

PROJECT UNDERSTANDING NEWS

A newsletter for the volunteers
and supporters of Project
Understanding

Volume XXI No. 2
(Monthly)

February 2006



Ben Franklin Comes to the Rubicon Theatre on Sunday, February 12, to Benefit Project Understanding

On the evening of Sunday, February 12, the Rubicon Theatre Company will host a benefit performance of the one-man show, *Ben Franklin: Unplugged*, to benefit Project Understanding. This special performance is made possible by a generous gift from the County Schools Federal Credit Union.

Tickets for the performance are \$50 and VIP tickets are available for \$75. VIP tickets include special seating, a poster signed by Mr. Kornbluth and recognition in the program. Tickets may be ordered using

the order form on page 3, by calling Debbie Beers at Project Understanding, 652-1326, Ext. 826, or from any member of the Project Understanding board of directors.

The Rubicon describes the show this way: "Beloved stand-up comic, actor and PBS television host Josh Kornbluth takes us on a hilarious, heartfelt and very human journey in this celebration of the 300th anniversary of the birth of one of the world's great thinkers. Josh wakes up one angst-filled, middle-aged morning, looks in

the mirror, and finds he has somehow become the spittin' image of Benjamin Franklin. He begins to uncover the mystery of Franklin's unresolved relationship with his son William, a Royalist during the Revolutionary War, and what starts as a jaunty stroll through history becomes Josh's personal and poignant quest to reconcile with his own father."

Plan now to help us celebrate the life of this great American and support Project Understanding at the same time. ♦

**A special benefit
performance of
Josh Kornbluth's
*Ben Franklin:
Unplugged***

**Starring
Josh Kornbluth**

**This performance
made possible
through a gift from:**



**County Schools
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION**



**Sunday
February 12
Reception 5 p.m.
Performance 6 p.m.

Tickets: \$50
VIP Tickets: \$75

Rubicon Theatre
1006 Main Street
Ventura**

For tickets, see the form on page 3 of this newsletter or call Debbie at Project Understanding, 652-1326.

My First Year in SARAH Center

By Jim Grimes
SARAH Coordinator

This is my first year as SARAH coordinator. Spending time with our clients each day I've learned so much. For one thing I have learned patience.

So many people from the streets go through more traumas in one weekend than most of us will have dealt within a year's time.

While trying to find food, finding a safe place to sleep, dealing with other homeless people, and having to keep on the move so the police will not cause them a problem — all this and more, they must go through each and every day.

Clients arrive at the SARAH Center tired, angry, hungry and sometimes just cold. This is where the patience comes in. As each one arrives, we try to meet their needs, anything from a shower or just using the phone. Many are there to meet friends and have time to rest and be off the streets for a couple of hours.

On a busy day we can have up to 45 people come through the doors. I find that by staying focused and taking care of one client at a time their needs are met. There are times when I am doing three things at once, but that's what makes SARAH and Project Understanding so interesting.

It's the people that you meet and their lives you hear about that make it a job like no other. Actually, this is more like a mission for me than a job. Each and every day I thank God for

leading me down this path. I only hope with the time I spend at Project Understanding I can help in some way each person who comes through the doors. I would like to bring them back to a feeling of self-worth. I want them to know that Project Understanding and other agencies are there to help them down whatever path they need to be on and that they need not be invisible people on the streets that no one bothers to acknowledge. Many times clients have told me that when they walk down Main Street not one person will greet them with a "good day." Everyone treats them like they are invisible. Homeless people are no different than anyone else, they need to be acknowledged.

Every once in a while we have clients who are able to pull themselves out of the hard life on the streets and move on to a better life. Susan and her husband Bob are two people who did just that. This time last year Bob lost his job and since they needed both salaries to pay the rent and put food on the table they lost their apartment. This forced them and their ten-year-old son to live in their van. That is when I met this family. Each day their son would come in before school and take a shower, then mom would drive him to school and go to work, while Bob looked for work. Each day I could see the stress both Susan and Bob were under. I could also see how this time out on the streets could and would affect their son. I could see the determination that they both had to do whatever it would take to get off the streets as soon as possible. Bob went out seven days a week looking for a job

that would do just that, all the time staying strong for each other.

God was with them and Bob did find that job he was looking for and with the help from others they were fortunate to get into a new place before the holidays. I wish there were more stories like this out there. Many more fall through the cracks and have a much harder and longer time out on the streets.

We at Project Understanding work very hard to bring back some feeling of self-worth — something street people have lost. This must be done before they give up on themselves. To find God's path for each one of our clients is why we at Project Understanding are there.

I have tried to do this my first year and hope to continue to do so for many more years. ♦

SARAH Needs Towels and Books

Every couple of years, we request the donation of towels for the SARAH Center.

To be usable, the towels need to be new or lightly used. Our towels get used once and are then laundered by a commercial laundry. This necessary treatment tends to shorten the useful life of the towels.

The people who use the SARAH Center have no other place to clean themselves — a luxury that most of us take for granted. Won't you help us help them keep clean by donating a towel or two?

Also, do you buy and read books and then wonder what to do with them? We have a solu-

See Towel Drive, Page 3

Words

Continued From Page 8

received recently. No, not the "Ask not . . ." line, but one that I didn't even know. President Kennedy said that day, "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich."

This quote truly struck home because I read it the same week that I heard this statistic: In 1973 the average CEO of a major corporation in the United States earned 45 times the wages of rank-and-file workers in those corporations. By 1991 that ratio had risen to 140 times the average worker. By 2002 the number was nearly 500 times the wages of an average worker in their companies.

Have we as a society really come to believe that what a CEO does in a month is worth as much as what a worker does in a lifetime? Do we consider it justice when many major corporations are laying off thousands of workers and ending their pension plans and asking bankruptcy courts to end union contracts to save the corporation money and asking those same courts to allow executives to receive large bonuses?

Then maybe we need to remember the words of Amos, "Woe to those who lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches, they shall now be the first of those to go into exile, and the revelry of those who stretch themselves shall pass away."

Maybe we need to remember those words of President Kennedy, "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich." ♦

Project Understanding Needs Vehicle

About six years ago, some faithful supporters of Project Understanding decided to donate their 1991 Acura Integra rather than trade it in. Since that time, this car has been used by the Project Understanding staff as a very reliable means of transportation.

Now this 15-year-old vehicle has more than 125,000 miles on it and has developed mechanical problems that are too expensive to have repaired (given the age of the car.)

We are, therefore, looking for another kind person who will donate a vehicle.

Because this vehicle will be used exclusively by Project Understanding staff, it is not covered by the donated vehicle law that went into effect last year.

We are seeking a vehicle under ten years old with fewer than 80,000 miles on it. If you have such a vehicle that you would consider donating, please call Rick Pearson at 652-1326, ext. 825. Thank you. ♦

Towel Drive

Continued From Page 2

tion to these volumes that may be cluttering your house. Donate them to the SARAH Center for the use of the homeless people who come in for services.

You will feel good knowing that you are sharing the pleasure of reading with others and the books will be most appreciated by our clients. ♦

Ben Franklin: Unplugged Benefit Performance

Sunday, February 12

*Ticket orders received after February 3
will be available for pick-up at the door.*

- Please send me _____ ticket(s) for the Benefit Performance (\$50 per ticket).
- Please send me _____ VIP ticket(s) for the Benefit Performance (\$75 per ticket).

Check enclosed for \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

(Please make checks payable to Project Understanding.)

Board of Directors



Hon. Melinda Johnson (retired)

President

Howard Bolinger, Vice-President

Ann Tobin, Secretary

Karen Campbell, Treasurer

Judy Alexandre, Past President

Mary Carr

Eloisa de la Rosa

Rev. Don Dewey

Bob Emerick

Tom Hallock

Larry Matheney

Dennis Mitchell

Staff



Rick Pearson

Executive Director

Debbie Beers

Administrative Assistant

Kari Brogdin

Business Manager

Regina Fitz-Gerald

Housing Case Manager

Jim Grimes

SARAH Coordinator

Kay Hoyt

Reception Center Coordinator

Lisa Lee

Pantry Coordinator

Marcia Wakelee

Tutoring Coordinator

Shelley Wilmeth

Receptionist

Our Mission and Programs

Mission

Project Understanding is a faith-based agency established on the principles and ideals of Judaism and Christianity whose mission is twofold: 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 individuals, local congregations 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.

The Bread of Life

Five congregations are working together to prepare and serve meals to hungry people in Oxnard each week.

“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

Thank You to Supporters of Project Understanding

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

Individuals

Judy Alexandre
Wendell & Denise Allen
Alan Alpers
Bruce & Letcy Anselmo
Ralph & Kay Armstrong
William & Dorothy Asano
Roy & Mary Lou Ash
C. Patrick & Lavonne Askay
Lila Atkisson
John & Catherine Baker
Lorraine Ballance
Edward & Jill Banman
Marion Baranowski
Jeanne Barcellos
Patricia Barrett
Richard & Mary Bauleke
Steve Bennett
Tom & Shirley Bertolino
Maurice & Carol Bickford
Charles & Dawn Blaney
Bartley & Michelle Bleuel
Donna Boeck
Howard & Linda Bolinger
Barbara Born
Robert & Jean Boyer
Jeffrey Brackett & Miriam Arichea
Sheila Brady
Bob & Mary Braitman
Arlene Briggie
Hank & Ellen Brokaw
John Broms, M.D.
Susan Bronn
James & Cheryl Bruckner
Edmond & Anke Bruist
John & Deborah Bylo
Richard & Laura Calzada
Verlynn & Maxine Carpenter
Thomas & Joan Carr
Robert & Elaine Castle
Pamela Chan
James & Susan Cheek
Yvon Chouinard & Malinda Chouinard-Pennoyer
Naomi Claypool Fowler
Matthew & Lillian Collins
Ann Cooluris
William Corkins & Diane Federle
Gerald & Joanne Cornelius

Jerry & Dayna & David Crow
Helen Culton
Joann Cunningham
Robert & Kenmere Davidson
Larry & Carol Dawes
Helen Dirkes
Dan & Mary Doll
Peter & Diane Dowler
Charles & Martha Dugan
Henry & Jessie Duim
Charles & Margaret Dunn
Ed & Beverly Eidson
Dorothy & Monte Elchonesh
James & Lelita Emch
Fred & Martha Engle
Betty Lou Evans
Frederick & Lynda Evans
Robert & Lynne Farrow
Joe & Kim Fiano
Kenneth & Deirdra Finning
William & Beverly Flothmeier
Edris Fowkes
Sue Ellen Fowler
Oliver Freeman
Thomas & Lois Gallardo
Robert & Barbara Garrison
Warren & Leilani Glaser
Peter Goldenring
Mark Goldenson & Janet Goldenson
Candy & Paul Gooding
Nancy Gordon
Newell & Dorothy Gragg
Iris Gruwell
Christoph Haar
Ronald & Pickens Halt
Joy Hamlat
Bill Hammaker
Kay Hannah
Ivan Harkey
Camilis Harkins
Ronald Harrington
Betty Harris
John & Shelley Harrison
Tom & Cynthia Hashbarger
Wilma Hays
H. Lee & Margaret Heise
Jane Helm
William & Pauline Hinds
Charles & Vicky Holmstrom
Bob & Lee Horne
Ronald & Barbara Hudoba
Carroll Hudson
Norman & Marilee Hudson
Carroll Hudson

Ann Huston
Fannie Hutchison
Robert Ingrum
JoAnn Jackley
David Jaffe & Elizabeth West
Daniel & Sungmie Jahng
Jay & Mindy Johnson
Victor & Susan Johnson
Craig & Donna Johnson
Jay & Mindy Johnson
Robert & Bruna Jones
David & Norma Kalian
John & Rebecca Keisler
David & Ruth Kille
Eunice Koch
Richard & Sue Komorowski
Theodore & Marilyn Kretschmer
George Kroll
Kevin & Sharon Krumdieck
Ada Kudron
Echo Kukuchek
Janice Kuzemko
Edward & Susan Lacey
Fran & Katherine Larsen
Gaylord & Muriel Larsen
Byron & Rene Lawler
Barry & Kathy Lewis
Warren & Lucille Lewis
Lou & Kay Liddi
Susan & Robert Livingstone
Douglas & Patricia Lochner
Kenneth & Laura Locken
Dennis & Jeannette Longwill
Meredith Loree
Frances Lowe
Rockwood & Susan Ludes
Don & Lucy Lyman
Nancy MacConell
Sylvia Mack
Barbara & Jackie Maitland
Jacqueline Manley
Lois Marrs
John & Frances Marshall
Art & Jean Marshall
John & Robin Martin
Shane & Wendy Matthews
Frank & Charaline Maxim
Robert & Lois McCampbell
Liliana McDermott
Marilyn McFadden
Tom & Florence McNally
Luceille Merkel
Leo Meyer
Dennis & Deirdre Mitchell

See Thank You, Page 6

Thank You to Supporters of Project Understanding

Betty Moon
 Robyn Moravetz
 Alfred Mottola
 Deborah Mucciacito
 Gail Narkevic
 Douglas & Diane Off
 Thomas E. & Mary Margaret Olson
 Doris Olson
 Joann Ontiveros
 John & Stephanie Orr
 Henning & Linda Ottsen
 Chang & Eun Soon Park
 Mason & Carolyn Parrish
 Jerry & Elizabeth Paul
 Nicholas & Nita Perkins
 John & Anna Powell
 Dorothy Prairie
 Diane Rennell
 Margery Ricards
 Samuel & Carolyn Rinaldi
 Duane Rodgers
 Chris & Kimberly Ronneberg
 Raymond & Marie Ruiz
 Michael & Carolyn Russell
 James Rutherford
 Louis & Susan Samonsky
 Salvatore & Mary Saputo
 Roberta Schoenherr
 Karol Schulkin
 Dorothy Schupbach
 Laurence & Linda Sellers
 Martha & David Sexton
 Charles & Jeannette Simmons
 Lawrence & Martha Smith
 William & Sharon Snure
 Marjorie Steinhouse
 Tom Stephen & Virginia Starkey
 Joanne Stone
 Phillip & Judith Stubb
 Brook & Sue Sturtevant
 Renee & Lonnie Sutton
 Robert & Angalee Swaney
 Michael & Pamela Swartout
 Jerome & Alice Sweetland
 Will & Lydia Thompson
 Roy & Nancy Todd
 Fred & Barbara Tomblin
 Charles & Dorothy Tubbs
 Jeffrey Tubbs, M.D.
 Les & Judy Vielbig
 Ruberda Vigen
 Blanche Viles
 Mort & Julia Vinecour
 Daniel & Joanne Wakelee
 Mary Jane Wallace

Dale & Mary Watson
 Doris Weinert
 Robert Willis
 Jack & Rochelle Wiltfang
 John & Paulina Wolfe
 K. L. & Claudette York

 In honor of:
 Abbie Spellman's Swimming Efforts
 Given by:
 Pamela Chan

 In memory of:
 Brother John Vigen
 Given by:
 Ruberda Vigen

 In memory of:
 Donald H. Price
 Given by:
 Sharron Price

 In honor of:
 Dorothy Prairie's 80th Birthday
 Given by:
 Jane Bourdon
 Rick & Coleen DeLeon
 Richard & Mary Gagne
 Daniel & Jennifer Rollag

 In honor of:
 James Moore's 80th Birthday
 Given by:
 Jack & Ann Sperber

 In memory of:
 Judy Alexandre's Birthday
 Given by:
 Sandra Westbrook

 In honor of:
 Judy Vielbig's Birthday
 Given by:
 Janni Chung
 Helen Collins
 Warren & Ardella Faue
 Bruce & Signe Smale

 In honor of:
 Marcia Wakelee
 Given by:
 Earl & Marcia Wakelee

In memory of:
 Maureen Herman
 Given by:
 Doyle & Anita Smith

 In honor of:
 Rick & Ellen Pearson
 Given by:
 Les & Judy Vielbig

 In memory of:
 Robert Anderson
 Given by:
 Rose Marie Voelker-Anderson

 In honor of:
 Sara Maust
 Given by:
 Art & Jean Marshall

 In honor of:
 Sister Marion Hufuc
 Given by:
 Ruberda Vigen

 In honor of:
 The Cliff Hitchcock Family
 Given by:
 Douglas & Patricia Lochner

 In honor of:
 The Francis Lochner Family
 Given by:
 Douglas & Patricia Lochner

 In honor of:
 The Honorable Melinda Johnson
 Retired
 Given by:
 Ventura County Criminal
 Defense Bar

Churches & Organizations

Cars 4 Causes
 Church of Religious Science
 Church of the Foothills
 College United Methodist Church
 Community Presbyterian Church
 County of Ventura
 Delta Theta Tau Sorority Zeta
 Epsilon Chapter
 Eastminster Presbyterian Church
 Edison International
 First Assembly of God of Ventura

Thank You to Supporters of Project Understanding

First Presbyterian Church of Santa Paula
 First United Methodist Church of Ventura
 Gallardo & Associates
 Grace Lutheran Church
 Horizon Foursquare Church
 Live Oak Christian Fellowship
 Moorpark Active Seniors
 National Association of Retired Federal Employees
 North Oxnard United Methodist Church, United Methodist Women
 Patagonia
 Pythian Sisters
 Rotary Club of Ventura
 San Buenaventura Institute
 St. Paul's Episcopal Church of Ventura
 Thrivent Financial for Lutherans
 Trinity Lutheran Church
 United Way, Other, United Way/Edison International
 VCCA, Inc.
 Ventura County Community Foundation
 Ventura County Community Foundation, Elsie J. Carr Memorial Fund
 Westminster Presbyterian Church
 Weyerhaeuser Company Foundation
 Wood-Claeysens Foundation

Thank you to the following people and groups who contributed food and other items to our program during the month of December:

Individuals

Kathy & Loral Back
 Margaret Barker
 Denise Baylor
 Richard Benson
 Eric Boys
 Micah Brogdin
 Misty Carpenter
 Ann Dean
 Tim Gardner
 Les Goldberg
 Ruth Hampton
 Bette Hartman

Haley & Marissa Hernandez
 Richard & Sue Komorowski
 Kevin & Sharon Krumdieck
 Eugenia Lynch & Tom Bertolino
 Michael McGuire
 Dorothy Schupbach
 Nathan Skinner
 Wayne & Katherine Strom
 George Tiliquist & Eleanor Tilquist
 Leonard & Marsha Weber
 Christian Wynhaner

Churches & Organizations

Alliance for the Mentally Ill
 Affinity Bank
 Alpha Center
 Altrusa International Inc. of Ventura
 California State Employees Association
 Church of Religious Science
 College United Methodist Church
 Commission on Human Concerns
 Community of Christ Church
 Community Presbyterian Church
 Covenant Players
 Delta Kappa Gamma, Oxnard Camarillo Chapter
 Delta Theta Tau Omicron Tau Chapter
 Eastminster Presbyterian Church
 Eastminster Presbyterian Church, Middle School Youth Group
 First Baptist Church of Ventura
 First Christian Church
 First United Methodist Church of Ventura, Joyful Fellowship
 Food Fantasies
 Girl Scout Troop No. 572
 Grace Lutheran Church
 Juanamaria Elementary School
 Keeper of the Rainbow
 Kentucky Fried Chicken
 Mound Elementary School
 Native Daughters of the Golden West
 Nicaraguan Children's Fund
 Peet's Coffee
 PEO Chapter FZ
 Rotary Club of Ventura East
 Rotary Club of Ventura Marina
 San Buenaventura Women's Club
 Second Church of Christ, Scientist
 Soroptimist International of Ventura

St. Paul's Episcopal Church of Ventura, Parish Day School
 Starbucks
 Temple Beth Torah
 Trader Joe's
 Trinity Lutheran Church
 U.S. Navy Black Eagles VAW113
 Unitarian Universalist Church
 Ventura City Firefighters Assoc.
 Von's Grocery, Harbor Blvd.
 Von's Grocery, Telegraph Rd.
 Von's Grocery, Thompson Blvd.

Newsletter Layout

Ellen Pearson

Remember the Daybreak Friend-Raiser

**Saturday
 February 25**

12 Noon - 2 p.m.

**Corner of
 Thompson Blvd.
 and Ventura Ave.
 in Ventura**

On Saturday, Feb. 25, there will be a celebration that will include a barbecue, live music, drawings of the proposed Daybreak facility, and public recognition of many of the people who have brought us to this point.



Rheto-Rick

Inaugural Words

By Rick Pearson
Executive Director

John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States in my bedroom in 1960.



Let me explain. The room in my childhood home that had been designed as a den became a bedroom as the family grew.

This room had a fireplace and, most important in this context, it had an external door. An external door made it possible to use the room as a polling station without having people traipse through the whole house.

The Presidential election of 1960 was the first election of which I was really aware. I was a little confused by it all. President Eisenhower was first elected in 1952, when I was two years old. So I just thought "Ike" was the President without

really thinking about how he had become President.

Now we were going to have a new President and he was going to be elected in my bedroom. I was more than a little concerned about having everyone in the country coming through my room. I was greatly relieved that it was only a few hundred and that all the rest would be voting elsewhere.

Then came January 20, 1961, and the excitement of the Inauguration and the President's stirring speech. There was that line from the speech that we heard over and over in the days and months afterwards, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

It was a line that inspired a generation of Americans into service. Service here at home and service around the world. Service through the Peace Corps and service through Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA).

I was reminded of all these things by one simple line from that inaugural address that was quoted in a newsletter I

See Words, Page 3

Highlights

P. 1: *Ben Franklin* comes to the Rubicon Theatre on Sunday, Feb. 12, to benefit Project Understanding.

P. 2: My first year in the SARAH Center.

SARAH needs towels and books.

P. 3: Project Understanding needs a vehicle.

P. 7: Remember the Daybreak Friend-Raiser.



Printed on
Recycled
Paper

This newsletter is made possible
by the generous support of:



Affinity Bank

Project Understanding at San Buenaventura
43 E. Vince Street
P.O. Box 25460
Ventura, CA 93002-2280
(805) 652-1326
FAX (805) 652-1389

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit # 297
Oxnard, CA

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED