

Jesus Loves the Little Children...

By Jung Joo Park
MCC International Volunteer Exchange Intern



Children I met in the world
I lived and worked in an intentional community based on Christianity in Korea for 4 years after graduated from a university. This community works in conflict areas in the world such as Afghanistan, Kashmir, Malaysia, Aceh and East Timor. So I had a chance to visit Afghanistan. When I was there, I taught children at a peace school we held for a month during summer vacation. It was great experience for me to get to know them even though we couldn't communicate well because of the language barrier. We became good friends in spite of the differences between us. They taught me what hospitality was from their true hearts by giving me the things they need and treating me like their family.

One day we talked about our dreams. I asked children what they want to be when they grow up. Some of them said they want to be soldiers and policemen because they want

to protect their family from U.S. army. Others said they want to work with an international organization to make more money. The girls wanted to be teachers. The Afghan people believed that the U.S. Army stayed in their country to help them. Some Afghans believe they suffered from what the U.S. army was doing. As time went by, our friendship got deeper and finally the day came when I had to leave the village. I had one student who gave me my portrait he drew and ran away without a word. Actually he was not supposed to draw a woman's face. As soon as I saw my portrait, I couldn't stop crying. And the women I met in the village came out of their houses to say good bye to me. Children and old women came up to me and gave me kisses with high respect. I can't forget them. They are my teachers and taught me what is important in life.



Children I met in the U.S.
I meet children at a public elementary school on Fridays. We learn how to work together in teams and listen to others with our whole heart. At first, I had a hard time figuring out their lives. I wasn't familiar with their culture and it took me a while to get to know them. They didn't want to do any activity with us and even listen to us. As time went by, we felt more comfortable with each other and it seemed like their hearts were more open to us and the students of Philadelphia Mennonite High School who helped us.

We shared our ideas, feelings and thoughts about conflict and communication by doing many different activities. One time, I gave them a question 'What does it mean to listen with your whole heart?' One girl drew a picture which described her father's death. Her mom was weeping by her dad's tomb and she was looking at her mom beside the tomb in her drawing.



At that moment, although she was young, I thought she seemed to know how to sympathize. Likewise I could see the changes in the

children from their responses and faces. When I felt they looked like they were listening to each other, I thought how negative my expectation about them was. Some people might think of my students as problematic kids because they got suspended several times. But in my eyes, they are just normal kids like someone else's beloved children. Instead, I learned that we grown-ups are not patient with their changes.



Becoming good friends
Is it possible children in the US and Afghanistan become good friends? It seems like they live in different worlds. Children I met in the U.S. want to be millionaires. Meanwhile children I met in Afghanistan worried about food for tomorrow. Although they live in very different situations, they are children who must live in this world. For me, both of them are my good friends. Sadly, children in the US don't know my friends in Afghanistan. What could I do to help them get to know each other and to develop good friendships?

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 2

Snapshots



*"Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness."
James 3:18*



**OXFORD CIRCLE CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
ASSOCIATION**

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To extend healing and hope in the Oxford Circle community, believing that God's purpose of reconciling all people to Jesus leads us to minister on spiritual, physical, social & economic levels.



NOTES FROM THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

We have the following ministry and resource opportunity opportunities and welcome your participation!

Human resources:

- Summer Camp volunteers and instructors—Prior to June 12, contact Lani Prunes @ frizzyhair3@gmail.net
- Professional grant writer to assist in writing grants for community programming
- We are excited to have a new IVEP intern from MCC who will be joining us from Cambodia in August. We are still looking for housing for him and it does need to be close to the church.

Financial/material resources: Contact Anita Lyndaker-Studer@occcda@verizon.net or (267) 265-1709

- Sponsors for children in after school and summer camp program. Cost for OCCDA is approximately \$25/week per student of which families provide \$5/week per student.
- Thanks to the generosity of the Broadcom Corporation, we have all the laptops and computers we need! We are asking for your donation of monitors and keyboards to go with the computers.
- Funding for Moveable Partitions for Sunday and After School Classrooms (total = \$21,000)
 - a. 2 moveable partition @ \$6600 each
 - b. 2 moveable partition @ \$4000 each

Board of Directors

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VOLUME 4, ISSUE 2

**NOTES FROM THE
BELOVED COMMUNITY**

JUNE 2010

A WORD FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

In 2008 during my 5 month sabbatical with my family in Puerto Rico one of the new experiences I valued was visiting the local "La Plaza." In Puerto Rico like many Latino countries and US communities where there is a strong Catholic parish you will find in the center of a town or community a "plaza." These plazas vary in size from one to two city blocks to those no larger than a small corner lot. The "Plazas" in Puerto Rico unlike our modern understanding of the word as a mere "shopping mall," mirror and model our desire at OCCDA:

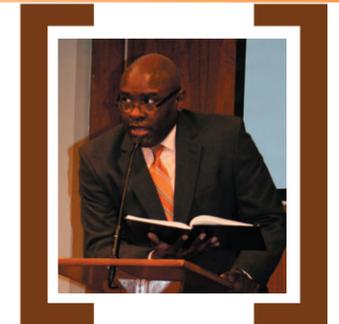
"To extend healing and hope in the oxford circle commu-



nity, believing that God's purposes of reconciling all people to Jesus leads us to minister on spiritual, physical, social and economic levels..."

The plazas are picturesque containing historic architecture, ample outdoor sitting, vibrant plants and shrubbery along with mature shade trees all derived from the local ministry of a hospitable Catholic Church. In addition to the beautiful surroundings, I found that this was a 'community center' that was full of life and vitality! Depending on the time of day, I would see high school and college students studying and socializing, business people, couples, parents and grandparents relaxing while watching their children play, members from the congregation entering and exiting the church, food and clothing being distributed to those in need and, of course, a great game of dominoes!

We at OCCDA are beginning to see the emergence of "La Plaza" at Oxford Circle! A 'community center' that is full of life and vitality! In a typical week, you will see a variety of people experiencing the professional services of our tenants such as dialysis, childcare, foster care and this coming fall we will be the host site for Eastern Men-



nonite Seminary S.T.E.P. training/equipping program for pastors. We also are transforming our 2nd floor common area into an art gallery. Currently within the confines of our OCCDA and church space we have sponsored seminars on peace, hosted retreats for local partners and work teams for projects all around the city. Weekly, local children attend our afterschool and summer arts program and we are the distribution center for MCC grocery bags to the local urban Anabaptist church network. The OC community attend our annual festival, our flea markets and participate in the annual Jared Hess blood drive. Throughout the week, OCCMC attendees/members come for small group gathering, counseling and coaching sessions, to sing and play instruments in the sanctuary and to sit quietly in the prayer room to meditate. We thank you for your ongoing support enabling us to "extend healing and hope." But I also invite you to come for yourselves so that you can have the "La Plaza" at Oxford Circle experience – dominoes included!

--Bishop Leonard Dow

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UPCOMING DATES

- 5/27 - After School Closing Program, 5:30pm
- 6/5 - 2nd Space Art Exhibition Opens, (2nd floor)
- 6/19 - Flea Market, 8-3pm. Proceeds support our Annual Community Festival. If interested in being a vendor, contact Gwendolyn.young@phila.gov
- 7/5-8/12 - Summer Enrichment and Arts Program, Monday-Thursday
- 7/24 - Jared Hess Red Cross Blood Drive, 8-4pm
- Board Meeting, 4th Tuesday of each month: 7:00-9:00pm
- Friends of Summerdale Civic Association, every 3rd Thursday: 7pm @ the Houseman Playground (corner of Summerdale and Godfrey Avenues). For more information, please contact momswing@comcast.net.