

# PROJECT UNDERSTANDING NEWS

A newsletter for the volunteers  
and supporters of Project  
Understanding

Volume XXI No. 5  
(Monthly)

May 2006



## Project Understanding Seeks Nominations for the 2006 Dan Stevens Shalom Award

The Dan Stevens Shalom Award was created in 2002 to honor the ministry and work of the Rev. Dan Stevens, who had been the pastor of Eastminster Presbyterian Church for more than a quarter of a century. Dan was also the first recipient of the award in October of 2002.

The award is presented annually to a person who is a resident of Ventura County who has positively impacted his or her community (either locally or globally) in the areas of peace and social justice.

The underlying basis for the award and the selection of the recipient is the following statement from the Project Understanding Statement of Principles:

*In the Spirit of Shalom —*

*the Biblical concept of wholeness — Project Understanding seeks to bring wholeness and reconciliation to a broken world. Shalom means peace, but it also means justice, reconciliation with our neighbors, prosperity for the society (not just for some individuals), healthy minds, bodies and spirits, and oneness with God and God's creation.*

The board of directors of Project Understanding is seeking nominations for this year's award. If you know someone who meets the criteria outlined above, please use the nomination form found on page 5. Nominations must be received by July 7, 2006.

The recipient will be chosen from the nominees by a selection committee and the decision

announced in the August edition of the Project Understanding News.

The award will be presented at a reception held in the fall. The date and place of the reception will also be announced in the August newsletter, and the public will be invited to attend and help us honor this year's recipient.

Since its inception, the award has recognized the efforts of three individuals (in addition to Dan Stevens.) In 2003, the award went to Dr. Robert Dodge for his work in the area of peace and reconciliation through such groups as Physicians for Social Responsibility and Citizens for Peaceful Resolutions (a local organization that Dr. Dodge founded).

See Shalom Award, Page 2

### Previous Recipients of the Dan Stevens Shalom Award



2002  
Rev. Dan Stevens



2003  
Dr. Bob Dodge



2004  
Ms. Cathy Brudnicki



2005  
Mr. Michael McGuire

## Shalom Award

Continued From Page 1

Cathy Brudnicki received the award in 2004 for her leadership for more than a decade in local efforts to end homelessness through the Ventura County Homeless and Housing Coalition, the Designated Local Board of the State of California Department of Housing and Community Development, the HOME organization in the Conejo Valley, the United Way of Ventura County and the Catholic Church.

Last year's recipient was Michael McGuire. Mike has served Project Understanding by participating in the blue-ribbon Site Selection Committee for the Daybreak Center and he was president of the board of directors of Turning Point Foundation, a local nonprofit agency assisting the homeless mentally ill.

In Santa Barbara, Mike served for many years with Transition House, an agency providing emergency and transitional shelter to homeless families in that city.

We trust that the supporters of Project Understanding and the community at large will help us identify an equally deserving recipient this year. ♦

## Avenue Tutoring Center Needs Summer Helpers

By Marcia Wakelee  
Tutoring Coordinator

This year's Summer Enrichment Program at the Avenue Tutoring Center is set for the

afternoons of June 19-29. Our theme is "Discover Your Artistic Side This Summer," and we would love to have some helpers. If you have a craft or talent you would like to share, that would be great. It would be wonderful to have a poet or a writer, a musician or a graphic artist spend an hour or two with our students. But you don't need any artistic talent to enjoy helping children explore the arts. Anyone who enjoys working with children is needed and welcome.

We also need healthy snacks and fruit juices to feed these budding artists. Please call Marcia at 652-1326 to offer your assistance. ♦

## Boy Scouts Come Through for Pantry Again

By Lisa Lee  
Pantry Coordinator

On February 28, the Boy Scouts of Ventura County held their annual food drive. Nearly 200 scouts from 19 different troops participated this year. These scouts scattered out throughout the community and came back with approximately 11,000 different food items. This food will help keep the pantry supplied for the next four to six months.

Some of the scouts arrived early and stayed all day to help count, sort, box and store the food that was brought in.

Jeff Dolan was one of these scouts. This is the second year that he has helped me in this project. He is one of the reasons that the food drive went so

smoothly. He is not only an asset to the Boy Scouts, but to all of us here in the community — a true future leader.

A huge "thank you" goes out to all of you who saw the flyers announcing the Scout food drive and responded by donating food. You helped make those 11,000 food items possible.

And mark your calendars now for the last Saturday in February in 2007. That is when the Boy Scouts will once again be seeking your food donations. Thank you again to all of the scouts and all of the donors. You are all wonderful. ♦

## Tutoring Program Receives Grant from Samuelsson Foundation

Project Understanding is pleased to announce that the Tutoring program has received a generous grant from the Harriet H. Samuelsson Foundation.

The mission of the Foundation is (in part) to "support organizations providing services for the betterment of the health, education, guidance, or welfare of children or adolescents residing in Ventura County."

The Foundation is established in the memory of Harriet Samuelsson who was well known for her consistent generosity. She is remembered most of all for her passionate support of organizations that benefit children. Harriet passed away on August 12, 2004, at 96.

The grant will help underwrite the costs of the Tutoring Program. ♦

## Two Riders Take On Sea to Summit for Project Understanding

It's not too late to help the Project Understanding Sea to Summit riders over the top.

May 20th is the 33rd Annual Sea to Summit bike ride from near Ventura to the top of Mount Pinos. It is a grueling 85-mile ride with a total climb of 8,000 feet in elevation.

Last year, the ride could only go half way because mud slides had closed the highway. This year the riders can once again go to the top.

This year there are two riders scheduled to ride on behalf of Project Understanding: Norm Hudson, who has ridden for nearly 25 years, and Jonathan Cordaro, who is riding for the second time.

Riding the Sea to Summit is partly about the challenge. It is



**Norm Hudson prepares to tackle the Sea to Summit once again.**

certainly satisfying to be able to accomplish something that few others would even attempt. But it is also about helping raise money for worthy charities. When speaking about the Sea to Summit ride, Norm said, "It's a difficult ride, but when you

finish you feel such a sense of accomplishment. But the main reason I do it is to raise money. When it gets tough out there, I talk myself up hills by thinking about the charities."

Let's help give our riders something to shoot for. Send us a pledge in either or both of their names (either per mile ridden or a flat rate for the whole ride) and help them over the top. ♦

## Aliens

### Continued From Page 8

Well, Gracie was not the only person whose birth records were lost in the catastrophe. The vital records of thousands of San Francisco natives were lost. But the Chinese immigrants turned the catastrophe into an opportunity.

Because there were no longer records to prove one way or the other, people of Chinese descent began to claim that they had been born in San Francisco and there was no way to prove that they hadn't.

This had a huge impact on the Chinese population in San Francisco (and the entire West Coast). Chinese immigrants who came here to work were not allowed to bring their families. But someone born in the United States was, of course, a United States citizen and was therefore entitled to be reunited with his family.

Does this historical oddity from a tragedy-turned-opportunity of a hundred years ago have anything to say to us now? Despite being a nation of immigrants, we have often treated those who came after us with fear and loathing. The

Chinese were just one example of a line of people whom we feared would overwhelm us. The Irish who were fleeing the potato famine. The Mexicans who came to pick our crops. Even internal immigrants like the African-Americans who moved north and west and the Okies fleeing the Dust Bowl.

But we are neither unique nor extreme in this. When the ancient Hebrews migrated to Egypt fleeing famine in their homeland, the response of the Egyptians was, "'Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and join our enemies and fight against us.' But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites." (Exodus 1:9-12)

So, when the Israelites came into their own land, God reminded them of what it meant to be feared and hated for being foreign. "When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." (Leviticus 19:33-34)

It is not my intention to advocate for a specific immigration policy. It is to say that, whatever our immigration policy is it must be based on what is just for the immigrant as well as the resident. Because in the end, all of our birth certificates are destroyed and none of us can prove our citizenship in any realm except the Kingdom of God. ♦

## Board of Directors



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Reception Center Coordinator

**Lisa Lee**

Pantry Coordinator

**Marcia Wakelee**

Tutoring Coordinator

**Shelley Wilmeth**

Receptionist

## Our Mission and Programs

### Mission

**P**roject 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*

# The Dan Stevens Shalom Award Nomination Form

Presented by Project Understanding

**T**he Dan Stevens Shalom Award is presented annually to a person who is a resident of Ventura County and who has positively impacted his or her community (either locally or globally) in the areas of peace and social justice.

The underlying basis for the award and the selection of the recipient is the following statement from the Project Understanding Statement of Principles:

In the Spirit of Shalom, the Biblical concept of wholeness, Project Understanding seeks to bring wholeness and reconciliation to a broken world. Shalom means peace, but it also means justice, reconciliation with our neighbors, prosperity for the society (not just for some individuals), healthy minds, bodies and spirits, and oneness with God and God's creation.

**Name of the person you wish to nominate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City and Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Your phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your City and Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**How long and in what capacity have you known the nominee?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please list the volunteer efforts, community service activities, and service, religious and/or community associations of the nominee:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please explain (on a separate sheet) why you feel this person deserves the Dan Stevens Shalom Award. In your answer, please show how this person has sought to bring wholeness and reconciliation to a broken world and how he or she has positively impacted the community (either locally or globally) in the areas of peace and justice. Please limit your response to 250 words.**

## 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 March:**

### Individuals

Evelyn Adams  
Judy Alexandre  
William & Dorothy Asano  
Roy & Mary Lou Ash  
Lila Atkisson  
Russell & Elvera Baccus  
Lorraine Ballance  
Marion Baranowski  
Kenneth & Debra Beckfeld  
Donna Boeck  
Barbara Born  
Jeffrey Brackett & Miriam Arichea  
Bob & Mary Braitman  
Gordon & Barbara Broberg  
Gene Bruton  
Bill & Loretta Burton  
Jimmy & Linda Bushong  
Thomas & Joan Carr  
Robert & Elaine Castle  
Pamela Chan  
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Naomi Claypool Fowler  
Helen Crouch  
Larry & Carol Dawes  
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Helen Dirkes  
Peter & Diane Dowler  
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Charles & Martha Dugan  
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James & Lelita Emch  
Fred & Martha Engle  
Frederick & Lynda Evans  
Betty Lou Evans  
Robert & Lynne Farrow  
Joe & Kim Fiano  
Kenneth & Deirdra Finning  
Betty Fiorentine  
Robert & Sharon Fleur  
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William & Beverly Flothmeier  
Sue Ellen Fowler  
Oliver Freeman  
Ruth Gallagher  
Robert & Barbara Garrison  
Warren & Leilani Glaser  
Albert Goldberg

Candy & Paul Gooding  
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Kay Hannah  
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Betty Harris  
James & Mary Harrison  
Wilma Hays  
Jane Helm  
Carolyn Hill  
William & Pauline Hinds  
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Warren & Lucille Lewis  
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Tom & Florence McNally  
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Alfred Mottola  
Gail Narkevic  
Douglas & Diane Off  
Susan Olson  
Chang & Eun Soon Park  
Mason & Carolyn Parrish  
Wallace & Hope Pearson  
Nicholas & Nita Perkins  
John & Anna Powell  
Jeanne Reiver  
Diane Rennell  
Margery Ricards  
Duane Rodgers  
Michael & Carolyn Russell  
Louis & Susan Samonsky  
Salvatore & Mary Saputo  
Roberta Schoenherr  
Iris Schulman  
Allan & Julianne Schulze  
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Laurence & Linda Sellers  
Becky Sexauer  
Martha & David Sexton  
Jasper & Irene Smith  
Ira & Esther Sorkin  
Marjorie Steinhouse  
Renee & Lonnie Sutton  
Charles & Dorothy Tubbs  
Eric & Shonda Vielbig  
Ruberda Vigen  
Blanche Viles  
Bernard Visser  
Rose Marie Voelker-Anderson  
Bill & Marcia Wakelee  
Daniel & Joanne Wakelee  
Mary Jane Wallace  
R. E. & Lynda Whitney  
Troy & Patsy Whitteker  
John & Laura Whyte

In memory of:  
Adrih Banhart  
Given by:  
Derrell Griggs

In honor of:  
Anne Alpers, Happy Birthday  
Given by:  
Judith & W. R Ditzler

In honor of:  
Eric Vielbig's Birthday  
Given by:  
Les & Judy Vielbig

## Thank You to Supporters of Project Understanding

In memory of:

Jean Jereska

Given by:

Carlos Aguilar

In memory of:

Jeanine Steen

Given by:

Gene & De Lois Greer

In honor of:

Maria Calvert's Birthday

Given by:

John M. & Anne G. Barker

In honor of:

Meredith Loree's Birthday

Given by:

Olga Lemay

In memory of:

Paul Kanarek: WWII Veteran  
of D-Day June 6, 1944

Given by:

Edward & Diane Zeamba

In memory of:

Pegeen Mathison, mother  
of Mindy Johnson

Given by:

Les & Judy Vielbig

In memory of:

Rod Embree

Given by:

Eunice Koch

In memory of:

Shirleen Smith, mother  
of Shonda Vielbig

Given by:

Les & Judy Vielbig

### Churches & Organizations

Amgen Foundation, Kimberly  
Ronneberg  
Cars 4 Causes  
Community Presbyterian Church  
County of Ventura  
Eastminster Presbyterian Church  
First Assembly of God of Ventura  
First Baptist Church of Ventura  
Harriet H. Samuelsson Foundation  
Horizon Foursquare Church  
Live Oak Christian Fellowship

Pythian Sisters

Soroptimist International of  
Ventura

St. Paul's Episcopal Church of  
Ventura

Temple Beth Torah

United Way, Other, United Way  
of Los Angeles County

Westminster Presbyterian Church

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

### Individuals

John & Linda Borneman  
James & Susan Cheek  
Lauren & Marilyn Cook  
William Corkins & Diane Federle  
Paul Dols  
Howard & Judy Goldberg  
Ruth Hampton  
Ashelei Higuera  
William & Pauline Hinds  
Kay Hoyt  
Peter & Martha Jaffe  
Carol Johnson  
Donna King  
Kevin & Sharon Krumdieck  
Carley Leach  
Don & Lucy Lyman  
Kara Munriz  
Dorothy Schupbach  
Sue Shirk  
Barbara Stevens  
Leslie Sullivan  
George & Eleanor Tillquist  
Maureen Vasquez  
Leonard & Marsha Weber  
Doris Weinert

### Churches & Organizations

Alliance for the Mentally Ill  
College United Methodist Church  
Commission on Human Concerns,  
Ventura  
Community Presbyterian Church  
Delta Theta Tau Sorority Zeta  
Epsilon Chapter  
East Ventura Lions Club  
First Baptist Church of Camarillo  
Girl Scouts Service Unit  
Grace Lutheran Church

Harbor Community Church

Kentucky Fried Chicken

Peet's Coffee House

PEO Chapter QM

Project Linus

San Buenaventura Institute

Soroptimist International of  
Ventura

Starbucks

The Breakfast Club

Trader Joe's

Trinity Lutheran Church

Unitarian Universalist Church

Ventura College of Law

Vons, Harbor Blvd.

Vons, Telegraph Rd.

Vons, Thompson Blvd.

## You Are Never Too Young

**I**n December of last year,  
a seven year-old boy  
made a donation to Project  
Understanding of \$25 worth  
of food. He said that he  
bought the food from his  
holiday gift money and  
wanted to help those less  
fortunate than himself. We  
hope that his gift will  
inspire other children to  
think and do likewise.

Nice going, Nicholas  
Schwartz. You've set a  
wonderful example!



## Rheto-Rick

# “You Shall Love the Alien as Yourself”

By Rick Pearson  
Executive Director

Our daughter Sonja has been a big fan of Gracie Allen for many years. She first heard Gracie’s “illogical logic” on old time radio broadcasts which Sonja listened to as a child. From the age of about four Sonja would love to repeat some of Gracie’s wonderful comments for weeks.

It was through Sonja’s reading of a biography of Gracie that I learned that Gracie and I share the same birthday. However, while it is well-agreed that Gracie was born on July 26, there is no agreement as to what year that birth occurred.

That is because Gracie Allen was born in San Francisco around the turn of the last century and the record of her birth was destroyed in the earthquake and fire in April 1906.

In later years Gracie turned even this event into comedy. She said that she thought she was born in 1906 but the birth record was destroyed in the earthquake. When someone pointed out that she was born in July and that would have been three months after the quake, she replied, “Well, it was a very big earthquake.”

I was reminded of all of this recently when I heard a series of reports on National Public Radio commemorating the centennial of the quake. One of the reports was on the effects of the quake and fire on Chinatown.

Chinese workers had been brought to this country to work on the building of the transcontinental railroad. These workers did some of the hardest and most dangerous tasks in getting the railroad through the mountains. By the turn of the century thousands of these Chinese immigrants lived in crowded conditions in Chinatown in San Francisco. Chinatown was, of course, destroyed along with most of the rest of the city. But why did this remind me of Gracie’s lost birth certificate?

See Aliens, Page 3

## Highlights

**P. 1:** Project Understanding seeks nominations for the 2006 Dan Stevens Shalom Award.

**P. 2:** Avenue Tutoring Center needs summer helpers.

Boy Scouts come through again for pantry.

Tutoring Program receives grant from Samuelsson Foundation.

**P. 3:** Two Riders take on Seat to Summit for Project Understanding.



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