

PROJECT UNDERSTANDING NEWS

A newsletter for the volunteers
and supporters of Project
Understanding

Volume XXIII No. 5
(Monthly)

May 2008



Faithful Supporter Leaves Us a Generous Legacy

Project Understanding has received a very generous legacy from one of our faithful supporters.

Janet Campbell was a 98-year-old retired school teacher who passed away this January. She had an annuity which paid out a monthly

amount and will continue to pay until

sometime in 2013. She generously named Project Understanding as the beneficiary for this annuity. The total which we will receive will be nearly \$100,000 which makes this gift one of the single largest gifts we have ever received.

Miss Campbell was born in Nova Scotia and was the eldest of eight children. Her family moved to Boston when she was a child and she attended Boston University. Following university, she began a long and successful career as an elementary school teacher.

She never had children of her own but her memory is kept alive in the many children she taught throughout her 44-year

See *Generous Gift*, Page 2

Let Your Stimulus Package Rebate Help Others

A Commentary
By Rick Pearson
Executive Director

In the next few weeks many of us will receive an economic stimulus check from the United States government. It is no secret that the American economy has slowed down. As part of the government's attempt to speed it up again, most taxpayers will be receiving a check from the Internal Revenue

Service. The idea is that we will spend the money and this influx of cash will spur the economy. Economists are reluctant to use the word recession. They are afraid that to use the word will be a self-fulfilling prophecy. If people believe that we are in a recession, they will stop spending and that will lead to a recession whether we were already in one or not.

But whether we are in a recession or not is not really the point. We here at Project understanding have our own methods of determining the state of the

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Giving When It Hurts

By Mindy Johnson
Board President

One of the things I learned during 21 years on the bench was that when the economy dipped down, our workload shot up. Contracts couldn't be fulfilled, rent couldn't be paid, desperation led to more crime. While the rest of government had the option to cut back services, the court had no choice but to handle every dispute presented to it, even if our budget was cut.

Project Understanding faces the same sort of dilemma. As president of the board, I under-

stand that money is tighter for everyone right now, including our faithful contributors. At the same time, the number of our fellow Venturans who can't afford to buy food for their children, who are in danger of being evicted, or who have actually become homeless and need showers and places to get their mail has increased dramatically. For 30 years, people in these predicaments have relied on Project Understanding to help them through their crises, and it is no different today. The demand on our resources grows daily.

I have supported Project Understanding for decades, and, when I left the bench, I headed

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LEAVE A LEGACY®

Make a Difference in the Lives that Follow

Generous Gift

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teaching career.

Even in retirement, she continued to teach, tutoring both adults and children in English literacy. Miss Campbell also spent more than 21 years as a docent at the Ventura County Museum.

Miss Campbell has been a regular supporter of Project Understanding for a number of years. She made regular donations although the size of these donations did not prepare us for the size of this generous legacy. Janet Campbell's generous gift is a reminder that even people of modest means may be able to leave a large legacy.

We here at Project Understanding are deeply appreciative to Janet Campbell for her thoughtfulness and generosity. ♦

There Are Many Ways to Leave a Legacy

The generous gift from the estate of Janet Campbell that is described above is but one of many ways to include Project Understanding in your planned giving.

We are well aware that most donors want to be sure to provide for their own families first. But even with that caveat, there are still ways.

For example, the apartments where Project Understanding provides transitional housing were made possible because of a donation strategy known as the charitable remainder trust. The couple who owned the building would have faced a

huge capital gains tax bill if they had simply sold the building. The tax would have been more than the equity they held in the property and they would have lost money on the sale.

Through the charitable remainder trust, they realized a tax deduction that not only eliminated the tax but even lowered their other income taxes. With the money they saved, they were able to buy a life insurance policy that insures that their heirs will receive an amount equal to the value of the building that was donated. It was a net win for the couple, a win for their heirs and a big win for Project Understanding.

We know that some of our supporters have named Project Understanding as a beneficiary on a life insurance policy — in some cases on a policy bought specifically for that purpose.

We were once given a house that a woman owned but which still had a sizable mortgage on it. The woman had rented the house to a low-income woman who was paying less in rent than the cost of the mortgage and taxes.

Project Understanding was given the property on the stipulation that the tenant not be evicted unless she could find affordable housing. We were able to relocate the woman (to a place where her rent was actually lower), sell the property, pay off the mortgage and still realize a nice donation.

Every family's tax situation is unique and should be carefully reviewed by a professional before any steps are taken. We hope that when you talk to your own financial planner, you will keep Project Understanding's needs in mind. ♦

Pantry Driver Dick Gilman Retiring

By Randy Ringen
Pantry Coordinator

Richard Gillman is retiring as a driver for Project Understanding, effective May 15.

For more than five years, Dick has been picking up excess food, primarily bread and



other baked goods, at the Vons on Thompson Blvd. every Thursday and Saturday morning, never missing a day, and delivering it to the Pantry. Dick is glad for the opportunity to serve at Project Understanding, and he will continue his charitable work, now helping people with financial matters.

Project Understanding is currently looking for volunteers to take Dick's place. Even if you cannot be available every Thursday or Saturday, you can still help by volunteering to drive on specific days each month. You need a van, SUV, truck, or large station wagon to transport the food, and retirees are welcome to help. For more information, call Randy Ringen, Pantry coordinator at Project Understanding, at 652-1326.

Dick has been a tremendous asset for Project Understanding. By his actions, countless thousands have been fed. Dick's position can be filled, but he can't be replaced; he's been a real hero for Project Understanding and the people who use the pantry at 43 East Vince Street. ♦

Stimulus Package

Continued From Page 1

economy.

The first is the number of people who come to us for assistance. The worse the economy is going the more people come to us. During the past few months the number of people who are using our Pantry has increased greatly, more than doubled in the last year. And the number calling to inquire about eviction prevention has skyrocketed despite the fact that we have hardly been able to increase the number of people we can assist.

The other way we know that the economy is struggling is that our donations go down. Nearly two-thirds of our income comes from donations from individuals, congregations, businesses or organizations. We fully understand when times get hard people have less money for discretionary purposes. Our donations are likely to decrease, not because people support us less, but because they have less to give.

That's where the government's stimulus package comes in. We know that the government wants us to spend it in ways that will spur the economy. But we want to suggest that you might use part of it to stimulate the economy here at Project Understanding. You can use some of it to buy something new for the house, but we hope you will also send some of it our way so that others can remain in their house.

So stimulate the national economy out of its downturn, but also help us help others survive the downturn. ♦

Help Needed for Summer Tutoring

By Marcia Wakelee
Tutoring Coordinator

The Avenue Tutoring Center will hold this year's Summer Enrichment Program from June 16 through 26. Our theme is "Adventures in Space," and we'll be exploring science-related topics. We will visit the Gulls Wings Museum in Oxnard and the Bell Arts Factory on Ventura Avenue, and will also have interesting activities in our Tutoring Center. There are many ways to help: volunteer to spend one or more afternoons with the children, drive for a field trip, or donate juice or healthy snacks. All are appreciated. Call Marcia at 652-1326 if you would like to lend a hand. ♦

Giving

Continued From Page 1

straight there to volunteer my time. It always has been, and remains, a reliable source of genuine, practical help for those most in need. Even though times may be tougher for all of us, it is important to remind ourselves that there are still those for whom "tougher" means the difference between eating and being hungry, between being housed and being homeless.

Please remember Project Understanding in your ongoing gift giving. Know that any amount will be appreciated and put to the best possible use. The entire board and the dedicated staff of Project Understanding thank you for making its good work possible. ♦

Maria Holmen Appointed as New Business Manager

Project Understanding is happy to announce the appointment of Maria Holmen as the business manager to succeed Kari Brogdin who held that position for the past seven years.

We will let Maria introduce herself in her own words:

It is such a great opportunity and thrilling prospect to be joining the team of Project Understanding. My parents blessed me with an old family name of Maria Karolena Eichhorn and later I became Mrs. Maria Holmen as I married Mark Holmen, who currently serves as the senior pastor of Ventura Missionary Church. For the past six years we have enjoyed the warmth of southern California as we moved here from Minneapolis, Minnesota where I served as the payroll manager for Boston Scientific.

I was raised in a small town in central Iowa and graduated from Wartburg College with a degree in business administration. My husband and I have one daughter named Malyn who is 12 years old and attends Ventura Missionary School and is an avid track and field runner in the Ventura Tigres program.

I am very excited to use the gifts God has given me for such a great organization that is being used by God to make a difference in the lives of so many people. I look forward to getting to know all of you as we continue to do the Lord's work in meeting the needs of people in Ventura County. ♦



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Tutoring Coordinator

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Receptionist

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 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.

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.

Permanent Supportive Housing

Project Understanding is working with a coalition of interested agencies and individuals to provide permanent supportive housing 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

Sea-to-Summit Time Again

If it's May, it must be Sea-to-Summit. The 35th annual Sea-to-Summit is scheduled for Saturday, May 17. The course is, once again, from near Foster Park to the top of Mount Pinos. It is a grueling 85-mile ride with a total climb of 8,000 feet in elevation.

And once again, Norm Hudson will be riding for Project Understanding. Norm has ridden in more than 25 of the previous 34 rides and has raised more than \$20,000 for us over just the last ten years.

You can help make Norm's day more satisfying for him and more rewarding to us by pledging your financial support to Norm and his ride.

Just send your gift or pledge to Project Understanding and mark it "Sea-to-Summit."

Norm thanks you and we thank you. ♦

Project Understanding Website Is a Wealth of Information

The Project Understanding website contains a wealth of information and it is available anytime you want it or need it.

The website address is www.projectunderstanding.org.

The website includes a home page with our mission statement clearly displayed.

On succeeding pages you will find a capsule description of each of our programs and a separate page for each program with a brief introduction to what

each program does and how many people benefitted from each program last year.

You can also see what are the volunteer opportunities in the agency as a whole and in each program.

And finally, on the publications page you can see every edition of this newsletter and every annual report as far back as January 2003.

We trust that the Project Understanding website will be both a reminder to those who already know us well and an introduction to people who are just learning about us.

We hope you will find it both interesting and informative. ♦

2008 Food Drive Is Letter Carrier Blitz Against Hunger

The Project Understanding Food Pantry has benefited greatly from the letter carriers' annual food drive. We encourage all of our supporters to participate this year by leaving canned food out on May 10 for their carrier to collect.

What follows is excerpted from the letter carriers' website (www.nalc.org):

Letter carriers, with help from their sisters and brothers in the other postal crafts and thousands of other volunteers, will stage a blitz on Saturday, May 10, to combat hunger in America, conducting NALC's annual "Stamp Out Hunger" Food Drive in every U.S. state and jurisdiction.

The drive, in its 16th year,

is the largest one-day food collection in the nation and the biggest community service effort by any union affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

"The food drive is the hallmark of the union's tradition of community service," said NALC President William H. Young.

On the day before Mother's Day this year, letter carriers will focus their efforts on restocking the community food banks, pantries and shelters that millions of American families will rely on throughout the summer.

The union settled on the second Saturday of May for the annual drive since food bank donations tend to wane after the winter holidays.

In 2007, the drive delivered 70.7 million pounds of non-perishable items donated by patrons to local food organizations — the fourth consecutive year the total surpassed 70 million pounds.

The U.S. Postal Service has pledged its assistance at every level, from enthusiastic support by Postmaster General John E. Potter and others at USPS Headquarters to hands-on backing by many area and district managers, postmasters and postal supervisors.

Project Understanding deeply appreciates this annual effort on the part of the National Association of Letter Carriers and the United States Postal Service. Please join them in their effort to "Stamp Out Hunger." ♦



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

Judy Alexandre
George Appel
Helen Archer
William & Dorothy Asano
Roy & Mary Lou Ash
Lila Atkisson
Edward & Jill Banman
Marion Baranowski
Kenneth & Debra Beckfeld
Steve Bennett
Donna Boeck
Howard & Linda Bolinger
Barbara Born
Jeffrey Brackett & Miriam Arichea
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Bill & Marcia Wakelee
Dorothy & D. Russell Walker
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Dale & Mary Watson
John & Paulina Wolfe
Janice Zechner
Mark & Wendy Zirbel

In memory of:

Barbara Hamilton

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Alan & Patricia Hovey

In honor of:

Cynthia & Tom Hashbarger's
birthdays

Given by:

Les & Judy Vielbig

In memory of:

Sene Jo Shields

Given by:

Lila Atkisson

Thank You to Supporters of Project Understanding

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Live Oak Christian Fellowship
Pythian Sisters
St. Paul's Episcopal Church of
Ventura
The Forum Foundation
Trinity Lutheran Church
United Way, Other, United
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**Thank you to the following
people and groups who con-
tributed food and other items
to our program during the
month of March:**

Individuals

Barbara Born
Don Brubaker
Tracy Buckingham
Ginny Fulgentes
Les Goldberg
Candy & Paul Gooding
John & Glenda Hammer
Sheelah Henry
Mike Herron
Douglas Jereska
Kevin & Sharon Krumdieck
Morrie Lewis
Jeanette Mickelson
Ralph & Eleanor Powell
Mercy Sanchez
Selena Sanchez
Leonard & Marsha Weber

Churches & Organizations

Alliance for the Mentally Ill
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Pythian Sisters
San Buenaventura Women's
Club
St. Paschal Baylon Church
St. Paul's Episcopal Church of
Ventura
Starbucks
Trader Joe's
Trinity Lutheran Church
Unitarian Universalist Church
Ventura Missionary Church
Vons, Thompson Blvd.

Newsletter Layout

Ellen Pearson

Sustaining Donors

Sustaining donors are
those who make a single
gift of \$1,000 or more. To
show our appreciation for
their support, they are listed
here for 12 months.

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Leah Ohse
Richard & Ellen Pearson
Tom & Pamela Prinz
Michael & Pamela Swartout
Dolores "DeDe" Taylor
Fred & Barbara Tomblin
Marion Ward
James & Marilyn Williams
Robert Willis



Rheto-Rick

“Her Children Rise Up and Call Her Blessed”

By Rick Pearson
Executive Director

My mother is older than Mother’s Day. My mother was born in May of 1913 and the first national Mother’s Day was declared by Woodrow Wilson in May of 1914.

This coming Mother’s Day will be like none of the 94 that preceded it. It will be the first Mother’s Day ever that my mother will not be here for. My mother passed away on April 8, a few weeks before her 95th birthday

My mother was a remarkable woman (just like your mother). I know that everyone wants to believe that his or her mother has all the qualities of a good wife described in Proverbs 31, but I reread the passage after my mother’s death and I believe she stacks up pretty well. (You don’t remember Proverbs 31? Reread it this year in honor or in memory of your mother.)

She and my father were married for more than 71 years. She learned to be thrifty by necessity (her first 9 years of marriage were during the Depression and World War II). She was industrious and hard working. She was loving to her family and friends and she deeply loved God.

And now, for the first time this Mother’s Day, I will be

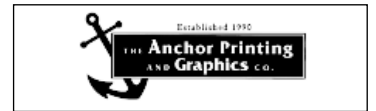
honoring her memory instead of her person.

But it is all right because I will still be fulfilling my role in the Proverbs passage. “Her children rise up and call her blessed.” ♦



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