

PROJECT UNDERSTANDING NEWS

A newsletter for the volunteers and supporters of Project Understanding

Volume XIX No. 3
(Monthly)

March 2004



How Our Rental Assistance Program Works

As housing prices continue to grow much more quickly than salaries, we are seeing more and more people who are facing eviction because a temporary setback has left them unable to pay their rent.

Maybe it is an unexpected car repair or medical bill. In some cases it is the ongoing grocery labor dispute. Whatever the cause, we know that it is better to work with the family and the landlord to prevent homelessness

than to try and get the family back into housing once they have been evicted. While we do have some funding available for this, the number of requests far exceed our ability to help.

The funding sources for Project Understanding's Eviction Prevention and Rental Assistance Program come from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Emergency Shelter Grant Program funding, and Project Understanding's Eastminster Presbyterian

Church donations. Many Families come in for rental assistance but were helped in other ways, including landlord negotiations, budget information, utility assistance, and referrals to other organizations. Many people learned that with the support and guidance of our staff, they have the ability to solve many of their problems.

Preventing Evictions

Here is an example of one recent experience. A woman came into to the office prior to her landlord sending an eviction notice to her. She had just gone through a mastectomy and was waiting for her first disability check to arrive. Her husband worked, but they could not make their rent payment without both incomes.

She had verification from disability that a check would be coming to her next month. That disability check would allow them to be able to pay next month's rent, but they needed help this month. We were

See Rental Assistance, Page 2

CROP Walks Are Almost Here

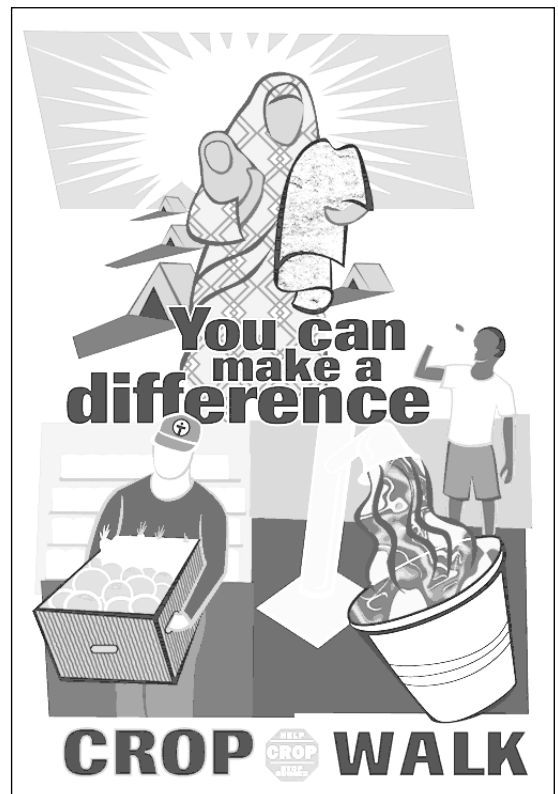
Last year's CROP Walks in Ventura County were a great success. The Walk in Ventura set records both for the number of walkers and money raised. The 2004 Walks are just around the corner and it is not too late to be involved.

Church World Service (CWS) is the sponsoring organization of CROP (Communities Reaching Out to People) Walks Against Hunger. Throughout the United States, CROP walkers

See CROP Walks, Page 3



Regina Fitz-Gerald, housing case manager, guides clients.



Two Volunteers Share in Tutoring One Student

People have many reasons (and excuses) not to volunteer. Employment, children at home, aging parents, the list goes on and on.

It is refreshing to find that some people will go out of their way to find ways to overcome these obstacles.

Recently a group of young mothers with young children were talking about their desire to volunteer but how difficult it was with their responsibilities for their children.

Their initial solution was that they could share the child care responsibilities and the volunteer opportunities.

One of the women, Cindy Martin, was familiar with the tutoring program at Project Understanding and suggested that to the group.

Their original plan for all of them to tutor and to share the child care responsibilities had to be altered when the situations of several group members changed, but Cindy and her friend Bridget Clayton have persevered in their commitment to tutoring.

It has taken some flexibility on their part and on the part of the tutoring program, but Cindy

and Bridget share a tutoring student and they balance their child care and home and work responsibilities in order to share the tutoring opportunity with their student. They each tutor on alternate weeks.

In these days when we all seem to have less and less “free” time, it is refreshing to see that there are still creative ways to share our times with people who need our help.

Thank you, Cindy and Bridget, for your willingness to share your valuable time.

And if there are others who would like to explore ways to make volunteering work in already busy schedules, please call Kendra Folsom. ♦



Cindy Martin, tutor.



Bridget Clayton, tutor.

Ventura Homeless Center Update

By Rick Pearson
Executive Director

Last May, the Ventura Homeless Service Center Site Selection Committee identified a list of seven primary sites and the Ventura City Council agreed to acquire one of those sites for the Center. In February, the Ventura County Star reported that the City Council had authorized negotiations to purchase a particular site from that original list of seven.

The outcome of these negotiations is, by no means, certain. The City is not the only party interested in this particular site. It is quite possible that the City will have to turn its attention to other sites on the list, even to the longer secondary list of sites should none of the original seven be obtainable.

As this process continues to move forward, it is important that the City Council be encouraged to keep this project a priority. As Councilmember Neal Andrews stated so well in last month’s Project Understanding News, there are many priorities competing for the Council’s attention. The longer that the negotiations take, the greater the possibility that the Council will be distracted by the many other issues pressing on them.

We join Councilmember Andrews in urging our supporters to let the City Council know that you consider the creation of this Center a high priority for the City. You may send your letters to Mayor Brian Brennen and ask that he share your concerns with other members of the Council.

The City Council went on record two years ago supporting the need for this project. The need has not decreased during those two years.

Help us encourage the Council to continue along the path they have already walked so long and so well—the path that will lead to the creation of the much needed Ventura Homeless Service Center. ♦

Rental Assistance

Continued From Page 1

able to assist her with the rent and relieve the stress from her life.

Many more come to Project Understanding and learn that we are here to help them succeed by empowering them with a listening ear, a warm blanket or many other services outside the scope of our limited resources here. ♦

CROP Walks

Continued From Page 1

and sponsors will be responding to the needs of poor and hungry people in our own communities and around the world by participating in CROP Walks.

In Ventura County there are six Walks scheduled during the month of March—five of them on Sunday, March 14.

The theme for this year's walks is "I make a difference." And it's not too late for you to make a difference. Here's how:

Be a walker. If your congregation is participating in a walk, get a sponsor sheet from your recruiter. Or call one of the coordinators listed in the box to the right to find a recruiter.

Can't walk? Then sponsor someone who can. Even a modest donation might make a big difference in the step of the walker you sponsor.

Pray for the CROP Walks. ♦

Make a Difference

Continued From Page 8

Then walking out the door with one last look at all that is being left behind and not knowing whether you will ever see any of it again.

Many never did see it again. Hundreds of homes were destroyed in those fires.

And there are more than 45 million people around the world in the same situation. According to the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees, 20 million people have been forced to flee their home country because of war or political or religious persecu-

tion. Another 25 million are called IDPs—Internally Displaced Persons—people whose flight has not led them across a national boundary but whose displacement is just as real.

For most of the thousands in Southern California who fled the fires, their nightmares are over. Their houses were spared and they have returned to their homes. The hundreds, who tragically lost their houses, have begun the slow and painful process of rebuilding their lives.

But for the millions of refugees around the world the future is not so hopeful. The wars around them rage on. The famine that starves them continues.

Church Word Service continues to be there for them because of people like us who are willing to give up one Sunday afternoon each year to walk just six miles for them.

The CROP Walk graphic on the front page of this issue of the Project Understanding News says, "I make a difference." It is the graphic from the CROP Walker envelope which also says, "I give aid to refugees. I stock food pantries. I dig wells."

If your home was not destroyed by fire, if you woke up indoors this morning, if you have food in your kitchen, you are rich compared to millions of people in the world and compared to thousands in your own community.

You too can make a difference. Participate in the CROP Walk in any way you can. Participate in and support the programs of Project Understanding. Make a difference. ♦

Ventura County CROP Walks

Check out the Walk dates,
locations and
coordinators listed below.

SUNDAY, MARCH 7

Santa Paula

Ruth Colbath, 525-5647

SUNDAY, MARCH 14

Camarillo

Mike Godfrey, 482-3923
mike77@aol.com

Conejo Valley/Thousand Oaks

Sherrill Hyink, 492-3674
shyink@earthlink.net

Moorpark

Marilyn Green, 529-3771
medmgreen@aol.com

Oxnard/Port Hueneme

Cloene Marson, 983-8111
marmilene@adelphia.net

Ventura

Renata Hundley, 658-7446
hundley@library.ucsb.edu



Note: The Ojai Walk is
not yet scheduled.



Board of Directors



Judy Alexandre, President
Hon. Melinda Johnson (retired)
Vice President
Barbara Tomblin, Secretary
Robert Farrow, Treasurer
Howard Bolinger
Carol Burhoe
Karen Campbell
Mary Carr
Rev. Don Dewey
James Farley
Ann Tobin

Staff



Rick Pearson
Executive Director
Joe Anguiano
Pantry Coordinator
Lynn Austin
Program Manager
Kari Brogdin
Business Manager
Regina Fitz-Gerald
Housing Case Manager
Kendra Folsom
Administrative Assistant
Renee Hall
SARAH Coordinator
Shari Kempton
SARAH Coordinator
Linda Simson
Reception Center Coordinator
Marcia Wakelee
Tutoring Coordinator
Shelley Wilmeth
Clerical Support

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 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 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.

“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

You Can Make a Difference in the Lives That Follow

LEAVE A LEGACY® is the public outreach program of National Committee on Planned Giving affiliated planned giving councils. The goal of the LEAVE A LEGACY® program is to increase the quantity of legacy giving.

Project Understanding is a member of the Planned Giving Council of Ventura County.



The Case for LEAVE A LEGACY®

While most Americans donate to charity during their lives, only a fraction leave legacy gifts. According to the Independent Sector, Giving and Volunteering in the USA 2001, 89 percent of Americans make charitable contributions during their lifetimes. Only 8 percent of Americans who have a will make a bequest to charity. Only around 2 percent of Americans have established a charitable trust according to NCPG, Planned Giving in the U.S. 2000: A Survey of Donors.

Charities of all sizes are attempting to educate their own constituents about the need and methods for legacy giving. However, their efforts are limited by the financial resources and personnel they can devote to general “marketing.” Many charities must focus on current needs and current gifts rather than endowment gifts and deferred gifts.

The charitable sector needs a cost-effective way to educate the public about the need for

legacy giving and a way to channel general inquiries to the proper sources so gifts can be completed.

What Can You Do?

Project Understanding encourages all people to leave a legacy. Of course, we hope that you will include Project Understanding in those plans, but, whomever you designate, we believe that, if we

all make some gift through our estate, our entire society will benefit.

Neither the size of the estate nor the size of the gift is the important factor. The fact that a gift is made is what matters.

In 1999, Boston College researchers Paul Schervish and John Havens published a new econometric study on intergenerational wealth transfer. They predict that over the 55-year period from 1998 to 2052 the wealth transfer between generations will be \$41 trillion, and may well reach double or triple that amount. The study’s most conservative estimate is that \$6 trillion will be transferred to charity through bequests during the 55-year period.

We can all be a part of this transfer. We encourage you to speak to your financial planner to see how you can leave a legacy both to your heirs and to important nonprofit efforts in our community. ♦

Save the Date for the Project Understanding Festival of Hobbies

Project Understanding has announced the date for a new event—the Project Understanding Festival of Hobbies.

The initial Festival will be held on Saturday, July 17, 2004, at Anacapa Middle School in midtown Ventura from one to four o’clock in the afternoon.

This will be a fun and educational event with hobbies for people of all ages.

There will be many demonstration booths where visitors will be able to explore the joys and rewards of many different hobbies. There will be vendors with the products and equipment needed to begin or expand a hobby.

Plus there will be “hands-on” opportunities to discover a new hobby.

In addition there will be food and a silent auction of (mostly) hobby-related items.

So again, save the date—July 17, 2004. It will be a great day!

P.S. Do you have a hobby or a skill that you would like to share? Maybe woodworking or flower arranging or finger-painting on tissue paper. It can be just about anything.

We would love to have you share that hobby with others. Just call Judy Alexandre at 647-1170. She will be happy to help arrange your involvement. ♦

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 January.

Individuals

Wendell & Denise Allen
Babette Amirkhan
Robert Anderson & Rose Marie Voelker
Ruben & Terrie Andrade
Roy & Mary Lou Ash
Patricia Barrett
Loye Barton
Beverly Benitez
Richard Benson
Elizabeth Blanchard
Barbara Born
Jeffrey Brackett & Miriam Arichea
Bob & Mary Braitman
William & Mae Briggs
John & Eleanor Buchanan
Jimmy & Linda Bushong
Joseph & Sarah Ruth Carpenter
Robert & Elaine Castle
Rose Chacon
Walter Clark
Gertrude Conover
Helen Crouch
Harriet Curry
Richard & Gertrude Desposato
Susan & Donald Dewey
Robin & Linda Dillion
Helen Dirkes
Dan & Mary Doll
Charles & Martha Dugan
Henry & Jessie Duim
Charles & Margaret Dunn
Annette Duston
Barbara Eggert
Ed & Beverly Eidson
James & Lelita Emch
Fred & Martha Engle
Betty Lou Evans
Frederick & Lynda Evans
Robert & Lynne Farrow
Sabrina Ferris
Joe & Kim Fiano
Howard Finnegan

Kenneth & Deirdra Finning
Karen Flock
William & Beverly Flothmeier
Kendra Folsom
Sue Ellen Fowler
Miriam Fraser
Oliver Freeman
Harold & Norma Fulkerson
Stuart Gabriel & Judith Katzburg
Robert & Barbara Garrison
Iris Gruwell
Ernest & Laura Gulovsen
Ronald & Pickens Halt
William & Catherine Hannah
Ronald Harrington
Wilma Hays
Jane Helm
Susan Henderson
Jymmye Hitch-Banhart
Bob & Lee Horne
Carroll & Dorothy Hudson
Norman & Ann Hudson
JoAnn Jackley
Jay & Mindy Johnson
David & Ruth Kille
Richard & Sue Komorowski
Janice Kuzemko
Edward & Susan Lacey
Byron & Rene Lawler
Barry & Kathy Lewis
Warren & Lucille Lewis
George Loffswold
Dennis & Jeannette Longwill
Gary Lundquist
Donald & Barbara MacDonald
Alphonse & Jan Marra
John & Frances Marshall
Deborah Mason & Annie Prichard
Shane & Wendy Matthews
Betty McCurley
Marilyn McFadden
Tom & Florence McNally
Luceille Merkel
Shari Morgan-Bridges & James Bridges
Alfred Mottola
Helen O'Donnell
William & Celia Paterson

Richard & Ellen Pearson
Wallace & Hope Pearson
Alan & Kristine Plasch
John & Anna Powell
David & Thayer Reese
Margery Ricards
Mark & Joy Riley
Emma Rush
Michael & Carolyn Russell
John & Suzanne Sanford
Salvatore & Mary Saputo
Dorothy Schupbach
Laurence & Linda Sellers
Albert & Rita Sever
Martha Sexton
Tom & Judy Shaw
Charles & Jeannette Simmons
Ira & Esther Sorkin
Joanne Stone
Robert & Angalee Swaney
Ruberda Vigen
Blanche Viles
Earl & Marcia Wakelee
Daniel & Joanne Wakelee
Mary Jane Wallace
Joseph Waltz
Troy & Patsy Whitteker
Robert & Hope Williamson

In honor of:
Alan Alpers
Given by:
Anne Alpers

In honor of:
John & Debe Bylo
Given by:
Thomas & Ann Finney

In memory of:
Ted Rubin
Given by:
David & Rae Wiener
Foundation Inc.
Joe & Arline Sincoff
Lawrence & Martha Smith
Eugene & Patricia West

Churches & Organizations
Amgen Foundation

Thank You to Supporters of Project Understanding

Cars 4 Causes
 College United Methodist Church
 Community Bible Church of Ventura County
 County of Ventura
 Eastminster Presbyterian Church
 Edison International
 First Assembly of God of Ventura
 First Baptist Church of Ojai
 First United Methodist Church of Ventura
 Grace Lutheran Church
 Horizon Foursquare Church
 No Room at the Inn
 Presbytery of Santa Barbara, Peacemaking Sub Committee
 Pythian Sisters
 Trinity Lutheran Church, Couples Circle
 Trinity Lutheran Church, Women of the ELCA
 United Way
 United Way of Central Maryland
 United Way of Los Angeles County
 United Way, Edison International

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

Individuals

Judy Alexandre
 Erwin & Ruth Bachhoffer
 Sheila Brady
 Richard Brennan
 Marilyn Childs
 Laura Covault
 Leann Davis
 Dorothy & Monte Elchoness
 Norma Emery
 Pat Glazer
 Joy Hamlat

Gale & Bette Hartman
 Ashelei Higuera
 Edward & Susan Hopkins
 Peter & Martha Jaffe
 Ellie Krumpholz
 Clarice Kulper
 Byron & Rene Lawler
 Alphonse & Jan Marra
 Peg McCarthy
 Don & May McMillan
 Jean Nussman
 Mason & Carolyn Parrish
 Glenna Ross
 Karol Schulkin
 Lawrence & Martha Smith
 Burt Storm & Family
 George & Eleanor Tillquist
 Kaaren Valdez
 Leonard & Marsha Weber
 Norm & Lynn Weitzel
 Gordon & June Welsh
 Paul & Lucinda Wilhelmsen
 Richard Wilmeth

Churches & Organizations

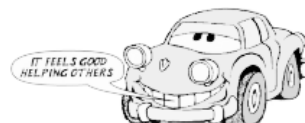
Alliance for the Mentally Ill
 Anacapa Bread Company
 College United Methodist Church
 Community Presbyterian Church
 E. P. Foster Elementary School
 First Baptist Church of Ventura
 First Christian Church
 First United Methodist Church of Ventura
 First United Methodist Church of Ventura, Mariposa Fellowship
 FOOD Share
 Grace Lutheran Church
 Kiwanis Club of Downtown Ventura
 Mission Uniform & Linen Service
 National Charity League
 Olivet Baptist Church
 Pythian Sisters
 Sacred Heart Catholic Church

San Buenaventura Women's Club
 Soroptimist International of Ventura
 Temple Beth Torah
 Trader Joe's
 Trinity Lutheran Church
 Unitarian Universalist Church
 Ventura Missionary Church
 Vons Grocery, Harbor Blvd.
 Vons Grocery, Telegraph Rd.
 Vons Grocery, Thompson Blvd.
 Women of Vision

Newsletter Layout

Ellen Pearson

Donate Your Car



The Charity That Gives to Charities

Donate your car, truck, boat or RV to benefit Project Understanding

1-800-766-2273



Rheto-Rick

Being a Refugee for Refugees— You Can Make a Difference

By Rick Pearson
Executive Director

I have moved a number of times in my life. Twice I have moved more than 2,000 miles at a time. Once just 200 feet to another apartment in the same complex.

Each time we had to pack up all our possessions into boxes and pack all the boxes into vehicles. Then reverse the process at the other end.

With each move I have had to make decisions as to what to keep and what to discard (although, if you ask my family, I have never decided to discard much).

But all of these moves had been to a known location with months of lead time and weeks of preparation. The moves may have been stressful, traumatic, even chaotic at times, but they

have never been panicked.

At a recent meeting for the Ventura CROP Walk, the Church World Service (CWS) Regional Director, Julie Brumana, was talking about refugees. Obviously, a large part of what CWS does around the world relates to refugees—people who are fleeing war or political unrest or natural disaster. But Julie was sharing how the plight of refugees was brought home to her by the wildfires in Southern California last fall and the resulting evacuations.

You will all remember that thousands of people—hundreds of them right here in Ventura County—were displaced from their homes by the advancing fires. These people had very little time to plan their departures. No trips to the market or truck rental dealer to get boxes. No leisurely or lovingly packing of boxes with bubble wrap to protect fragile objects. Just a matter of hours or minutes to decide what treasures of a lifetime to take along. Just the space in the family car to fill.

See Make a Difference, Page 3

Highlights

P. 1: How our rental assistance program works.

CROP Walks are almost here.

P. 2: Two volunteers share in tutoring one student.

Here's an update on the progress of the Ventura Homeless Center.

P. 3: CROP Walk dates, locations, coordinators.

P. 5: You can make a difference in the lives that follow.

Save the date for Project Understanding's Festival of Hobbies.



Printed on
Recycled Paper

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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