

PROJECT UNDERSTANDING NEWS

A newsletter for the volunteers
and supporters of Project
Understanding

Volume XX No. 10
(Monthly)

October 2005



City Gets Last Daybreak Parcel

The Daybreak Living Center has taken a huge step forward with the acquisition by the City of Ventura of the last parcel in the proposed site.

Last month we reported that the City was at an impasse with the owners of this parcel that is

homeless families and individuals to downtown Ventura.

While there is still much work to do before this project becomes a reality, this is a major step towards the realization of a dream that has been seven years in its planning.

The property bounded by Ventura Avenue, Thompson Boulevard and Garden Street will some day soon house more



Architectural drawing shows the style and layout of the Artspace/Daybreak center.

vital to the viability of the Artspace/Daybreak project going forward. Now we are pleased to announce that an agreement has been reached and the City has acquired the parcel and the entire site is now under City control.

This agreement came just in time for Artspace to be able to apply for vital funding from the state of California — funding that is a necessary piece of the project.

The Artspace/Daybreak project is an exciting partnership among Project Understanding, Artspace and the City of Ventura to bring low-cost housing for artists and emergency and transitional shelter for

that 50 units of affordable live-work space for low-income artists

and their families as well as a place for up to ten homeless families and 16 homeless individuals to begin the transition to self-sufficiency.

We greatly appreciate the efforts of our partners and all our supporters in getting to this day. And we look forward to the day when our seven-year dream becomes a reality. ♦

Saturday Opening Set for January

Beginning in January, the Project Understanding Reception Center and the Focus on Food Pantry will be open on

Saturday mornings. This will allow us to serve working families and individuals who have found it difficult to come to Project Understanding during the week because of their employment.

These new Saturday hours will be made possible by the willingness of supporting congregations and organizations who will provide the six to eight volunteers on Saturdays. Each congregation will be responsible for one Saturday every other month. This means that we will need eight groups who will take a regular schedule (e.g., the first Saturday in even numbered months or the second Saturday in odd numbered months). We will also need one “floating” group that will take the four “fifth” Saturdays each year. In addition, one Project Understanding staff member will be present each week.

We already have five groups who have said “yes” and we are looking diligently for the other four. Training for the volunteers will occur between now and the end of the year so that we are fully prepared to begin on the first Saturday in January.

If you are interested in having your congregation or group be a part of this exciting new effort, call Rick Pearson at 652-1326, ext. 825. ♦

Food, Volunteers, and Love Make the Pantry Work

By Lisa Lee
Food Pantry Coordinator

Well, it's been a while since my last article. I know many of you know me, but for those who don't, I'm Lisa and I run the Food Pantry. So how does a food pantry work, you ask? Well, I shall tell you. But



Charlo Stuart (L) and Elizabeth Wolfe volunteer once a month in the Food Pantry.

before I do, let me tell you a little about the pantry itself.

The Food Pantry is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 10 a.m. to 12 noon, soon to be joined by Saturday 10 a.m. to 12 noon. This is very exciting for us here at Project Understanding as we will be able to help more people who are unable to make it during regular pantry hours. The pantry supplies the less fortunate and homeless with a three-day supply of groceries. The pantry is run by volunteers and relies on donations from churches, organizations and good-hearted people.

Now the first thing a food pantry needs is food. I get a monthly order from the United States Department of

Agriculture, and I get food weekly from FOOD Share. That food will only go so far and last so long. The majority of my food comes from donations.

Without these donations it would make it very hard to balance out the pantry and be able to give out a variety of needs. Especially now. Due to Katrina, we will be seeing a shortage of canned goods from FOOD Share, and with the holiday season coming up. So the need for donations will be even greater.

The second thing a pantry needs is volunteers. Volunteers come from many places. Churches, organizations like the National Charity League (whom I would love to give a huge thank you to on a summer well done at the pantry), and anyone willing to make a difference.

Elizabeth Wolfe and Charlo Stuart are two of my pantry volunteers I would like you to meet. Elizabeth has been volunteering once a month for the last 15 years. She got started after she retired from teaching. Some of her friends from her church, Trinity Lutheran, were volunteering and asked her to join. She has been here ever since. She loves the hours and really enjoys giving her time. Charlo has been volunteering once a month or so for the last three or four years. She got started through another volunteer, Gloria Johnston. She also enjoys the hours and feels she is doing a great service for others. They both highly recommend it.

The final thing a pantry needs is love. Without love, there would be no pantry. My volunteers would not keep returning if they did not love what they do, and donations would not come in if people did

not love to help. And of all the jobs I have ever had, I think God has put me in a job he knew I'd love.

So now you know how a pantry works. If you would like to volunteer, please call my volunteer coordinator, Jerry Fletcher, 643-2015, or myself, 652-1326, ext. 833. I am also always on the lookout for volunteers with trucks who may be willing to do pick ups.

In closing I would just like to say that I have made it through my first year here and would like to thank everyone. I couldn't have done it without the help of my volunteers and all of the wonderful donations.

In God's love, Lisa Lee. ♦

Heart

Continued From Page 8

as to whether to use cash reserves or cut services. We made the choice to use reserves. While donations have recovered, we have not been able to restore those reserves. We cannot sustain another period like that without cutting services — something we are obviously reluctant to do.

So we encourage all of our supporters to follow their hearts and give generously to the Gulf Coast relief. But we also ask that you remember that there are ongoing needs here at home. Needs that local agencies are continuing to attempt to meet. These needs are not going away and neither are we.

Please continue to help us help others.

Thank you. ♦

Two Ways To Help Feed People Who Are Hungry

Donate Food or Cash to Feed a Family of Four

The Focus on Food Emergency Food Pantry provides a three-day supply of food to hungry people.

For a family of four that turns out to be the following food bag:

- Tuna, 2 cans
- Soup, 3 cans
- Canned beans, 3 cans
- Canned vegetables, 3 cans
- Stewed tomatoes, 3 cans
- Tomato sauce, 3 cans
- Macaroni, 1 pound
- Canned fruit, 1 can
- Breakfast cereal, 1 box
- Peanut butter, 1 jar
- Canned meat, 1 can
- Bread, 2 loaves
- Pastry, 1 package
- Rice, 1 pound
- Dry beans, 1 pound
- Rolled oats, 1 pound
- Produce, as available

If you went to the supermarket, that basket of groceries would cost you \$40.35. Because so much of our food and labor are donated it doesn't cost us nearly that much, but that's what it would cost the family that receives it if they had to buy it themselves.

Would you like to help us feed a family of four? There are two ways to do it:

One way would be to go to the store and buy the items listed above. I would suggest that you buy it at the same time you are buying food for yourself and your family so that it would really feel like you are fulfilling

Isaiah's instruction to "share your food with the hungry."

The other way to help that family of four is to donate \$40.35. This has the added advantage of really providing much more food because that food basket only costs us less than half that to produce.

Either way, you will know that you are feeding a hungry family at a time of desperate need. Even though they may not know you they will bless you. ♦

Participate in "Food of the Month" Giving

Much of the food that is distributed through the Focus on Food Pantry has been donated by individuals and by congregations. But sometimes people are not sure what foods are most appropriate to donate. So people give whatever they have in the cupboard.

For example, one of the most commonly donated items, especially in the fall and winter, is pumpkin pie filling. It seems like a fitting donation for the holidays, but in order to make it into a pie you need many ingredients that the recipient family might not have.

Here is a simple solution. Have your congregation become a "Food of the Month" congregation. Here is how it works:

Decide on the item for the following month and announce it during the last week of the month.

Set up containers to receive the donated food. (Helpful hint: Keep the containers small

enough so they can be lifted when they are full.) If you would like, we will supply the containers.

Then just bring the collected food to Project Understanding. Or call us and we will be happy to come and pick up the donation. ♦

Suggested Donations for Food of the Month Giving

- Tuna
- Peanut Butter
- Soup
- Canned Vegetables
- Pasta Sauce
- Canned Fruit
- Breakfast Cereal

Walter Clark Leaves a Legacy

When Walter Clark died last spring he left behind many friends that he had made during his 101 years of life.

He also left behind a number of generous gifts to groups and organizations that he believed in, one of which was Project Understanding.

We are thankful for Walter's long and productive life and we are deeply appreciative of his support for Project Understanding which has even extended beyond his life.

If any of our current supporters wish to make us a part of their estate planning, please call Rick Pearson. ♦

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*“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 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.

Volunteer Opportunities Abound at PU

Part of Project Understanding's mission statement says our mission is "to provide avenues for those who wish to serve others." From time to time, we like to remind our readers about some of our volunteer opportunities.

Focus on Food Pantry

The pantry supplies food to individuals and families from our community who are in need. There are three ways to serve in the pantry:



- ◆ Pantry distributors (or substitutes) work one or more times per month and the position requires a minimum of a six-month commitment.
Time: Monday, Wednesday, or Friday, 10 a.m. to 12 noon.
- ◆ Pick-up person for food from FOOD Share and other donors.
Time: Monday through Saturday by arrangement.
- ◆ Repackaging of bulk food (usually done in groups).
Time: By arrangement.

Reception Center

The Reception Center is the entry point for all services offered at Project Understanding and for referrals to other agencies. Volunteers can help out in two ways:

- ◆ A case assistant works one to four times per month and requires a minimum of a six-month commitment.
Time: Monday through Friday 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.

- ◆ Substitute receptionist (by arrangement).
Time: Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 12 noon and/or 1 to 4 p.m.

Transition House

Transition House provides transitional housing for formerly homeless families as they work towards a return to self-sufficiency.

- ◆ Become a mentor to a family. This position requires a minimum of a six-month commitment and weekly contact with the family.
Time: By arrangement.

Tutoring

Volunteers tutor for low-income elementary-aged students at our five tutoring centers in Ventura and Oxnard. Project Understanding will provide training and ongoing support. A person can work directly with students or in an equally important manner in a clerical capacity.

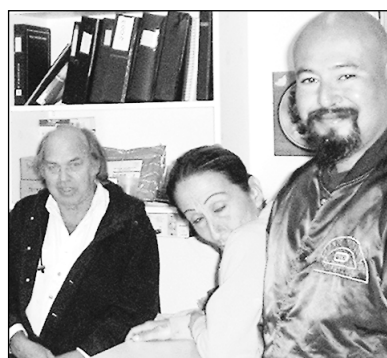


- ◆ Tutor one (or more) elementary-aged students for one hour each week.
Time: Monday through Thursday 3 to 6 p.m.

- ◆ Filing, clerical, help organize educational materials.
Time: Monday through Friday by arrangement.

SARAH Center

The SARAH (Simply Arranging Real Assistance Here) Center is a drop-in center that provides shower and laundry facilities, a mail drop, local phone calls, and services of County Health Services to individuals in need.



- ◆ Host/hostess at the center one (or more) days per month.
Time: Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 12 noon.

Administration

Volunteers are needed in both the financial office and the executive director's office.

- ◆ Filing and clerical work.
Time: By arrangement
- ◆ Prepare our newsletter for bulk mailing.
Time: The last Friday of each month, 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

Project Understanding also needs volunteers to help with technical support of computers, building repairs and maintenance and groups who wish to do one-day projects!

Call Rick Pearson, executive director, (805) 652-1326 ext. 825. ◆

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 August:

Individuals

Judy Alexandre
Helen Archer
William & Dorothy Asano
Roy & Mary Lou Ash
Lorraine Ballance
Marion Baranowski
Carolyn & Alyssa Barber
Patricia Barrett
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John & Paulina Wolfe

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Kathi Taylor

In memory of:
Bill Hannah
Given by:
Robert & Geraldine Browning
Greg & Margo Eidson
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Betty Ewin

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 Arthur Rynerson

In memory of:

Doris O'dell

Given by:

Echo Kukuchek

In memory of:

Elsie Carr

Given by:

Agnes Riedmiller

In honor of:

Fran Slater

Given by:

Connie Lewis

In honor of:

Les & Judy Vielbig's 45th
 Wedding Anniversary

Given by:

George Appel

In memory of:

Marge Barnum

Given by:

James & Martha Raysor

In memory of:

Norman Weeks

Given by:

Viola Baptiste
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In memory of:

Robert Anderson

Given by:

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In honor of:

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 Wellpoint Foundation
 Ventura Suburban Kiwanis Club
 Westminster Presbyterian Church

**Thank you to the following
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 to our program during the
 month of August:**

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 Leonard & Marsha Weber

Churches & Organizations

Alliance for the Mentally Ill
 Anacapa Bread Company
 Commission on Human
 Concerns, Ventura

Community Presbyterian Church
 Delta Theta Tau Omicron Tau
 Chapter
 First Baptist Church of Ventura
 First United Methodist Church of
 Ventura
 Friends of the Library
 Gallardo & Associates
 Grace Lutheran Church
 Mission Uniform & Linen Service
 National Charity League
 Peet's Coffee House
 San Buenaventura Women's Club
 Soroptimist International of
 Ventura
 Starbucks
 Trader Joe's
 Unitarian Universalist Church
 Ventura Missionary Church
 Vons Grocery, Harbor Blvd.
 Vons Grocery, Telegraph Rd.
 Vons Grocery, Thompson Blvd.

Newsletter Layout

Ellen Pearson



Rheto-Rick

When Giving Follow Your Heart

By Rick Pearson
Executive Director

Americans are certainly among the most generous people on the face of the earth. There is a line about Iowans in "The Music Man" that says, "We'll give you our shirt and the back that goes with it if your crops should happen to fail."

But what is true of Iowans is even more true of Californians and especially of Venturans. There was an article in the *Ventura County Star* about how generous Ventura County individuals and businesses have been in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. A million and a half through the Red Cross. Thousands more through the United Way and the Salvation Army.

Then too there is the \$68,600 which was raised in a

single day by the Ventura County Firefighters' Association and the Salvation Army. Not to mention the organizations, children's groups, schools and cities all over the county that have held fund raisers or pledged money towards the Katrina relief effort.

As the executive director of an organization which relies on donations for nearly 60% of our income, I certainly applaud all this generosity. The needs in the Gulf Coast region are astronomical and every dollar that can be sent there will definitely help those who have suffered incredible losses.

But I would also echo the words of Dave Smith, president and CEO of the United Way, Ventura County, who said, "Ventura County is a very generous community, and people give from the heart. We hope that people understand there is still a need here."

During the six months after the attacks on September 11, 2001, our donations were down considerably (as were the gifts to other local nonprofit agencies). We had to make decisions

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Highlights

P. 1: The City of Ventura gets last Daybreak parcel.

Project Understanding's Saturday opening is set for January.

P. 2: Food, volunteers, and love make the pantry work.

P. 3: Donate food or cash to feed a family of four.

Participate in "Food of the Month" giving.

P. 5: Volunteer opportunities abound at Project Understanding.



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