

# The Canticle

The newsletter of Santa Maria Urban Ministry, San Jose, CA January 2008

## Many Groups and Individuals Help SMUM Make Christmas Special

During December, many individuals and groups contributed gifts, time, and talent to make it a special time for our clients. Here is a sampling of that generous spirit:

**Youth Party.** Under the leadership of Ruth Leif of St. Stephen's in the Fields, young people from St. Stephens and from St. Francis Willow Glen gave a party for the children of Santa Maria families waiting to apply for and pick up their Christmas baskets and gifts. The youth volunteers worked with the SMUM kids at Christmas craft tables, served Christmas treats and cider, and lead Christmas caroling.



Santa Maria children make Christmas crafts at party.

The party included a youth Santa Claus (who reportedly had the Santa routine down perfectly) and his elf helper.



Santa, his elf helper, and one of the Santa Maria children



Youth from St. Stephen's and St. Francis with Santa and helpers

The youth also helped in the food pantry and present distribution rooms. Eight adults from the two churches were also on hand. Great job, kids and leaders/helpers!

**Dinner and Fundraiser.** On December 8, St. Thomas Sunnyvale held a St. Nicholas feast and fundraiser to benefit Santa Maria. As a result, they were able to give us \$1,383 for Christmas items, combining a special evening and a good cause.

**Churches Provide for Children, Families.** St. Andrew's Los Gatos focused their Christmas efforts on middle school students with an "angel tree" of gifts, while St. Luke's Los Gatos provided Target and movie gift cards and bus tokens to students ages 13-17.

St. Francis Willow Glen adopted eleven families identified by SMUM and delivered well-stocked food baskets to them for a Christmas feast plus individual gifts for each family member.

St. Mark's Santa Clara provided gifts and gift certificates through a special Christmas tree, from which parishioners selected tags describing needs.

**50 Bicycles.** Thanks to the generosity of Trinity Cathedral, Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, and Britannia Arms on Almaden Expressway, San Jose, we received 50 new bicycles for distribution to Santa Maria's children at Christmas.

(more about Christmas on page 2)

**(Christmas, continued)**

**500 stockings.** Several years ago, with her December birthday approaching, Gale Hazen of Holy Spirit Campbell decided that she didn't need "more stuff" and asked her family and friends to help her provide stockings for Santa Maria children instead. They did—and continue to do so. Gale's idea has grown so that this year she and her crew were able to deliver 500 stockings.

As Gale describes it: "The stockings are really a large group effort. The stockings are made individually out of felt, and I have found a way to have all our felt donated. Our goal is to put in each stocking a toothbrush, toothpaste and floss, crayons, pencils and erasers, several candies including canes, and \$5 worth of McDonalds gift certificates. We do the gift certificates because it is most children's favorite food as well as a toy if they get a happy meal."

The stocking project begins in February when Gale and her crew cut out the stockings, and it continues throughout the year with five-hour workdays on seven Saturdays. The group members watch for bargains all year (and have already found some for next year's stockings), and involve others when possible. For example, a dentist donated half the dental care supplies, then her personal dentist helped with the rest. Finally, two weeks before Christmas the group stuffs the stockings, load their cars, and deliver the stockings to Santa Maria. The photo below shows how 500 stockings can fill up two cars, bringing lots of Christmas cheer to our children.



Gale Hazen with the 500 stockings she and her crew made and filled for Santa Maria's children.

**The Year 2007 at SMUM**

During December, we offered these services to our clients:

- Provided food for 317 households: 854 individuals and 408 children through our Food Pantry program. Over the entire year, we supplied food to a total of 4,000 households: 9,860 individuals including 4,429 children.
- Received in-kind food donations valued at \$11,953 from the San Jose Elks Club, Le Boulanger, Martha's Kitchen, PW Market, Trader Joe's, St. Timothy's Mountain View, and Trinity Cathedral San Jose. In December the Safeway supermarket at 4950 Almaden Expressway adopted our Food Pantry and supplied 735 pounds of food. Many thanks to all.
- Made an estimated 225 bags of clothing available to clients through our Community Closet, with at least a 100 percent increase of clothing donations over November. Thank you to everyone who gave us clothing.
- ABC Playtime and Studio 17 were in session for only part of the month, due to the Christmas holiday.

Volunteers gave 566 hours of time in the areas of CHRC (Community Health Resource Center), Community Closet, Family Counseling, Food Pantry program, Local Motion Ministry (food transport), ABC Playtime, Studio 17, SMUM Christmas, Maintenance, SMUM Administration, General Cleaning/Organization, and Welcome Desk. Thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers!

**Our mission statement:**

Santa Maria Urban Ministry serves the inner-city San Jose community by providing basic services to meet short-term needs, such as food, clothing, and transportation, and by supporting long-term transformation through education, counseling, and after-school and seasonal programs.

**HELP WANTED!**

We always need volunteer help at Santa Maria, but the needs are particularly acute at this time. Please prayerfully consider the following opportunities for service.

Do you love kids? ABC Playtime seeks a **coordinator, teachers, and assistants**. Hours are mornings from 9:30 to 12:30 for one morning a month or one morning a week. Two of our fine ABC teachers will be leaving in June so you have time to observe, work with them, and learn from them until then. Classes are small; the children are enthusiastic and rewarding.

Do you like working with older kids and computers? Studio 17 needs additional **leaders and assistants** to help students in the computer lab on Tuesdays from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. Training is available to help you get started.

Can you drive a truck? The Food Pantry needs a **driver and helper** to help with the food pickup at the Food Bank from about 8 to 10 a.m. on Mondays. The order is placed and prepared in advance; only pickup is needed. A limited amount of heavy lifting is involved.

Can you push a broom? The Food Pantry warehouse needs **cleaning help**. Assistance on even one day a month would be helpful; more days would be even better!

Are you good at **data entry**? The Executive Director could use some help from a person with tech skills to enter data before the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month and again at the end of the month. A computer is available in the back of the building; hours are flexible.

Do you like to meet people? At the front desk at SMUM the **receptionist** greets clients, answers questions, fields phone calls, and assists with administrative tasks, and we always need more people for this task, particularly during vacation times. Training is available; Spanish speaking is helpful but not essential. Like most of the other jobs listed above, this one can be done on only one day

per month, several days per month, or every week. You decide how much time you can give. Or try one day a month and see how that suits you. We welcome all help!

If you would like the opportunity to use your skills for any of the above jobs, please call Lawrence Robles at 292-3314 or e-mail him at smum83@gmail.com.

**SANTA MARIA RECEIVES GRANT**

Santa Maria recently received a grant of \$10,000 from the Wu Foundation. We are particularly grateful for this grant because it is unrestricted, meaning that we can use it wherever needed, not just for specific programs expenses.

***Remembering Diane Conrad***

On January 5, Santa Maria lost a dedicated worker and supporter and a link with our history when Diane Conrad died in San Jose. Diane was instrumental in getting Santa Maria established, serving as the first director of the Santa Maria Food Bank and facilitating the move from our first quarters on Willow Street to the present location. Dorothy Duckett, who volunteered at Santa Maria under Diane's direction (and for many years later), describes Diane as "a very religious woman who had a great sense of humor. She would do anything for anybody." Dorothy remembers Diane as being especially kind to volunteers and serving as an advocate for them. We honor Diane's important role in establishing Santa Maria and her many other acts of service in the Episcopal Church.

**EL MINISTERIO URBANO  
DE SANTA MARIA  
SANTA MARIA URBAN MINISTRY**

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## Help us out. Pass it along.

When you finish reading this edition of *The Canticle*, what will you do with it? Will you put it on a stack of other publications that eventually get tossed? Will you carefully file it away in your ever-growing collection of *Canticles*? Will you post it on the bulletin board at your Church? What will you do with it?

At SMUM we have a limited publication budget, and so there are only about 350 copies of this newsletter circulated each month. You can help us by passing your copy along to friends, colleagues, or members of your church community. When you do so:

- ✓ Mention a particular article or picture that caught your attention.
- ✓ Tell them a little about SMUM.
- ✓ If there is a Friends envelope in your newsletter, pass it along also.

There is an old Boy Scout song whose words say:  
It only takes a spark to get a fire going.  
And soon all those around can warm up in the glowing.

Be the spark for SMUM.

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## SMUM DIRECTOR TELLS ABOUT OUR CLIENTS

During a recent conference in which several community agencies and churches were participating, the guest speaker raised issues regarding homelessness, the poor, and families in need of social services. This was a very eye-opening experience, for many reasons; however, it was especially fascinating that the people who were present at the conference were basing their understanding of the plight of poor people upon myths about this particular population. Among these myths are “Poor people just need to work harder; Homeless people 'choose' to be homeless; Poor people do not want to work at entry-level jobs as these provide the best opportunity for employment,” and others.

In recent months, the majority (at least 75 percent) of our new registering clients had been employed

60-90 days prior to soliciting for social services. In addition, our clients currently pay out as much as 70 percent of their wages on housing, alone. This percentage is higher, according to the amount of wages earned. Therefore, “shared housing” is a common solution to alleviate minimum household income while meeting the high cost of housing in the region.

Illustrating this point further, we offer a typical story from one of our “working-poor” clients. Recently SMUM assisted a client, “Liz” who had lost her job just prior to the holidays. Liz is a single mom with two children (ages 12 and 10 years). Her local company was downsizing and her job was cut. She was able to obtain unemployment insurance for a couple of months, but then her account ran dry. By the time she was soliciting help from SMUM, she had gotten a notice to vacate her apartment.

Through the help of local churches and individual donor support, SMUM was able to assist with a portion of the past due rent for Liz’s apartment. She continues to look for employment through EDD and personal weekly job searches, often spending nearly 40 hours per week, yet she remains unemployed.

This personal story demonstrates a typical experience of many of our recent clients. Several are facing the reality of homelessness, as they are one or two paychecks away from losing their housing. We at SMUM can only support the working-poor people in our community as long as our “Friends” and other financial supporters provide us with resources.

Yes, at SMUM we believe that clients need to be held responsible and accountable for their choices. Yet it is equally important that loving people can be compassionate toward those working-poor people by participating in the solution to help people who struggle to provide for their families. Is it possible that you can help to “feed the hungry, offer drink to the thirsty, house the alien, clothe the naked...”(Matthew 25.35-36)? Will you be part of the solution—today? An envelope is provided with this issue so that you may participate in help for the needy. Thank you for your caring contribution!

-Lawrence Robles, Executive Director