Grace House Mentoring – It All Began With One – WINTER/SPRING/SUMMER 2015

When Carmen Wilcox learned last fall that Grace House needed mentors for women residents transitioning from former incarceration to productive and healthy lifestyles, she jumped right in. She met with Director Holly Christian and immediately hit it off with her mentee, Renee. Renee was determined to turn her life around and within a few months had found employment and an apartment and had graduated out of the program. What did Carmen do then? She asked for another mentee! And not only that, she also recruited six more Christ Church women, including Deacon Heath, to mentor others at Grace House. Heath has agreed to provide pastoral counseling to the group of mentors, which also includes Charlotte Robertson, Suzie Peregrine, Mary Walther, Debbie Ross and Cindy Campbell.

Youth Guidance – BAM and WOW sessions – FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2015

Robin Anstaett has been working hard to coordinate our participation as Career Presenters at several Becoming a Man (BAM) and Working on Womanhood (WOW) sessions with Chicago's touted Youth Guidance organization. These BAM and WOW sessions have been recognized by President Obama as powerful anti-violence and self-esteem tools for teens. Parishioner Brian Flood enthralled participants with stories of his fighter pilot days, stressing the importance of level-headedness and planning to the success of any operation. Tom Tubekis similarly engaged the boys regarding the challenges and opportunities of small business management and ownership.

On the WOW side, Carolyn Tubekis shared her experiences working in the advertising world, including a discussion of recent female empowerment messaging, and Tika Walsh spoke with the girls about careers in nursing and health care.

On April 18th, twenty volunteers from Christ Church carpooled to Chicago’s west side to help beautify the premises of St. Leonard’s House (a halfway house for former inmates). Volunteers weeded, shoveled, mulched and mowed for a few hours and then were treated to a tour of the facilities and a great grilled hot lunch! A number of participants were so impressed by the work going on at St. Leonard’s that they are looking for opportunities for ongoing work with this organization. Contact Jim McGee at jim@mostlymcgee.com if interested in becoming involved.

Waukegan to College – Career Day – May 2015

On May 16th, Lisa Crankshaw shared a few hours with 70-80 middle and high school students of Waukegan to College. W2C’s mission is to help get Waukegan’s under-resourced youth to college. Lisa reported being impressed with the students and organization of the event, concluding, “I think overall, everyone got something out of it.”

A Just Harvest – A Summer Picnic and Beyond – July 2015

On Saturday, July 25th, over 300 of the near north's hungry enjoyed a summer picnic in the park. Christ Church parishioners shopped for and served the traditional fare of hotdogs, baked beans, fruit and drinks for all. Organizer Bob Spencer described the event.

“It turned out to be a wonderful summer day, and we had loads of good food for an abundant picnic. . .And, it was fun to actually be able to serve the folks face to face, as they passed through and doctored their hot dogs or added hot sauce to the Italian beef sandwiches! A great effort by all, and very much appreciated!”
36 Children of Grace House Celebrate Back-to-School with New Backpacks and School Supplies -- AUGUST 2015

This summer, parishioners hit the back-to-school sales in order to provide new school supplies and backpacks to the 36 children and grandchildren of the residents of Grace House halfway house for formerly incarcerated women. Carmen Wilcox delivered the supplies to the Grace House ladies who excitedly unpacked them while reminiscing about their own early school days. Then on August 22nd, residents and their children gathered at back-to-school picnic. Deacon Heath was on hand and described the scene:

“There were lots of kids, all glowing with health and good spirits. There was great music, and a lot of dancing (I joined in a bit), and some of the women are amazing dancers. [Director] Holly offered a beautiful blessing, focusing on the children's safety, as they go to and from school, as well as their learning, from pre-K up to 8th grade. ... Everyone was cheerful, happy, and cooperative.” Deacon Heath

Clothing Collection for Women of Belize – AUGUST 2015

During the month of August, our weekly Rummage sorters set aside a special clothing collection intended for the women and children of Belize. Sharon Stain, former Christ Church Rummage Coordinator and Belize native, gratefully received

Parish Moms and Kids Stuff Backpacks for the Children of Revive Center for Housing and Healing – AUGUST 2015

At the same time as the Grace House backpacks were being packed, Emily Horvath and her two boys, Drew and Austin, also were helping to shop for and pack school supplies for the children of Cressy House at Revive Center for Housing and Healing.

Drew and Austin Horvath

Lavon French Revive Program Assistant
clothing for a poverty and hunger program called Together We Can Stop Hunger. Sharon Stain, Parishioner Pat Kerpan and Chini Burgess loading clothes for women and children in Belize.

Sharon Stain, Parishioner Pat Kerpan and Chini Burgess loading clothes for women and children in Belize.

Christ Church Top Contributor to A Just Harvest for Over 25 Years.

Christ Church’s feeding commitment to A Just Harvest goes much further and deeper than a lovely summer picnic. Out of more than thirty faith-based organizations that support AJH by providing food or servers, we are one of only three to do both and to do it twice every month. Even more remarkable is the fact that Christ Church has sustained this commitment month-in and month-out for over 25 years. Let’s hear it for current AJH Coordinators, Suzie Peregrine and Jenny Smith and all those who have served or donated along the way! If you are interested in helping out, please contact Suzie at speregrine@comcast.net or Jenny at hillerbrandfamily@gmail.com.

Parish Youth are Volunteer Superstars!

Possibly our most active volunteer contingent, Christ Church’s youngest members work year round to help those in need. In 2015, under the devoted guidance of Melissa Durbin and Leah Romanelli, kids from preschool through high school have:

- Packed meals for Feed My Starving Children and Kids Against Hunger
- Made and decorated lunches for A Just Harvest
- Handmade valentines and shamrocks for elderly and homebound parishioners and for residents of Sunrise Assisted Living

Christopher and Susan Mundy ready to serve at A Just Harvest – September 2015.
• Cooked and served dinner at Inspiration Café and A Just Harvest on multiple occasions throughout the year
• Made personalized notes and cards for the homeless and for children in our companion diocese in southeast Mexico
• Baked cookies, brownies and pies for those in need, including Evanston Hospital's NICU, ICU and ER and Sunrise Assisted Living
• Adopted Christmas Angels families

To top it all off, 15 of our youth committed eight days in July to working with the Tree of Life Ministries in Mission, S.D. on the Lakota Rosebud Reservation where they worked to rehab houses, staff a food pantry, perform upkeep on the properties and sort and organize at the donation center! What a great example these guys set for all the rest of us!

Hundreds Respond to Rummage Call –

Longtime king of Christ Church volunteerism, our Rummage Sale effort requires literally thousands of volunteer hours. Charlotte McGee conservatively estimates over 400 volunteers support Rummage, including at least 200 who work the minimum ten hours each required to earn early shopping privileges and a dedicated core of at least 20 year-round sorters and 71 department chairs who generally work a whopping 100 hours or more per year. Add it all up and you easily get over 5000 hours of service! Best of all, the Rummage experience is proof positive that volunteering can be fun!

From Rummage to Refuge

Even after the Rummage tents were folded and gone, our parish's service outreach continued. At the end of the sale, Rummage volunteers set aside garbage bags full of outerwear intended for Refugee One and the expected influx of Syrian refugees to Chicago this winter. Twelve year-old Lierin Peterson and her friends took on the task of making the items presentable and inviting. They took each item out, smoothed it down, brushed it off and buttoned and zipped it up. But before folding them up, the girls tucked little welcome notes in the pockets. It was lots of fun for the girls and much appreciated by Refugee One.
Christmas Angels Spirit

Under Julie Flood’s inspiring leadership, many dozens of volunteers came together to provide holiday cheer for nearly a thousand disadvantaged individuals this December. From shopping, to wrapping, to sorting and baking, parishioners young and old experienced the joy of the Season by reaching out to help others. In addition, this year Christmas Angels, Rummage and Youth Ministries worked together to organize a parish participation project during the Faith and Practice hour. During this time, parishioners wrapped gifts, sorted donated toiletries into bags for the homeless, and made cookies for the NICU, ER, and ICU staff at Evanston Hospital, Sunrise Assisted Living in Wilmette, and the Islamic Community Center in Des Plaines. Unsurprisingly with all those helping hands, Christmas Angels was able to complete its work early this year!

January 2016 – Jockey Joy at Grace House

When women leave incarceration and come to live at Grace House to begin to build their new lives, they often have only the clothes on their backs. Clothing donations help provide the necessaries for meetings and job interviews, but rarely do such donations include undergarments. When our group of Grace House mentors learned about this deficit, they decided to do something! Cindy Campbell leveraged a contact at Jockey who was more than happy to help out. Each resident was measured and provided with custom fitted undergarments. The Grace House mentors delivered the items at a
“Lingerie Party” in which all celebrated the joy of properly fitting clothes and the gift of personal attention with a lunch shared by all with gratitude for the gifts of friendship and service.

**Upcoming Events**

**New BAM and Wow Sessions – February 16th**

This month Christ Church will be presenting two new Becoming A Man and Working On Womanhood sessions at Amundsun High School in Lincoln Square. If you are interested in volunteering to present at one of these anti-violence and self-esteem programs, please contact RobinAnstaett@aol.com.

**Donate-A-Day April 2016!**

Coming soon to a venue near you! We are working out the final date and details for this second annual event. Stay tuned for more information….

**Christ Church Summer Rummage Sale! Saturday, June 4, 2016**

Save the date. More information to follow.

**Family Promise of Chicago North Shore**

Starting this Fall, Christ Church will join the more than 25 other congregations on the North Shore in supporting temporarily homeless families. We are very excited about this initiative, which will allow a broad variety of Christ Church parishioners to make a meaningful difference to families in need right here in our own back yard. More details to come!

**Do you know about an outreach effort going on at Christ Church?** Let us know! We’d love to share the story! Contact Christine Peterson at christinepeterson@comcast.net or Rena Kowalski at rena@christchurchwinnetka.org and be featured in future issues of the Local Outreach Newsletter.