

Common Call

Community of Congregations of Oak Park and River Forest

P.O. Box 3365, Oak Park, IL 60303-3365

(708) 383-6369

<http://www.Lgrossman.com/comcong.htm>

May 2010

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Our mission: To develop a community among the churches, synagogues, and other congregations of faith in Oak Park and River Forest and enable common service.

Special Announcement

Community of Congregations is moving to delivering the newsletter electronically. Please e-mail Jane Wood, editor, to have your name added to the e-mail list. This month's newsletter was sent electronically to all for whom we have e-mail addresses.



HOLIDAY FOOD AND GIFT BASKET LAUNCHES MAY FUND DRIVE

Watch your mailboxes later this month for the 2010 spring fund appeal from the Holiday Food and Gift Basket. Our need for donations is greater than ever this year. The increasing demand on the OPRF Food Pantry and the exciting new changes underway there has meant a necessary reduction in the Pantry's financial support of the food gift certificates which are an integral part of the Holiday Food and Gift Basket program.

Last year we successfully served 958 referrals representing more than 2300 family members, senior citizens and single adults. Every household received a food gift certificate prior to Thanksgiving.

The insights of those who refer people to the HFGB powerfully demonstrate how important these food gift certificates are to those in need.

"...many of the folks who receive the gift cards are either alone for the holidays or have no family. . .the gift card seems to make accepting this fact easier and a tradition has begun where some will get together and share the food they purchased with the card. They kinda' make a party for themselves."

"... my clients use the gift card to pick up something special to bring to a Christmas dinner with friends . . . or family they are not completely estranged from. . . They are genuinely happy and excited they were able to do something a little different and "splurge" a little when so often they are living check to check."

"The program and gift certificates are valuable on many levels, not just the financial assistance it provides clients who are on set budgets and otherwise couldn't afford holiday extras, but the comfort and warmth clients feel from being remembered during an often lonely holiday season."

Please help us keep the gift of food in the Holiday Food and Gift Basket program by giving generously to our spring fund drive.

Also, mark your calendar for Thursday, August 5 from 6:00–9:00 p.m. when HFGB will be the beneficiary of a Community Shopping Night at Ten Thousand Villages. On that night, HFGB will receive 15% of the store's proceeds.

Thanks to all of you and your congregations for your ongoing support of the Holiday Food and Gift Basket program.

Sincerely,

Valerie Woods, Mary Jane Welter and Marcia Alpert
Coordinators, HFGB

COMMUNITY OF CONGREGATION NEWS

March 18, 2010 Program Summary

Our speakers for the March 18 Community Board meeting were Jim Schwarber and Nick Brunick from United Power for Action and Justice. Jim and Nick explained some of the group's history and its current projects. United Power does 3 basic things:

1. Tries to build relationships across boundaries of race, class, religion and economics
2. Works on issues of mutual interest
3. Tries to develop leaders.

They have tackled issues such as affordable housing, job training, gun control, young adult health care, and the fair map amendment. They distributed some of their literature and urged us to think about how the group might work within our communities.

Submitted by Pam Meyerson, Secretary

May 20, 2010 Community Meeting 7:00 PM

The Pine Room, Ascension Catholic Church
(Southeast corner of Van Buren and Clarence)

All delegates and friends, old and new, are encouraged to participate in this important meeting. The results of the visioning committee's deliberations, including its recent survey of the membership, will be presented. The survey is designed to elicit ideas and issues which the membership has an interest in taking on through the Community of Congregations. This will be a working meeting in which the participants engage with each other in setting some specific goals for the near future. Please plan to attend.

Community of Congregations Hosts and Volunteers

CoC is in need of:

- Host congregations for its May 20th and October 21st 2010 community meetings
- A host congregation for the Interfaith Thanksgiving service on Sunday, November 21, 2010
- Volunteers to serve on the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service planning committee
- Volunteers to serve on the Program Committee. The duties include planning and presenting the programs for the community meetings

If you are interested in volunteering please contact Jane Wood at 708-383-6369 or woodnflute@comcast.net.

CENSUS UPDATE

It was a great help to have the Community of Congregations in support of the Complete Count Committee and spreading the word about the importance of the Census. As of today Oak Park has a participation rate of 66%, above the 62% national participation rate but behind the participation rate of top states (all in the Midwest!). To track participation, you can click on this link (updated daily):
<http://2010.census.gov/2010census/take10map/>

Select participation rate (lower right corner) and when open, enter your zip code or Oak Park, IL to find out how we are doing.

Teresa Powell, Oak Park Village Clerk

EVENTS OF NOTE

CROP Walk

Sunday, May 2, 2010

1:15 p.m.

Pilgrim Congregational Church
406 Lake Street, Oak Park

Senior Housing Expo

Friday, May 7, 2010

10:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

Oak Park Public Library
834 Lake Street, Oak Park

For more information contact Nancy Teclaw
at 708-848-5251 or sccopr@wsbcglobal.net

Labyrinth at Euclid

Tuesday, May 11, 2010

Friday, May 28, 2010

7:00—9:00 p.m.

Euclid Avenue United Methodist Church
405 S. Euclid Avenue, Oak Park

For more information call Rev. Cossy
Ksander at 708-386-2669

Inclusionary Zoning Meeting

Sunday, May 16, 2010

10:30 a.m.

Oak Park Temple
1235 N. Harlem Avenue, Oak Park

For more information contact Deborah
Kadin at d.kadin@att.net

Community of Congregations

Community Meeting

Thursday, May 20, 2010

7:00 p.m.

Ascension Catholic Church
808 S. East Avenue, Oak Park

For more information contact Rev. Harriette
Cross at safirefour@aol.com

Taizé at Euclid

Friday, May 21, 2010

7:30 p.m.

Euclid Avenue United Methodist Church
405 S. Euclid Avenue, Oak Park

For more information call Rev. Cossy
Ksander at 708-386-2669

Taizé at Unity Temple

Friday, May 28, 2010

7:00 p.m.

Unity Temple Unitarian Universalist
Congregation

875 Lake Street, Oak Park

For more information visit their site at
www.unitytemple.org

EVENTS OF NOTE (continued)

Peace Vigil

Every Friday Evening

7:00–8:00 p.m.

First United Church of Oak Park

For more information contact Bob Haisman at 708-997-1993

or Gardenoprff@sbcglobal.net



OAK PARK RIVER FOREST FOOD PANTRY

“providing hunger relief to families in 28 zip codes in Cook County”

www.oprffoodpantry.org

How the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 helped the Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry serve high quality food to 11,000 families in 2009

When you are hungry in Illinois, where do you turn? For over 11,000 families in the Oak Park and River Forest (OPRF) area, that place of sustenance is the OPRF Food Pantry. As part of the Illinois Emergency Food Assistance Program, OPRF Food Pantry steps in to feed local families in their time of crisis. Like most member agencies, we provide families with an emergency ration of food, striving to supply enough for three days worth of meals.

In 2009, we set a goal of boosting the nutritional make-up of the food we provide. Specifically, we committed to including two dairy products and two frozen meat products to all families as part of their 3-day supply of food. Yet providing even that minimal amount became more and more challenging as the year progressed. By June, 2009 we had served 4961 families. For the same time period in 2008 we had served 2913 families. Could we continue to supply meat and dairy to exponentially increasing numbers of families? Not without help.

Fortunately, the USDA with the help of Stimulus Funds provided a much needed boost. In July, our allotment of USDA commodities leaped from an average of 7499 pounds to 12,137 pounds due to **ARRA funds**. So while we ended 2009 with a 63% increase in client visits, we also ended 2009 with a 58% increase in USDA allotments. The USDA allotment increase enabled us to continue providing quality, nutritious food to everyone in need who came to us for help. Without those extra commodities, we would have been forced to eliminate dairy and meat products in favor of less costly cans of vegetables and soup.

The extra nutrition content of our food has not been lost on our clients. One of our clients recently remarked that “it helps people in need like myself have the food I can’t afford to buy. The foods are very healthy for the body.” Another noted “I am receiving food stamps, but I find it very hard to eat three meals on less than four dollars a day.” Yet another commented that “the Pantry means a meal or no meal at all—and when you have odds and ends, the pantry helps fill in to make a meal for my family.”

We could not have afforded to continue providing significant amounts of nutritious food to all our clients in 2009 without the increase in our allotment of USDA commodities. One of our clients says it best: “Bless you and all the workers. I can sleep at night because my stomach is full.”

Michele Zurakowski, Director of Operations

Kathy Russell, Executive Director

Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry

WIM VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Walk-In Ministry needs volunteers for all of its shifts as well as volunteers who are interested in researching its referral resources who do not need to be available during our client hours. Contact Catherine Rison at 386-1946 or send an e-mail to info@walk-in-ministryoprff.org and indicate "volunteer" in the subject line. Hours are:

Monday–Friday 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Saturday 9:30–11:30 a.m.

1st Wednesday of the Month 7:00–8:00 p.m.

All other Wednesdays 3:30–5:00 p.m.

CROP HUNGRAR WALK–Come walk with US.....

Our theme this year is “**A Million To Feed Millions**”. This year we have challenged our walkers to raise \$60,000. This will put us over the \$1,000,000 mark in contributions to Church World Service and our local food agencies over the past 27 years. We are very optimistic because last year we raised \$66,107.72!

Please rally around your church recruiter and help make this walk our best yet.

CROP Hunger Walk

Sunday, May 2, 2010

Registration: 1:15 p.m.

Step-Off: 2:00 p.m.

Pilgrim Congregational Church

406 Lake Street

Oak Park, IL

LIFELONG LEARNING CENTER NEWS

The Lifelong Learning Center (also known as The Senior Citizens' Center of Oak Park River Forest) is sponsoring its 8th Annual Senior Housing Expo on May 7, 2010 at the Oak Park Public Library at 834 Lake St., Oak Park, IL from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The event is free to everyone. The purpose of the Housing Expo to provide individuals with useful information about housing options and services as they approach an age when they need to, or desire to change their housing arrangements. Vendors will be available to help answer questions regarding their respective facilities.

This is one-stop shopping for housing needs, saving time and research as the need for a change approaches aging adults. For further information contact Nancy Teclaw at 708-848-5251 or sccoprfl@sbcglobal.net. Remember, it's free to all!!!

INCLUSIONARY ZONING PRESERVING OAK PARK'S VIBRANCY

Oak Park has long been a nationally-recognized proponent of integration and diversity. To counter white flight from Austin in the 1960s, Oak Park adopted a fair housing ordinance that embraced imminent racial change. In 1973, the board of trustees passed its first statement that affirmed the value and importance of diversity in the community. Since then the community has been at the forefront of promoting the progressive environment and values that brought many of us here to live.

At a time of rising foreclosures and high unemployment, Oak Park needs to ensure that diversity remains intact. One avenue to keep diversity alive and vibrant is to provide new housing that will allow low to moderate income people to remain here, raise their families and keep Oak Park a robust community.

Housing advocates in this community and elsewhere feel that one important means of retaining that value is passage of an inclusionary zoning ordinance. The Oak Park Temple Social Action Committee hopes to engage the congregation around formation of a community-wide coalition to adopt such a measure here in Oak Park.

We invite you to attend and learn about efforts around inclusionary zoning during a forum at 10:30 a.m., Sunday May 16 in the Chapel of Oak Park Temple at 1235 N. Harlem Avenue, Oak Park. This is the third panel in a series on housing and homelessness, which the board of directors 18 months ago approved as the issue Social Action could concentrate on. A three-person panel will explore regional and national efforts and address the experience of Highland Park, the first community in Illinois to adopt an inclusionary zoning ordinance.



GREEN TIP

Do you know what's in your tap water? Here is one quick way to find out. The Environmental Working Group conducted national research on America's drinking water. EWG is a national, non-profit organization that conducts research and provides information regarding public health issues. Go to their website and here is what you will find: The complete report on findings; an analysis on water filters; and tips for safe drinking of tap water. Enter your zip code and read the report covering your own drinking water. Remember: Drinking water out of a plastic bottle is not the answer. Now, take a few minutes and find out what's in your water: <http://www.ewg.org/tap-water/fullreport>

2010 COMMUNITY OF CONGREGATIONS MEMBERSHIP

About 50 congregations in Oak Park, River Forest and surrounding communities have contact with the Community of Congregations through membership and/or participation in its ministries including the Holiday Food and Gift Basket Program and the Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry.

The following congregations and faith communities are current with their 2010 dues:

**Ascension Catholic Church
Austin Boulevard Christian Church
Cornerstone United Methodist Church
Faith In Place
First United Church of Oak Park
Grace Lutheran Church
Oak Park Friends
River Forest United Methodist Church
SHEM Center for Interfaith Spirituality
St. Catherine-St. Lucy Parish
St. Edmund Parish
St. Giles Parish
St. Luke Parish
United Lutheran Church
Unity Church of Oak Park
Unity Temple Unitarian Universalist Congregation**

We thank these congregations for their support.

Oak Park-River Forest
Community of Congregations
P.O. Box 3365
Oak Park, IL 60303-3365
Visit us at: <http://www.lgrossman.com/comcong.htm>

Nonprofit Organization
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Permit #190

Oak Park IL

Save These Dates

Sunday May 2, 1:15 p.m.
CROP Walk
Pilgrim Congregational Church

Friday, May 7
Senior Housing Expo
Oak Park Public Library

Tuesday, May 11 & Friday, May 28 7:00–9:00 p.m.
Labyrinth at Euclid
Euclid Avenue United Methodist Church

Sunday, May 16 10:30 a.m.
Inclusionary Zoning Meeting
Oak Park Temple

Thursday, May 20,
CoC Community Meeting
Ascension Catholic Church

Friday, May 21, 2010 7:00 p.m.
Taizé at Euclid
Euclid Avenue United Methodist Church

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Unity Temple Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Every Friday Evening
Peace Vigil
First United Church of Oak Park

If your congregation or organization has a special celebration or activity that you would like to share with the Community of Congregations community, please send your information to Editor Jane Wood at woodnflute@comcast.net by the 5th of the month.

Community of Congregations Executive Committee

Officers: President, Rev. Harriette Cross; Vice President, _____; Secretary, Pam Meyerson; Treasurer, Valerie Lester; Immediate Past President, Rev. Lowell Eckberg

At-large committee members: Joe McDonald, Harriette Robinet/McLouis Robinet, Dr. Bradford Wainer

Administrative Secretary: Jane Wood