



VOLUME 6, ISSUE 3

NOTES FROM THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

OCTOBER 2012

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It Takes A Village

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UPCOMING DATES

Events - located at 900 E. Howell Street, 19149 unless otherwise indicated:

- After School, 3-6pm, Mon-Thurs
- GED and ESL, 5-8pm, Tues & Thurs
- Nutrition & Cooking Class, 6:30-7:30pm, Mon thru 11/19
- Financial Management, 7:00-9:00pm, Tues 11/4-12/6
- Neshaminy-Warwick Presbyterian Church, Mission Day @ OCCCDA, Sun 11/4
- Appreciation Banquet & Silent Auction, 6:30-8:30pm, Fri 11/16
- Media Presbyterian Church, Carnell Work Day, Sat 11/17

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

"So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together"
Acts 6:2a

In the first few chapters of Acts the early church on at least two occasions (Acts 1 & 6) thought it wise to collectively gather to revisit their "mission" as given by our Lord Jesus just prior to his ascension (Matthew 28:18-20). The reason they collectively gathered to revisit their "mission" wasn't because they forgot what Jesus had told them. Rather the "Twelve gathered all the disciples together" as a faith community was in direct response to their changing environment and seeking to navigate through new pressures and accompanying opportunities being presented to them. In other words they were seeking to be faithful to Jesus while living in a rapidly changing world and asking a key question as it relates to mission "how do we do this (mission) now?". The fact is for the disciples Jesus was no longer physically present 24/7 to readily "tell them what to do". However, for this fledgling group of post resurrection early Christians they quickly came to recognize what Jesus left them was more than enough -

"For where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them." **Matt 18:20**

It is this same spirit that recently the Oxford Circle Mennonite Church community and OCCCDA gathered on consecutive Sunday mornings for "community conversations" in lieu of the sermon. Why? It had been about 10 years since we had held "community conversations" and we recognize as in Acts that the world we live in continues to rapidly change providing our community both pressures and opportunities for OCMC/OCCCDA to minister in a more faithful way to our OC neighborhood and beyond.

At our two Sunday "community conversations" (a mix of members, regular attendees, first time visitors from OC, etc) we leaned on the same hope



of the early church and promise of our Lord Jesus that "where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them." As both an observer and participant in the "community conversations" I am excited to report that indeed Jesus was present with us as we - shared, listened, cried, laughed, reflected, dreamed and discerned our mission in relation to the question "how do we do this (mission) now?" In this issue and in coming issues you will hear more about how our "community conversations" will continue to shape us and guide us moving forward.

*--Bishop Leonard Dow
OCCCDA President*

(Below photo: Back to School Event held 9/8/12)



We are very excited to have on board our new out of school coordinator, Dr. Raquel Joyce! She brings extensive knowledge and experience both as a teacher and with out of school programs for which we are so thankful. She also has a heart for the program since her daughter attended our out of school program for the past year. We were able to hire Dr. Joyce, thanks to a grant from the 21st Century Community Learning Center through PA Department of Education. This grant also allows us to offer our after school program for free and 5 days a week as well as to develop a middle school component coming summer 2013. The grant is a 3 year grant with a potential for an additional two year extension if the program goals are being met and is truly an answer to prayer!



It Takes a Village, a Circle of Love and a Community of Believers at OCCCDA's Afterschool Program

"It takes a Village", you have probably heard that African proverb before. It conveys the multitude of people it takes to help raise a child. At Oxford Circle Christian Community Development

Association (OCCCDA) it is no different. It takes a community to help care for, teach, protect, nurture and love a child. For us at OCCCDA, it takes a communal effort to band together and surround children in a circle of love. This year, due to the 21st Century grant the Lord has blessed us with, we hired a staff that makes our circle of influence a bit larger than before and helps fulfill our mission to "extend healing and hope".

This circle of love started with our International Volunteer, Tandzile Mokoena, who exudes warmth and an unmatched joy. Her caring and gentle manner makes her a perfect match to be the Group Leader for the kids in Kindergarten to third grade. Through her lessons in the Cross-Cultural Class, kids will be taught about her homeland, Swaziland.

Then there is Matt Nocho, who came to us with Out-of-School-Time (OST) experience from working in afterschool settings in North Philadelphia and Camden, NJ. He has dreams of one day opening an international afterschool program. Until then, he is the Group Leader for students in grades 4-6. The kids find him relatable, easy to talk to and supportive. He will be leading the recreational activities and in the spring you may see him gardening with the kids.

There is also Joshua Burgos, our tutor. Josh is a senior at Temple University where he majors in music and religion. This professional viola player has agreed to teach music appreciation in a class he has created. If you know someone or someone willing to donate musical instruments, let us know. For when that day comes, Josh has agreed to teach the kids how to play them, preparing him for his ministry of leading people to Christ through music.

Our kids will learn a lot about music through their class but also through participating in the community choir that is being directed by the talented Anne Hess and Janelle Tinsley. This December, get ready to see the fruit of their labor transformed into a melodious tune that carries us into the heavenlies. There is also our very own Lauren Moyer, who teaches math and engages our students with her knowledge and joyous spirit. However, we do not stop with teaching the children math and literacy skills. Thanks to Bridget Justice, they are also learning conflict resolution skills and how Excellence Drives

Growth Every Day (EGDE). She also works with Carnell Elementary School, teaching these same skills with the assistance of students she trained, from Philadelphia Mennonite High School. If you ever pass by when she is teaching you will see the students having a great time while learning through discussion, art, role-playing and relevant lessons.

We also have Naida Montes, a minister at Nueva Jerusalem (a church in North Philadelphia) who has spent time abroad engaged in missionary work and educational work on a local level. She supports the work in the afterschool program through the knowledge she has gained as an alumni from Arcadia University and Eastern University's Master's Program. She will be teaching a Beginner's Spanish Class for the kids. She is also our Youth Worker, and as such she will be engaged in community and youth organizing to create an Advisory Board. Through their collaborative efforts, the summer of 2013 will mark the first summer program for middle school students. This will be done in tandem with high school students who have been developed into mentors and co-laborers. This means we will be offering OST programming for kids in grades K-12!

This visionary work was conceived in prayer long before we received this grant. It was entrusted to OCCCDA's Board and then enacted upon through the tireless work of Chantelle Todman-Moore, our Program Director and Anita Lyndaker-Studer, our Executive Director. Their unwavering dedication and diligence has enabled the afterschool program to offer quality programming from its inception, even when they comprised the entire staff. We have come quite a distance since then but we know there is even more terrain to travel. We are excited with where we are going as an organization but even more excited about the work God is doing in the lives of the kids.

(contd on next page)



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One student in particular has blessed our hearts immensely because of his willingness to serve in a spirit of love and compassion. D. is a ninth grader who comes every day after school and volunteers his time working with the kids. He helps them with their HW, their projects, plays with them and helps clean up. His presence makes a difference.

This work makes a difference. I hear comments from the kids that express their happiness about being a part of OCCDA afterschool program. In fact, one day after attending Lauren Moyer's math class, where she integrated culinary skills with a math lesson, one of the students proclaimed how this was "the best day of their life". I know we are also making a difference in the lives of the parents because I had a parent come in the other day and recount how every time she picks up her daughter, she is met with an unwillingness to leave.

So, this mother figured out a way to make the most of this situation. She will now be volunteering weekly by teaching our students Conversational French; enabling her daughter to stay till to the end!

Another way we are making a difference in the lives of students is through positioning them as successful and intelligent. We don't view them by their grades; we don't treat them differently based on where they live, their socioeconomic status or their physical traits and abilities. To us, each student is a treasure with incredible potential. And by potential I don't mean one day in the future, I mean they are filled with potential to make a difference now in their communities, schools and homes. When we see them with the eyes of God, we recognize the beauty in each child.

I started by saying that it takes a community to raise a child. You are part of this community. I recognize not everyone can volunteer between the hours of 3-6pm. However there are other ways to contribute to the afterschool program and most importantly, to the lives of the kids. Please join us in serving the ones Jesus called to Himself (Mark 10:14). Consider bring-



ing food or baked goods during one of our monthly birthday celebrations, held the last day of each month. You can lead an activity, help set up or clean up and donate supplies or gifts. One of the other ways you can share yourself with the kids is to become a "Prayer Pal". This does not require you to enter our program space, just your quiet space where you speak to God. There, you can pray consistently for the child you have been paired with and intercede for their family and school. Another opportunity to join hands in this work is by becoming a "Pen Pal" and corresponding monthly with your pal. You can do this via email, letter/card, video conferencing, etc. Let these "Pen Pal" moments be times of encouragement, sharing your prayers for them, mentorship and an opportunity to let them know how special they are to our community. For it is through our actions, our words, our listening, our prayers and our presence in their lives that they will realize how loved they are by this community of believers, and as such, by God Himself. In the end, that's what it is all about; love God and love people (Mark 12:30-31). This is what matters, this is the work that remains when all else has passes away (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

****If interested, in any of these opportunities to serve, email me at raquel.oxfordcircle@gmail.com****



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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.*



Congratulations to Kevin, our first GED graduate!

NOTES FROM THE BELOVED COMMUNITY



**Board of
Directors**

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Leonard Dow, President
Hong Tran, Vice President
Karen Jantzi, Secretary
Carlos Rodriguez, Treasurer

Members:

Krista Yoder-Latortue
Jennifer Leaman
Bethannie Parks
Ron Sider
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