

Spirit of the Streets

The Trinity Center Newsletter

Spring 2008

Director's Corner

By Mary Rychlik,
Executive Director

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted...a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance...(Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, 4, RSV)

Such is the rhythm of life. As we leave winter and enter spring, we reflect on the past few months at Trinity Center, from Jesus' birth at Christmas to his resurrection at Easter, and we look forward to new beginnings. We've celebrated Christmas with our neighbors, finished our annual fund raising campaign, held our fifth annual Barbara Jordan Luncheon, and said good-bye to exiting board members and hello to new ones.

We've also started a new program called Monthly Matters, a list of our most-needed items every month. You can help to meet our neighbors' needs by donating items from the list throughout the year.

Our website has been "reborn," as well. Visit us on the internet at www.TrinityCenterAustin.org to learn more about us, sign up to volunteer, donate online, and view pictures of our programs in action.

As always, thanks to all of you who help us, season after season, to plant and laugh and dance.

Goodbye To Old Friends

We bid a fond farewell and give heartfelt thanks to members of our board of directors whose terms ended in February. Doug Bell, Mark Lehman, Alex Ogunmuyiwa, Beth Plater, and The Rev. Chad Vaughn have served diligently and passionately during their tenures. You have our deepest gratitude for all that you've given to Trinity Center. A special thanks to Doug and his wife Diana who founded Trinity Center in 1999 and have given countless hours to the organization during the past nine years. We appreciate all of you.

Christmas Celebrations

Trinity Center again held 3 Christmas parties in 48 hours for our neighbors. The Trinity Center Bridge party had live music, delicious food, stocking decorating, a visit from Santa Claus and gifts for all the children.

Thanks to Gene and Robin Shepherd and all the Bridge volunteer families. The Trinity Streets party treated 200 neighbors to a grand meal, live music, portrait taking and gifts for every neighbor. Several media groups covered the event, too, sharing the stories of your generosity with the broader community. Thanks to John Ross and Sharon Voudouris-Ross, the committee members and the donors. At the Woman to Woman party, neighbors made cards, shopped for gifts to give their own friends and family, and had fellowship time. Thanks to Carolyn Miller, Gretchen Miller and all the W2W volunteers. And thanks to all of you who helped to make the Christmas season a blessed one for our neighbors.



Top left clockwise: Special Thanks to Photographers Rick Patrick and Charla Wood. During The Holiday Season, these photographers took professional portraits of our neighbors and volunteers.

Bottom left: Neighbor enjoying Christmas party.



“Debbie” and “Eric”

By Jane and Larry Graham

Jane and Larry Graham volunteer at Trinity Center. They're married to each other, but they volunteer on different days. Jane serves at the Woman to Woman program on Mondays, and Larry prepares and serves breakfast, greets, and provides spiritual support on Thursdays. The couple talked recently about their different experiences with neighbors they've met at the center.

Jane described “Debbie” (not her real name) as someone who can “change the dynamics of the morning,” depending on her mood. On one recent day, Debbie came to Woman to Woman (W2W) with a frown on her face, arms crossed at her chest, her perky black wig slightly askew, and saying, “I don't feel good.” Consequently, the mood at her table that morning also started out gloomy, and Jane went to work trying to help Debbie feel better.

Jane has known Debbie for several years and knows quite a lot about her because of the friendship they've developed. Debbie was born and raised in Austin, one of eight children. She has three daughters, nine grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Debbie is proud of her family and often goes out of her way to help other children she knows. Debbie is deaf, and she has spent some time in prison and on the streets, but she hasn't let those things stand in her way. In May 2007 Debbie graduated from ACC with a degree in marketing. Jane recently asked Debbie if she was looking for work, and Debbie replied that she is not; she spends her days attending and volunteering at various church programs, and that is her job, she said. True to her word, by the end of the morning she was helping to clean the center and prepare it for the next day's crowd. Her mood had brightened considerably, she expressed her gratitude for W2W and the volunteers, and she said she'd come back again next week.

“Eric” (not his real name), in contrast to Jane's “Debbie” is someone Larry doesn't know so much about. Their

friendship is just as real as Jane and Debbie's, but Eric has not shared as much personal information about himself with Larry. Eric prefers to remain largely anonymous, but he comes to the center on a regular basis. Eric always opts to sit at the back of the room against the wall, or in the corner near the exit door. He seems to be well-educated and is in his mid-40s. When Larry and Eric have a moment to talk, after breakfasts have been made and served, and there's enough coffee to go around, they talk about life on the streets: Eric knows the laws, the regulations, and what's legal and illegal. As a loner he prefers to sleep in a well-lit place where no one else is around so he can defend himself. But, when it's cold, below freezing and/or with a stiff wind blowing, it's tough, he says, since it's not always certain that he can find a cold-weather shelter.

Eric has talked to Larry only a little about his background. His father was a seaman, he has a sister in the northeast, and he has spent time in Hampton Roads, Virginia. At one point, he worked as a truck driver. A serious accident left him with a permanent disability. Since then, he has been wandering from one end of the country to the other, north to south and east to west.

Why does he come to Trinity Center? Larry's not sure, since Eric's answers to his questions are always guarded, but Larry guesses it's the hospitality that Eric encounters in a place that is secure and non-threatening, where he can get a good breakfast and something hot or cold to drink, depending on the weather. And it's more than that: he can participate in a devotional service, reminding him and all our “neighbors” that they are not forgotten, that God came into the world to care for people, and that redemption is available to all...whether we know them well or only a little.

By Megan Strauss,
UT Social Work Intern

Monthly Matters

Figuring out the best way to serve our neighbors seems overwhelming at times. Monthly Matters provides information about which donations would be most beneficial to our neighbors during a specific month. Of course, we appreciate all donations any time they're given, but if you're wondering how you can help to meet timely needs, just check the Monthly Matters for some guidance! Donations can be dropped off on the second floor of St. David's in the red donation barrel, or they can be brought directly to Trinity Center.

APRIL SHOWERS: extend the feelings of replenishment and freshness of the earth to the neighbors by providing them with necessary hygiene products. The following donations will start May off being squeaky clean:

- Deodorant
- Toothbrushes
- Toothpaste
- Razors

MOTHER'S MONTH OF MAY: Every day we receive multiple requests for fundamental items such as underwear and feminine hygiene products. You can help our neighbor women by contributing:

- Underwear (new)
- Feminine hygiene products
- Bras (new or gently used)
- Socks (new)
- Bags (tote bags, backpacks, hand bags, wallets)

A special thank you to Brian Lofgren, Center Administrator for two years. We appreciate all you did.



Welcome To New Board Members

Julie Jansen

Julie Jansen joins the board after having served as a Trinity Center volunteer since 2004. Julie and her "Georgetown Group" of friends provide sack lunches to Trinity Center every month to give to neighbors who need a meal. In 2007 they provided 1,099 lunches (plus many toiletry items), and since 2004 they've provided 3,446 lunches. As a member of the national catastrophe team for State Farm Insurance, Julie is often among the first to arrive following a major event such as Hurricane Katrina. Observing and participating in the efforts that go into assisting people recovering from a catastrophe is inspiring, exhausting and rewarding. Julie is married to Perry Gound, and they have one son, Mark Jansen. Julie is a member of St. David's Episcopal Church.

John Rouse

John Rouse also began volunteering with Trinity Center in 2004. He works the Wednesday morning shift, welcoming neighbors at the front desk, providing emotional support and informing them about community resources. John served in the U.S. Air Force from 1958 to 1983 and retired as a Lt. Colonel. He worked as a probation officer for Travis County from 1984 to 2003, serving primarily substance dependent and substance abusing probationers. John holds a Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor (LCDC) license, and he teaches DWI Education classes and Repeat Offender classes and facilitates a 12-Step Spirituality Aftercare group. John has been an Episcopalian since 1983 and a member of St. Alban's Church since 1994.

Beverly Silas

Beverly Silas comes to the Trinity Center board from one of our partner churches, First United Methodist. Beverly worked for AT&T for 31 years, retiring in 2000. From December 2001 through May 2004 Beverly served as the founding Executive Director of Envision Central Texas, facilitating the 70+ member board of directors to ensure that the visioning process drew input from every part of the regional five-county community. Beverly has served, and continues to serve, on a wide variety of boards in the community including at her church. Beverly is currently employed as the President and Chief Executive Officer of Concept Development & Planning, LLC, a privately owned public involvement firm headquartered in Austin.

Mark Warner

Mark Warner and his family have volunteered with the Trinity Center Bridge program for two years. They are members of St. David's Episcopal Church. Mark works as a Director to oversee natural resources investing for The University of Texas Investment Management Company (UTIMCO). Previously, Mark served as the Director of Corporate Development for PointOne, a telecommunications company, as Senior Vice President of Growth Capital Partners, L.P., an investment banking firm, and as Director of Domestic Finance of Enron Corporation, an energy company. Mark currently serves as a director of Quicksilver Resources, a publicly traded oil and gas exploration and production company. Mark is married to Cissy Warner, and they have two daughters.

Visit Our New Website At:
www.TrinityCenterAustin.org

Community Voice Mail

Imagine having no way to reach the important people in your life and no way for them to reach you. How could you find work? How could you keep in touch with family members? How could you hear back about housing opportunities, doctor's appointments, etc.? Life would be truly difficult. People who are "phone-less" may simply not earn enough income to pay for all their living expenses, including telephone or Internet service. To help remedy this situation, Trinity Center is proud to offer Community Voice Mail to neighbors who are taking steps to improve their lives. Community Voice Mail (CVM) is a service that provides neighbors with a personal voice mail box that they can access from any phone, twenty-four hours a day, offering a reliable and confidential way to communicate.


CVM is a nationwide service that has been in existence for fifteen years, partnering with more than 2,000 social service agencies in more than 40 cities. It helps more than 46,000 people a year and since 1991 has helped over 500,000 people to regain stability. CVM began in Austin with start-up funding by Impact Austin, and it is administered by the Austin/Travis County Mental Health and Mental Retardation Authority.

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Board of Directors

Trinity Center is a faith-based organization conducting programs that improve the spiritual, mental, and physical well-being of the poor and homeless in inner-city Austin. Trinity Center achieves its mission through volunteer opportunities that foster compassion, understanding, and acceptance of God's people who are homeless and poor; neighborly hospitality in a caring environment; collaboration with similarly-focused agencies, faith-based organizations, service providers, and partner congregations; and the responsible use of space provided by St. David's Episcopal Church.

Thanks to Barbara Jordan Supporters

Thank you to everyone who supported Trinity Center's Fifth Annual Barbara Jordan Luncheon. We appreciate the planners, donors, attendees, speakers, pray-ers, and others who contributed to the effort in any way. The speakers, including Jody Conrardt and Max Sherman, eloquently described Ms. Jordan's contributions to the community. Others educated the audience about Trinity Center, our neighbors, and how they could get involved. The event was fun-filled and moving, and we couldn't have done it without you.

Platinum Sponsors

- Hunton & Williams and The Rev. Lex and Zonnie Breckinridge
- Gene and Robin Shepherd
- The VanLeeuwen Family

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