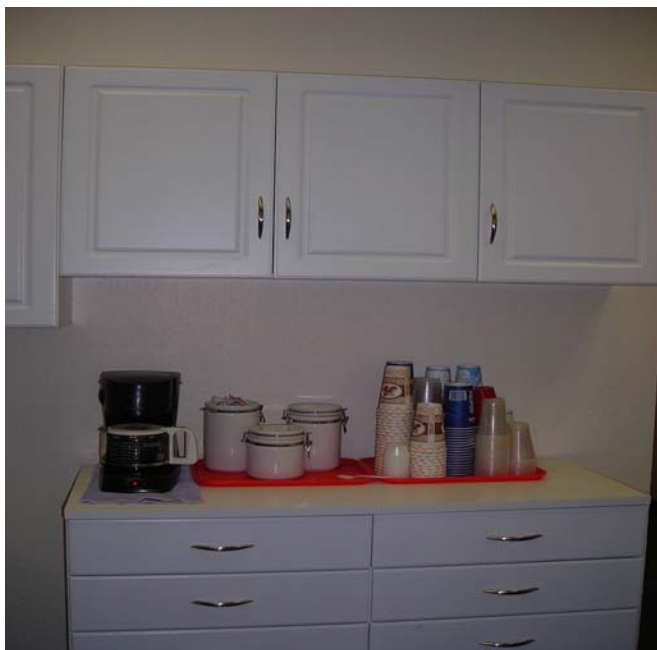


The Canticle

The newsletter of Santa Maria Urban Ministry, San Jose, CA February 2009

ACE Hardware Workers and Materials Make a Difference

On February 10, 30 workers from ACE Hardware arrived at Santa Maria, armed with supplies and lots of energy and began working their magic. By the end of the day, they had installed new cupboards in the reception area and kitchen.



Some of the new cupboards ACE workers installed

The ACE workers also painted the reception area, hall and kitchen; and installed new, safe rubber tiles on the outside play area for the ABC Playtime children.



New safe surface for ABC kids

The tiles were funded by previous grants, but all other materials and labor were part of the \$10,000 ACE awarded to SMUM last fall. Many thanks to ACE, and in particular to the ACE Hardware store at Curtner and Lincoln Avenues, Willow Glen. You've made a difference!

January 2009 at SMUM

During the month of January, the **Food Pantry** served **1,164 clients**, including 513 households and 476 children. Emergency food boxes were given to 95 individuals. In-kind food donations valued at \$14,250 were made by these merchants:

- Martha's Kitchen
- PW Market
- Safeway
- Trader Joe's

These donations greatly extend our ability to provide food for clients.

The **Community Closet** was able to distribute an estimated 225 bags of clothing; **ABC Playtime** has had eight students per session; and **Studio 17** has hosted 10-12 children and youth per session. **Counseling services** are suspended until counselor Mario Murillo returns on February 27.

Total time volunteered in January was 662 hours—generous, dedicated service in the programs listed above plus general cleaning and organization, transportation of food, maintenance, administration, and the welcome desk. All are important and much appreciated.

Current needs include facility maintenance—plumbing, heating, landscaping, and roof repairs. If you can help, please call Lawrence Robles.

Hail Britannia!

In December, [Mr. Michael North](#) (owner), the staff and patrons of the Britannia Arms on Almaden Road continued their long-time support of Santa Maria by contributing THIRTY bicycles, making wishes come true for many SMUM clients. Thank you, Britannia Arms!

Give Your Time, Talent, or Treasure — or All Three

Santa Maria Urban Ministry offers you many opportunities to give your time, abilities, and funds to help working poor families (and some recently unemployed) in the inner-city San Jose community. Just imagine yourself helping in one of the ways described below and on the next page.

Driving a truck. Every Monday morning SMUM needs to pick up food at Second Harvest so that it can be boxed and distributed to our families. An order has already been placed for items we need to restock shelves, and as a driver, all you have to do is drive to Second Harvest (only four miles away), along with another volunteer, pick up the food, and look over newly available items to see if other groceries should be added. Second Harvest will train you in how to do this shopping. It's easy and you will learn it all quickly.

What else do you do? The items are loaded at Second Harvest, then you drive back to Santa Maria, help unload the items, and you're finished. All you need is a regular driver's license, time, and the selflessness to say, "I'll help!"



You could be driving this truck!

How much time is involved? You will start at about 7:45 AM and finish by 9:00, with the whole day still ahead for whatever else you want to do. In a little over an hour, you will provide an important service to SMUM and you will feel good about helping others. A great way to start the week! Put yourself in the truck driver's seat!

Working with Preschoolers. Do you know how much fun it can be to work with three-, four-, and five-year-olds? In ABC Playtime, SMUM provides a program to about 12 preschoolers, and two volunteer teachers work together at each session.



You could be this teacher!

The preschool is currently offered every Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday morning, and you might enable us to add a Tuesday session, increasing the kids' preparation for kindergarten.

What background and training do you need? You do not need to be a credentialed teacher (although experience is helpful of course), and you will be trained. You don't have to think up activities either—the program has an established curriculum—and you will get help as needed.

How much time is involved? Children attend for two hours per day, and teachers generally come a half hour earlier and stay a half hour afterwards. So for three hours a week you will make a real difference to kids. How about it?

Giving Time, Talent, Treasure (cont.)

Working at the Front Desk. When clients come to Santa Maria, they take a number and wait in the reception area until their number is called. Then a volunteer at the desk talks with them to determine their needs, check their eligibility, maintain the required records, and ensure that they get the assistance. This friendly person could be you!

Do you need to speak Spanish or any other language besides English? It is helpful but not essential as bilingual speakers are generally available to assist.

How do you know what to do? You will receive training in three phases. First, you will watch how SMUM works for one morning and help fill out a food order. Second, you will spend one or two mornings with an experienced volunteer at the reception desk, noting what he or she does (both men and women serve in this role), asking questions as needed, and gradually helping as you gain confidence. Third, you are ready to “go solo,” working by yourself but calling on Lawrence Robles or others at SMUM for help if you’re faced with a new situation. “We don’t just toss you at the desk and say, ‘Good luck!’” Robles says.

When is help needed? Most of the times are covered at present, but we need alternates, who can fill in when others are ill, away, or otherwise unable to be there. Help on Friday and Saturday mornings is particularly needed. How about help from you?

Helping Kids in STUDIO 17. Santa Maria offers a homework assistance program to students in grades 5-8 after school. Two adult volunteers assist the kids as needed and help distribute snacks. You could be one of them!

You will be trained in what to do, and you will work an experienced volunteer. Do you need special academic knowledge? No, not even geometry—all you will need is an appreciation of kids, a good sense of humor, and some time to give. Sessions are from 3:30 to 6:30 PM. How about it?

Many Answered Prayers

Contributions came from many sources in December, the traditional month of giving, and we welcomed support from the following:

Contributions from churches. The following churches made gifts to Santa Maria in December:

- Santa Teresa Hills Presbyterian, San Jose \$400
- St. Francis Episcopal Church, Willow Glen \$1,000
- St. John’s Episcopal Church, Capitola \$2,000
- St. Jude’s Episcopal Church, Cupertino \$3,600
- St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, San Jose \$500
- St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church, Mountain View \$5,093
- St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Sunnyvale \$3,371

In addition, the following churches generously give the listed amounts **every month**:

- Episcopal Church of Almaden, San Jose \$108 (or about \$1,300 per year)
- St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, Saratoga, \$400 (or \$4,800 per year)
- Trinity Cathedral \$167 (or \$2,000 per year)

Grants. In December, the **CrossRoads 90** fund at St. Edward the Confessor Episcopal Church, San Jose, and the **Silicon Valley Community Foundation** each awarded \$5,000 grants to Santa Maria.

Individuals. Friends of Santa Maria and other individuals contributed a total of **\$15,620** in December—a wonderful sum! It reflects a pattern of giving in which 75 percent of SMUM’s individual donations are made between Thanksgiving and Christmas. While we are very grateful, we want to encourage year-round giving to facilitate our financial planning and avoid the “summer slump” we experience each year.

Again **THANK YOU** to all the generous churches, organizations, Friends of Santa Maria, and other individuals who were part of this giving!

Juan's Story—The Faltering Economy Affects Working-Poor

Being exposed to the “global” media these days, you are soon aware of the ongoing struggles of working-poor people due to the sluggish economy. Why, even those who are fortunate to be employed are suffering these days! Yet, what makes the life of the working poor so difficult?

Recently, one of our clients, named Juan*, shared his story. Juan is a father of three who is a local service worker. He lives in a San Jose apartment with his wife Rosa and their children. Through the years, he has taken jobs as a janitor, dishwasher and hotel service supervisor (his last job). Due to current decreases in the service industry, Juan lost his job at a local hotel. Being cautious with his spending, Juan had a few thousand dollars saved, yet his rent, utilities and groceries for the family quickly consumed the family's savings.

Juan and his family have lived in Santa Clara County for about 15 years, and they have not needed to seek social services in the past. “We have not asked for help before. We get some money from unemployment insurance. And, after we pay rent and utilities, we have very little left over for food.” Juan looks for work every day, yet he is not qualified for most of the jobs that are available. Juan's family will continue to obtain basic life-giving services from Santa Maria Urban Ministry (SMUM) until he secures gainful employment.

Juan's story is becoming more common among clients of SMUM and other social service agencies in San Jose. Recent declines in funding resources make it difficult to maintain high quality services, especially in the quantity of food available for working-poor clients. Last month (January), we experienced a dramatic increase in client requests for emergency food boxes (offered to those clients outside of our service area) and assistance with rent and utility bills. Every week, families are turned away because SMUM does not have the funds to provide help for special services. What can we do to alleviate these problems?

* Juan's name has been changed in this story.

According to prevailing reports, the economic stress that working-poor people are now experiencing will continue for a while in our area. Until willing workers like Juan obtain employment, families will continue to suffer the effects of limited economic resources.

One solution to the problem of economic stress may be to ask the “HAVES” to share with the “HAVE NOTS.” Each and every person who has economic resources can make a difference in the lives of those who have not. No amount is too small, and no amount can possibly be too great! We have provided an envelope with this mailing so that the “HAVES” can help, in a real and significant way, those who “HAVE NOT.” The working-poor people like Juan and his family will be very grateful for your help.

May God bless you,
The Rev. Lawrence Robles
Executive Director, SMUM

St. Joseph the Worker—Where Outreach Is Ongoing

St. Joseph the Worker is a small Episcopal Church in Milpitas, where, as their website notes, “Outreach is going strong,” and the church's support of SMUM is exemplary. Even though they are small in number, members of St. Joseph's not only make financial contributions to SMUM, but the church sends at least **nine volunteers** to SMUM regularly.

These volunteer workers are a vital part of SMUM, and we are grateful for their faithful service. If all churches in the diocese were as generous with their time and talent, SMUM could respond to more of the growing needs in our community. Thank you, St. Joseph Church!

SANTA MARIA URBAN MINISTRY
EL MINISTERIO URBANO DE SANTA MARIA
778 South Almaden Avenue
San Jose, California 95110
Phone: (408) 292-3314
Fax: (408) 292-0728
E-mail: smum83@gmail.com
Website: www.smum.org
Executive Director: Rev. Lawrence Robles