Church

Community groups and organizations with volunteer teams:

GE teams from Global Research, Corporate, Energy and Infra structure (19 teams total)
 Baxter-Andrew and Griswold Funeral Home
 Assemblyman Amedore's Office
 109th Air Force National Guard
 Siemen's
 Maple Ridge, Princetown and Schenectady ARC
 NYS Dept. of Env'tal Conservation
 Concerned for the Hungry
 Schenectady Rotary Club

We thank all these volunteers who helped feed our hungry kids this summer!



The Edible Playgrounds were back this summer—bigger and more productive than ever. Edible Playgrounds are parks that contain Children's Gardens where Schenectady's youngest can learn where food comes from, taste the treats they grow, and play in the park. The concept was piloted by Roots and Wisdom in Orchard Street Park, Mont Pleasant Neighborhood in 2008. In 2009 SICM secured two years of funding to expand and refine the program through a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for Safe Parks and Edible Playgrounds. Last year the program expanded to Hillhurst Park in Bellevue Neighborhood. This year Children's Gardens were growing in Hillhurst Park, Carrie Street Park (Goosehill area), and Wallingford Park (Mont Pleasant area; Orchard Street was closed due to vandalism). The establishment of the gardens was done by youth doing community service – both National Honor Society students and teens connected with the Center for Community Justice. Nearly 200 first through sixth graders from Blodgett School, Yates Magnet School, and Hamilton School spent more than 50 hours starting plants, preparing garden beds, and sowing seeds. Children learned about and planted an Iroquois Three Sisters garden of corn, beans and squash; planted seedlings they'd raised in their classrooms, directly sowed other seeds, and added beauty to each garden with flowers. Volunteer stewards helped to keep the program growing by watering the plants when there were no programmed activities.

Once the summer arrived, SICM interns were on hand each day to offer programs to neighborhood children in the parks. Edible Playground programs took place immediately before or after Summer Lunch was served. At each site, two SICM interns engaged children in garden activities, crafts, and physical play each day. While working in the garden children were able to taste cucumbers and green beans, tomatoes and lettuce. They could take chard, collards, kale and other produce home to prepare. Crafts proved to be the highlight of the activities, and most of the art focused on food-related themes. The forty four children registered for the program ranged from 3 to 14 years old; boys slightly outnumbered girls.

Edible Playgrounds are a growing experience for everyone involved. SICM interns learned new things about their community and they were able to share their enthusiasm and experiences with young children. Some of the most important lessons the children learned during the summer came from the attachments they formed with SICM interns. The interns provided them with a friendly face each day ready to engage them in fun and meaningful activity. While the vegetables and flowers grew so too did the connections that Schenectadians made to each other and their community.

The Last Word *by Peter Notch, President*



Reflecting and Refocusing

Sometimes, we do things the way we always have... “just because.” And sometimes, we have to pause and think about what we do, remember why we do it “the way we always have,” and decide if there is a different or better way to move forward.

SICM is doing just that this year- reflecting and refocusing. Beginning with a review of our constitution and the way we run our Assembly meetings, we are taking a deep breath, thinking about what we do and how we do it, and looking to the future of the organization.

Your help, as members of the SICM community, is essential. Reflecting and refocusing are best done with the input of as many interested people as possible. Please share your ideas with members of the Steering Committee or the Executive Director at Assembly meetings, by phone or e-mail. Many thanks.

Peter Notch, President (notchp@nycap.rr.com)



Damien Center in the News

Another year, another AIDSWalk! The outpouring of support by volunteers, youth groups, university groups, and SICM congregations for the Schenectady Damien Center (SDC) has been overwhelming. Many thanks to all, and special thanks to Thrivent Financial for Lutherans for their support! While the donations for the 2010 AIDSWalk are still being tallied, it looks to be another successful fundraiser. All AIDSWalk funds will support SDC's supplemental nutrition program, through which we provide hot, nutritious meals five days a week to the HIV/AIDS community of Schenectady. In the 2009-2010 program year, the total number of meals served topped 2300!

In other exciting news, the Schenectady Damien Center has gathered a number of community leaders to serve as a Community Task Force to assist SDC staff in outreach and development. Members include consumers, local elected officials, volunteers, and representatives from other AIDS service organizations. Our current project is to gather information for an upcoming strategic planning retreat, to be held this winter. We hope this process will reveal ways in which staff and volunteers can continue to grow SDC into a strong and vibrant program.



SAVE THE DATE! Sunday, November 7, 2010



Harvest for the Pantry

a dinner to raise funds for the

SICM Emergency Food Pantry

Date: Sunday, November 8, 2009



Featuring:

- Homemade chicken dinner
- A silent auction

Tickets:

- available at the SICM Office, 930 Albany Street, 374-2683
- \$25 per person, a portion of which is tax-deductible

Honorary Committee members welcome!

***Please join us for an evening of fun and fellowship,
and show your support for the Food Pantry!***

