

PROJECT UNDERSTANDING NEWS

A newsletter for the volunteers and supporters of Project Understanding



Volume XVIII No. 3

March 2003

Great Needs, Let's Meet Some with "Project Shelter"

By Lisa Cerino, Coordinator for Project Shelter

In May 2003 Project Understanding is sponsoring Project Shelter at the Emma Wood State Beach.

Project Shelter is an educational camping event in which groups will raise money to help homeless people and others in need in Western Ventura County and to raise awareness about the problems of homelessness. Individuals and group members will raise money, camp and learn about

See Project Shelter, Page 3

Eviction Prevention and Rental Assistance: How Do They Work?

By Regina Fitz-Gerald Housing Case Manager

For many years Project Understanding's Eviction Prevention and Rental Assistance Program has been helping families who are in danger of eviction or who need financial aid in order to move into a house or apartment.

Families with children are our primary target population rather than individuals or couples. But even a family must meet certain requirements before we can grant them assistance. The family must have dependent children living in the home, must have enough income to cover their rent in future months, and the immediate need for assistance must be due to an unexpected need. An example of this unexpected need could be an unexpected bill such as medical bills, car repair, or loss of job for a short period of time.

The main goal of the rental assistance is to help the family to maintain and stabilize the family's housing for the next six months. Sometimes, the family not only needs rental assistance,

but also they may need many other types of assistance. When looking at the family's needs we evaluate the situation and find resources to ensure the family the best possible success.

A family in need.

One such family came to Project Understanding with the need of rental assistance. The father came in and went through a case assistance process and was referred for rental assistance to the case manager.

The family had recently moved to Ventura from the East Coast because the father was unemployed and the mother had been ill. They have family in Ventura and at the suggestion of that family they came here to find work and housing. The mother found work right away and the father found part-time work. They stayed with their family for a couple of months until they were able to rent a place.

The family was doing fine in their new home until the mother became ill again and needed medication. The family did not have medical benefits. They had to pay for the medication so that the mother could continue to work. The medication was several hundred dollars, which they took from the rent money they had saved.

Now they did not know what

See Prevention, Page 2

JOIN!!!

PROJECT SHELTER

AN EDUCATIONAL CAMPING EVENT

Weekend of May 2, 3, & 4

EMMA WOOD STATE BEACH

Prevention

Continued From Page 1

they were going to do, because they were short on that month's rent. In talking with other family members about their problem one of the family members suggested that they come to Project Understanding to see if they might help them with the rent.

After the case manager evaluated the family to see if they met the preliminary requirements she met with the father. It was determined that this need to pay for medication would not arise again next month because the mother's insurance from her job would go into effect. After talking to the father the case manager found out that there would be no coverage for himself or the children. The case manager gave the father the information about Healthy Families, the state health insurance for otherwise uninsured children. Healthy Families would give benefits for the children if they qualified. She also told the father about the Medically Indigent Adult program that might help if the father had medical needs in the future before he could get coverage. The family also received food vouchers for the next few months to help supplement their food needs.

In one of the visits, the case manager found out that the chil-

dren had been sleeping on the floor with no beds. She was able to get the children two single beds just in time for Christmas through the Project Understanding furniture Book. The father thought that this was the greatest Christmas present he could give his children.

As of February 2003 the father has found a full-time job and is also working a part-time job in his field of expertise, and the children are on Healthy Families. This family is on their way to a happy fulfilling future with all the love and support of their family in Ventura and the love and support of their Project Understanding family.

With donations from individuals, congregations, business or industry as well as government grants, we have been able to pay a portion of the monthly rent, provide food and many other services to help a family maintain a warm loving home to come home to each night.

With rents and unemployment on the rise, we know that many more people will request services here at Project Understanding. Please continue your support with prayers, volunteer time, and other resources. ♦

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



Affinity Bank

Project Shelter

Continued From Page 1

homelessness, then raise awareness by teaching others what they learned. Project Shelter will be held at Emma Wood State Beach on May 2 - 4.

Participants will raise money in the weeks before the event by circulating sponsor sheets among friends and work or school mates, for example. A sponsor just writes his or her name or business name on the sheet, donation amount, and the address to which they would like their tax receipt sent.

Likely participants may be individuals, youth groups, men's or women's groups, Bible study classes, other groups withing congregaitons or even entire congregaitons.

It is our hope that each participating group or individual will secure \$1,000 in donations.

Individuals and a few representatives from each participating group will then camp at the event. During the campout experience they will take part in forums and listen to a variety of speakers who will help shed light on a very real situation in our area. They will also have experiences akin with being homeless.

Following the Project Shelter weekend, participants will go back to their group and give a teach-back about what they learned and experienced. The other group members participate by raising funds, supporting the representatives, learning and naturally sharing what they learned with even more people! Individuals or families who are not representing a formal group and wish to participate in the event may do

so as long as they commit to sharing their experience from the camp out with a particular group like a class, youth group, congregation, or group of friends.

If you are interested in participating in Project Shelter, please contact Lisa Cerino at (805) 901-4239. God bless you in your desire to help others. Thank you for any prayers that we may all help meet great needs.

There is great need to fill a void of funds needed to provide existing services at Project Understanding. Another huge need in Ventura County is immediate, year-round shelter for women and families. Last, but not least, most of us agree on the huge need to spread awareness about the help our neighbors require, because many of us want to help, but don't know where to begin. ♦

Ventura County CROP Walks

SUNDAY, MARCH 9

Camarillo

John & Bev Pearson, 482-6758
bowlerjay@aol.com

Conejo Valley/Thousand Oaks

Sherrill Hyink, 492-3674
shyink@earthlink.net

Santa Paula

Ernest and Joyce Carlson, 525-2824
eandjcarlson@cs.com

Oxnard/Port Hueneme

Cloene Marson, 983-8111
marmilene@adelphia.net

Ventura

Jeanine Faria-Walker
walkerr@vcss.k12.ca.us

SUNDAY, MARCH 30

Moorpark

Marilyn Green, 529-3771
medmgreen@aol.com



Note: Ojai Walk is not yet scheduled.



Board of Directors



Judy Alexandre, President
Jackie Manley, Vice President
Barbara Tomblin, Secretary
Don Cline, Treasurer
Karen Campbell
Mary Carr
James Hornstein
Hon. Melinda Johnson (retired)
Warren Lovingfoss
Roy Schneider

Staff



Rick Pearson
Executive Director
Joe Anguiano
Pantry Coordinator
Lynn Austin
Program Manager
Kari Brogdin
Business Manager
Bobbie Condron
Clerical Support
Regina Fitz-Gerald
Housing Case Manager
Kendra Folsom
Administrative Assistant
Renee Hall
SARAH Coordinator
Sheila Kay
Transitional Housing Case Manager
Shari Kempton
SARAH Coordinator
Kathryn Meza
Community Health Outreach
Linda Simson
Reception Center Coordinator
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

Project 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.

Kendra Folsom Joins Staff as Administrative Assistant

Project Understanding is happy to announce the appointment of Kendra Folsom as the new administrative assistant to the executive director.

Kendra has most recently worked with the Ventura County Special Olympics as area director. She also has a history with the city of Ventura, having worked for the Ventura Avenue Adult Center in Senior Services.



A 23-year county resident with three adult sons and a “wonderful” new daughter-in-law, she says that she is thrilled to be at Project Understanding and turned down three other offers to be here. Kendra says her first day “was like being amongst old friends. Everyone is so friendly and genuine.”

Kendra’s experience and experience with volunteers have already made her invaluable.

Welcome, Kendra. ♦

Three New Faces Join PU Board

The Project Understanding Board of Directors elected five people to a three-year term running through December 2005.

Two of these were current

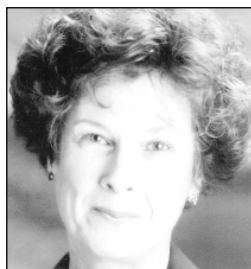
board members Barbara Tomblin and Don Cline who were serving unexpired terms and now begin terms of their own.

The new board members are the Honorable Melinda Johnson (retired), Karen Campbell, and Mary Carr.

Hon. Melinda Johnson (retired)

Mindy Johnson is a recently retired judge in the Superior Court in Ventura County where she had served for the past 20 years.

During her tenure, the ethical rules concerning judges participating in fundraising activities



made it difficult to serve on the board of any nonprofit agency.

With her retirement she eagerly accepted the invitation to join the Project Understanding board. She says that as a longtime supporter of Project Understanding she is well aware of the needs of homeless people and other low-income people in Ventura County and looks forward to working towards meeting their needs.

We are happy and proud to have Mindy serving on our board.

Karen Campbell

Longtime readers of this newsletter may remember Karen from her years of leadership in the Project Understanding live and silent auctions. The auctions began as an effort of the Ventura Association of Realtors through Karen’s

efforts. When the realtors stopped sponsoring the auctions, Karen helped the Project Understanding board to carry on the tradition.

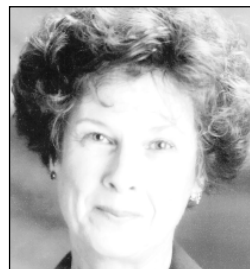


In recent years, Karen has been serving on the Task Force for the Ventura Homeless Service Center which Project Understanding has been trying to create. She has also just completed a term as president of the West Ventura County Association of Realtors.

We welcome Karen as she begins this new area of service to Project Understanding.

Mary Carr

Mary Carr is the executive director of the Ventura County Medical Association and, in her spare time, is the pastor of the Outdoor Gospel Church which serves the spiritual needs of homeless people through the Place of Rest located on



Ventura Avenue. This ministry obviously prepares her well for her participation on

the board at Project Understanding.

We are indeed fortunate to have these three talented and energetic people serving on the Project Understanding board of directors. ♦

Thank You to Supporters of Project Understanding

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

Individuals

Susan Adamich
Judy Alexandre
Babette Amirkhan
Ruben & Terrie Andrade
LeRoy & Margaret Andrews
William & Dorothy Asano
Roy & Mary Lou Ash
C.Patrick & Lavonne Askay
Lorraine Ballance
Pauline Ballard, Estate
Edward & Jill Banman
Marion Baranowski
Loye Barton
Elizabeth Blanchard
Donna Boeck
Barbara Born
Jeffrey Brackett & Miriam Arichea
Bob & Mary Braitman
William & Mae Briggs
R & Catherine Brudnicki
John & Eleanor Buchanan
David Burgeson
Bill & Loretta Burton
John & Deborah Bylo
Thomas & Joan Carr
Robert & Elaine Castle
James & Susan Cheek
Walter Clark
Naomi Claypool
Helen Crouch
Harriet Curry
Dennis & Loretta Curtin
Robert & Kenmere Davidson
Richard & Gertrude Desposato
Helen Dirkes
Dan & Mary Doll
Peter & Diane Dowler
Claire Drysdale
Charles & Martha Dugan
Henry & Jessie Duim
Charles & Margaret Dunn
James & Frances Egan
Barbara Eggert
Ed & Beverly Eidson
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James & Lelita Emch
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Susan Henderson
Stanley Henney
Jymmye Hitch-Banhart
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JoAnn Jackley
Florence Jay
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Eunice Koch
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Luceille Merkel
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Blanche Viles
Mort & Julia Vinecour
Earl & Marcia Wakelee
Daniel & Joanne Wakelee
Mary Jane Wallace
Dale & Mary Watson
Wanda Watson & Morgan Kortlander
R. E. & Lynda Whitney
Troy & Patsy Whitteker
John & Laura Whyte
Doris Williams

In honor of:

Bart Bleuel

Given by:

Joan Nordman

Thank You to Supporters of Project Understanding

In honor of:

Betty Harris

Given by:

Charles & Martha Dugan

In honor of:

Bill Corkins, Happy Birthday

Given by:

Francis & Asella Federle

In honor of:

Dennis & Loretta Curtin

Given by:

John M. & Anne G. Barker

In honor of:

Dr. Cherry

Given by:

Richard & Ellen Pearson

In honor of:

Ellen Pearson

Given by:

Leona Lewis

In memory of:

Grace Gleaton

Given by:

Kathi Taylor

In honor of:

Judy Vielbig

Given by:

Leona Lewis

Churches/Organizations

County of Ventura

Eastminster Presbyterian Church

First Baptist Church of Ojai

First Presbyterian Church of

Oxnard

First Presbyterian Church of Santa

Paula

First United Methodist Church of

Ventura

Jenkins Drywall, Inc.

Kinko's

Presbytery of Santa Barbara,

Peacemaking Sub Committee

Pythian Sisters

St. Paul's Episcopal Church of

Ventura

Trinity Presbyterian Church of

Camarillo

United Way

Ventura County Community

Foundation, Ben E. Nordman

Public Service Award

Ventura County Community

Foundation, Vielbig Family Fund

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Wood-Claeysens Foundation

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

Individuals

Pat Anderson

Linda Andreotti

Sally Baca

Barbara Bissett

Larry & Kari Brogdin

Lisa Cerino

Karen Donaldson

Elizabeth Felix

Howard & Judy Goldberg

Lisa Hashbarger

William & Pauline Hinds

Douglas & Jean Jereska

Mary Kay Lambert

Connie Lewis

Donna Lubansky

Lynn Luk

Art & Jean Marshall

Bernard & Phyllis Pivo

John & Anna Powell

Karen Romney & Keith Lothrop

Jill Shaffer

Sheila Thibodeaux

George & Eleanor Tillquist

Loretta Tuttle

Dr. Wasden

Leonard & Marsha Weber

Churches/Organizations

Alliance for the Mentally Ill

Anacapa Bread Company

California State Employees

Association

Community of Christ Church

Community Presbyterian Church

First Lutheran Church

FOOD Share

Grace Lutheran Church

Gumballs Etc.

Longs Drug Store

Lucy in the Sky

Mission Uniform and Linen Service

National Charity League

Native Daughters of the Golden

West

Pythian Sisters

Rite Aid on Thompson Blvd.

San Buenaventura Women's Club

Trader Joe's

Trinity Lutheran Church

Unitarian Universalist Church

United Methodist Church of

Westlake Village, "Holy Club"

Youth Group (4th & 5th Grade)

Ventura County Public Health, The

Center

Ventura Missionary Church

Vons Grocery, Harbor Blvd.

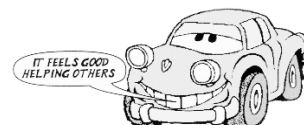
Vons Grocery, Telegraph Rd.

Weyerhaeuser Company

Newsletter Layout

Ellen Pearson

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1-800-766-2273



Rheto-Rick

By Rick Pearson
Executive Director

Highlights

P. 1: A brief synopsis of the workings of the Ventura Hunger Coalition.

P. 2: CROP Walk and Church World Service—a tradition of caring.

P. 3: Frank Maxim, Joyce Carlson, and Marilyn Green, three out of hundreds of volunteers working to end hunger in Ventura County.



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Continued on Page 5

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