

# PROJECT UNDERSTANDING NEWS

A newsletter for the volunteers  
and supporters of Project  
Understanding

Volume XVIII No. 2

February 2003



## Ventura County CROP Walks

**SUNDAY, MARCH 9**

### Camarillo

John & Bev Pearson, 482-6758  
[bowlerjay@aol.com](mailto:bowlerjay@aol.com)

### Conejo Valley/Thousand Oaks

Sherrill Hyink, 492-3674  
[shyink@earthlink.net](mailto:shyink@earthlink.net)

### Santa Paula

Ernest and Joyce Carlson, 525-2824  
[eandjcarlson@cs.com](mailto:eandjcarlson@cs.com)

### Oxnard/Port Hueneme

Cloene Marson, 983-8111  
[marmilene@adelphia.net](mailto:marmilene@adelphia.net)

### Ventura

Jeanine Faria-Walker  
[walkerr@vcss.k12.ca.us](mailto:walkerr@vcss.k12.ca.us)

**SUNDAY, MARCH 30**

### Moorpark

Marilyn Green, 529-3771  
[medmgreen@aol.com](mailto:medmgreen@aol.com)



Note: Ojai Walk is not yet scheduled.



## Project Under- standing Outreach on Chronic Diseases

By Kathryn Meza, Community  
Health Outreach Worker

The Chronic Disease Prevention Program (CDPP) is a collaborative program between Ventura County Public Health and various community agencies. Project Understanding is one of the partners with Public Health on the Chronic Disease Prevention Program grant.

Our target population is low-income and under-served families who are at high risk for, or who already have, diabetes, hypertension and/or elevated total cholesterol and body fat levels.

Our primary service area includes Ventura, Oxnard and Santa Paula. CDPP's goal is to promote healthy eating and regular physical activity in order to prevent and manage diabetes and hypertension among low-income people.

The program accomplishes its goal through three major services that are free to the community.

**1. Community Health Screening Tests.** These consist of random blood glucose, blood

pressure and a body fat analysis. The program identifies those who are at risk for, or are in the early stages of, diabetes or high blood pressure.

**2. Educational Classes.** Por La Vida/For My Life is a curriculum of eight nutrition and physical activity classes presented by the Community Health Outreach Worker (CHOW) or dietitian.

**3. Case Management.** The individuals from the screenings that are found to have impaired readings are referred to the case management component of the program. Here they will receive one-on-one education and counseling services by a team of registered dietitians, health educators and public health nurses. All individuals are encouraged to participate in the educational classes and walking clubs.

This is where I, as the Community Health Outreach Worker (CHOW), come in. As a CHOW I seek out, organize, and participate in community events. I may perform a screening, educate people on chronic diseases, or present a cooking demonstration or a series of classes. We have collaborated with the following agencies and attended the following events: 4th of July Street Fair on Main Street, the Salvation Army's Ventura Transitional Living Center and Housing, (senior living

**See Outreach on Page 2**

## Outreach

Continued From Page 1

complex), Avenue Adult Center, Sheridan Way Family Center, Holiday Street Fair on Main Street, E. P. Foster Elementary Carnival, First Baptist Church and many others.

CDPP focuses on the prevention and control of diabetes and hypertension because they are two of the leading causes of disability and death in Ventura County, especially in the low-income communities. Low-income people often have no medical insurance and limited access to health care and may lack awareness on prevention and control of these diseases

This is why educating the community is so very important. Education and awareness are key to the preventing and controlling of many chronic diseases. Even if at the time of screening the results are normal, educating that individual on prevention may keep his or her numbers at normal ranges. You never know if you will get another chance to make a difference in their life This is why I make it a point to educate at every event; we could be the first step to a healthier life

Diabetes is a disease that affects the way the body uses food. It also affects the ability to store sugar. Some of the risk factors for diabetes are (1) family history, (2) Latino ethnicity,

(3) obesity, and (4) lack of regular exercise.

There are two types of diabetes. Type I is the insulin dependent diabetic, occurring most often in children and young adults. Once on insulin it becomes difficult to come off the insulin. Type II is the most common type. The body produces insulin but can not use it effectively. It is usually controlled by oral medication, diet, and exercise. Diabetes can lead to a heart attack, amputations, and blindness.

Hypertension (high blood pressure) is a condition where the pressure in the blood vessels stays high over a period of time. It can cause heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, and even death. Some of the risk factors for hypertension are (1) family history, (2) obesity, and (3) lack of regular exercise.

To date we have served the community of Ventura with screenings, walking clubs, and physical ability and Por La Vida classes. More than 1,400 participants attended our programs between January and September of last year.

We continue to reach many people every month with our community health screenings, educational classes, walking clubs, family aerobic classes, and case management sessions. Our service has expanded to other communities outside of Ventura, Oxnard, and Santa

Paula. Many of our programs, services, and events are now available in Fillmore, Piru and other areas of our county. ♦

## Year-End Giving Letters Mailed

As in previous years, Project Understanding recently mailed year-end giving letters to all donors whose gifts to Project Understanding totaled \$200 or more for the year 2002.

Many of our donors (and their tax preparers) like to have a single document which itemizes all of the donor's gifts.

If you are one of the donors who received such a letter, please take a moment to assure yourself that our records agree with yours. If there is a discrepancy, please call business manager, Kari Brogdin (652-1326), so that the discrepancy may be resolved. You should also call Kari if you donated \$200 or more and did not receive a letter.

Finally, we routinely send these letters to those who gave more than \$200 but every donation is vital to us and is acknowledged at the time of donation with a receipt. We are happy to supply any donor with an aggregate receipt for the year, whatever the total of their gifts. If you would like such a letter for your records, please call Kari and we will quickly supply you with one.

More than 50% of Project Understanding's income comes from donations from individuals, congregations, organizations and businesses. Each and every one of these gifts is important to us and much appreciated. ♦

**Thank You Again to Our Annual Dinner  
Sterling Silver Sponsor**



**Affinity Bank**

## Two Project Understanding Staff to Pursue Other Endeavors

Project Understanding reluctantly bids farewell to two wonderful staff members.

### Aina Barber

Aina first came to Project Understanding during the summer of 2001 as a temporary receptionist when the morning receptionist took a two-month leave of absence for family reasons. When the two months were over, Aina had made such

an impression that she was invited to remain on the staff permanently as the



administrative assistant to the executive director. She has served in that position for the past year and a half.

Aina and her husband Nick are the owners of Barber Signs in Ventura. Aina had hoped and believed that she could work 20 hours per week and still keep the family business going. The Barbers have reluctantly decided that this is not possible. Aina has therefore left Project Understanding to devote her full-time attention to that business.

We will miss Aina's efficiency and cheerful spirit.

### Maria Encarnacion

Maria joined the Project Understanding staff as morning receptionist last September. Since that time she has somehow managed to keep a calm and happy disposition in an

environment which is often moderately controlled chaos. She answers the busy phones and greets all who come through the door. And she is able to do this in both English and Spanish.



Unfortunately, the morning receptionist is only a part-time position and Maria needed full-time employment. She has therefore accepted a full-time position. January 31 was her last day.

Thank you, Maria, for your brief but faithful service. ♦

## Staff Positions Available

Because of the two staff departures reported on this page, Project Understanding is seeking to fill these positions.

Each of these positions is part-time (20 hours per week.)

The morning receptionist works in the reception center and answers the phones and assists all those who come to Project Understanding (clients, volunteers, donors and guests). The hours are from 8 a.m. to 12 noon, Monday through Friday. Bilingual (English-Spanish) is a definite plus.

The administrative assistant works with the executive director performing clerical duties, scheduling meetings, assisting in the preparation of grants and reports and in general office organization. This is also a part-time (20 hour per week) position with flexible hours.

For the candidate with appropriate skills and experience, these two positions could

be combined into one full-time position.

Interested parties may contact either Linda Simson (for the receptionist position) or Rick Pearson (for the administrative assistant position) for more information or a job description. ♦

## Acts of Kindness

### Continued From Page 8

Michigan remembers a day when she was 11 years old, and her parents took their six children for a special day at the beach. Donna's mother brought a picnic lunch and prepared a plate for each of them.

"When I looked up from my plate, my mother was fixing one more plate. . . . She turned away from us and walked over . . . to where there was a man by himself. And he was picking his way through the trash can. And my mother — I don't know whether she just put the plate there or whether she touched him gently or whether she said a few words — but I remember him turning to her in a gesture of thankfulness."

Years later, Dugay asked her mother if she remembered the incident. She laughed and said, "Not at all." "But for me," Dugay writes, "I remember it very well because for me, it was the touchstone for what good deeds became in my life."

I share these stories with you because they remind me of what I see unfold every day here at Project Understanding because of the many acts of kindness, random and otherwise, of the volunteers, staff and donors who daily pass through our doors. ♦

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Community Health Outreach Worker  
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**Marcia Wakelee**  
Tutoring Coordinator

*“What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”*

*Micah 6:8*

## Our Mission and Programs

### Mission

**P**roject Understanding is a faith-based agency founded and established on the principles and ideals of Judaism and Christianity whose mission is two-fold: To do justice by serving the poor, hungry and oppressed with compassion and mercy, and to provide avenues for those who wish to serve others.

### Programs

Project Understanding initiates, develops, and maintains special projects pulling together the efforts of individual local churches and groups to meet the needs of the less fortunate. The programs are:

#### Reception Center

A program that utilizes an intake process with skilled, supportive listeners to minister to and assess the needs of individuals and families in order to make appropriate referrals.

#### Focus on Food Emergency Food Pantry

A pantry program designed to help homeless and hungry people through times of crisis. The Pantry provides recipients with a three-day supply of food.

#### SARAH (Simply Arranging Real Assistance Here)

A source of basic services for homeless people. Services include shower and laundry facilities, a mail and message center for job seekers, and assistance in attaining food and shelter.

#### Ventura County Hunger Coalition

A network of church and community-based groups and individuals committed to eliminating domestic and world hunger through communications, advocacy, networking, education, and action.

#### Tutoring Station

To assist economically disadvantaged children, this program provides one hour per week of extra classroom instruction with volunteer tutors in one-to-one interaction at five locations in Ventura and Oxnard.

#### Religious Coalition for the Homeless

Churches and synagogues joining in faith-based action to provide transitional shelter and a voice for the homeless of Ventura County.

#### Emergency Shelter

Project Understanding is working with a coalition of interested agencies and individuals to provide year-round emergency shelter for homeless people.

## Thank You to Supporters of Project Understanding

**Thank you to the following people and groups who contributed cash during the month of December:**

### Individuals

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**See Thank Yous on Page 6**

## Thank You to Supporters of Project Understanding

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In honor of:  
Bryan Fisch DDS, Happy  
Birthday From Your Staff  
Given by:  
Howard & Linda Bolinger

In honor of:  
Dora Alvarez & LaVonne Askay  
Given by:  
Fred & Victoria Tiedt

In memory of:  
Elsie Carr  
Given by:  
Jeanette Ross

In memory of:  
Harriet Gilbert, Happy Birthday  
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Douglas & Harriett Unfug

In memory of:  
Hilde Kirsch  
Given by:  
Robert & Rosalind Thomas

In honor of:  
The Hitchcock and Lochner  
Family  
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Douglas & Patricia Lochner

In honor of:  
Jan Jason, Happy Holidays  
Given by:  
Harry & Esther Cooperman

In memory of:  
Jim Feuling  
Given by:  
Jay & Mindy Johnson

In honor of:  
Judy Alexandre's Birthday  
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In honor of:  
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In honor of:  
Lou & Dan Lincoln  
Given by:  
Douglas & Jean Jereska

In memory of:  
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Doyle & Anita Smith

In honor of:  
Mr. & Mrs. I. C. Maust  
Given by:  
Art & Jean Marshall

In memory of:  
My brother Chris Browning  
Given by:  
Berdean Eaton

In memory of:  
Steven E. Ennis  
Given by:  
Ross Smith

In honor of:  
Susan & Don Dewey  
Given by:  
Jeanette Ross

In memory of:  
Thomas G. Miller Jr.  
Given by:  
Lawrence & Teresa Barker

In honor of:  
William Corkins & Diane  
Federle  
Given by:  
James & Janet Corkins

### Churches & Organizations

Cars 4 Causes  
College United Methodist Church  
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 First Assembly of God of Ventura  
 First Baptist Church of Ojai  
 First Lutheran Church,  
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 of Ventura  
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 Ventura  
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 Trinity Presbyterian Church of  
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 Ventura County Community  
 Foundation  
 Ventura Interfaith Ministerial  
 Association  
 Westminster Presbyterian Church

**Thank you to the following  
 people and groups who  
 contributed food and other  
 items to our program in  
 December:**

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Nancy  
 Danny Armstrong  
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### Newsletter Layout

Ellen Pearson

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Rheto-Rick

## Acts of Kindness, Random and Otherwise

By Rick Pearson  
Executive Director

Once wrote a column based on the line, "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers," spoken by Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. That line came back to me when I heard a recent article on the NPR news magazine, *Morning Edition*.

In December, the program invited listeners to submit stories of "good deeds" they had either witnessed or heard about and they shared some of the stories that they received. I thought that several of those stories are worth sharing with you.

There was the story of the grandfather of Stephen Gordon. The senior Mr. Gordon was a Jewish immigrant who owned a hardware store in Norfolk, Virginia, in the 1930s. The Ku Klux Klan organized a boycott

of Mr. Gordon's store because it was competing with the store owned by a member of the Klan. One day Mr. Gordon mentioned to a Mennonite farmer that he was in danger of losing the store. The farmer nodded and left, but within a short time all of the Mennonite farmers in the region began shopping in Mr. Gordon's store in defiance of the Klan boycott.

Or there was the act of kindness experienced by Beverly Jordan after Hurricane Andrew slammed into South Florida in 1992, leaving a wide path of destruction in its path. Jordan, a nurse, volunteered to go door to door in Miami delivering emergency relief.

Her relief van pulled up to a house that was nothing but a shell. She asked the young owners if they needed anything. Jordan writes, "They said, 'No, but can you wait a minute here?' They came back out with a case of diapers and four or five bags of food and said, 'Would you please give this to somebody who needs it worse than we do?'"

Donna Delfino Dugay of  
**See Acts of Kindness on Page 3**

## Highlights

**P. 1:** Project Understanding and Ventura County Public Health strive to prevent chronic diseases in low-income and under-served families.

**P. 2:** Year-end giving letters are mailed to donors.

**P. 3:** Two Project Understanding staff leave to pursue other endeavors.

Staff positions are now open and available.

**P. 5:** Thank you to the supporters of Project Understanding.



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