



From the Executive Director

As we approach the holiday season, there are many things for which we can be thankful. This year has been both challenging and exciting as we continue to address the needs of those in our community. You have heard about our exciting building project and plans for our eventual move to Franklin Street and a permanent home. The generosity of professionals, through many donated services to help with the building redesign and our capital campaign, and the community, through volunteer hours on demolition work on the building and financial support to the campaign, have been wonderful. Through all of that, our work at the Outreach Center continues, with greater numbers of people requesting basic assistance to feed and clothe their families. November and December have become favorite months for me at the Center, as we see the overflowing generosity of people donating food, toys and time to help those around us. While it is crowded most of the time these days in the building, there is a sense that we are united in our desire to be helpful and that those working are just as blessed to be there as those that are receiving the assistance. May this season of thanksgiving and giving be a joyous one for each one of you, and may the blessings that we see in this building and our work be extended to your households.

Barbara Wilhelmy

A Call to Alms

The holiday season is upon us yet again. Thanksgiving, Hanukkah and Christmas among others are celebrated by many people in our community; however, some will not be able to celebrate this season. In the past 20 months, hundreds of families have lost their livelihood as jobs have been eliminated. Compounding the problem, Cluster funding sources have also shrunk. One example is the reduction in our grant for home heating oil assistance, which has been reduced by about 70%. We are facing a monumental task of providing toys and holiday boxes of food, helping with heating homes this winter, and providing other desperately needed assistance due to the current economy. **Can you help us meet their needs? Please consider what sacrifice you can make to our operating funds to help others endure their hardships this winter.**



New Signage for our New Building

In October, we officially made our name known in the neighborhood of our future home. We are grateful to Danielle Nelson of Hot Glue Media for the design of our new logo, which is now proudly displayed on our building at 57 North Franklin Street. Dani provided countless hours with our marketing team to develop the concept for our new logo, and we are very appreciative of her donated professional services to this project. Please visit www.hotgluemedia.com to learn more about their services. The sign was made and installed by Patrizi Designs, Pottstown.



In The Spirit: Giving Thanks

As the end of 2010 approaches, it is not too early to look back and give thanks to our God for the blessings He has bestowed upon us this year.

First of all, the Lord does answer the cries of the poor. He answers through the people who read this newsletter and who contribute over 16,000 hours of volunteer time, professional time, money and material goods to help our less fortunate brothers and sisters. We and our clients are thankful that so many people have allowed Him to work through them.

Secondly, while we are seeing many more first-time clients due to job losses and the worsening economy, we have managed to meet the most basic needs of food and clothing. While we did not have the funding to address all legitimate requests for financial assistance, we were able to help the most desperate cases and take great comfort in that.

Finally, the Lord has heard the steadfastness of the prayer and plea for a sufficiently sized and permanent home to our mission. We were pleased and thankful to meet the wonderful folks of the American Legion who sold us the building at 57 N. Franklin and to find the professional resources that have guided us each step of the way toward zoning approval and rehabilitating the building.

As we move forward into the new year, we note that we have launched our Cluster Capital Campaign to address the second part of our mission statement that focuses our efforts to help many families on the road to self sufficiency through appropriate programs, partnerships and referrals. Despite the economic downturn, we believe that the Lord is with us in this undertaking and will open hearts to this merciful cause. That faith, and the very gift of faith itself, is perhaps the greatest reason of all to give Him thanks in this His season.



The Road to Self-Sufficiency



Amy and Michael at the Outreach Center

Today many people with limited resources find themselves in situations they never would have imagined because of a saturated job market, exhausted unemployment benefits, or economic misfortune. For some, one month's rent or mortgage assistance in these times can make the difference between having a home or facing an eviction.

Thanks to the generosity of the community, the Pottstown Cluster's Financial Assistance Program is there for many of these families and individuals whose financial means cannot tolerate much challenge. The additional good news is that for those living on the edge of well being, the road to self-sufficiency can be a short one, requiring a one-time helping hand when a single misfortune renders them in desperate straits. Such is the story of Michael. Michael called the Cluster a few months ago to request assistance for one month's rent. Michael had permitted a friend of his into his apartment, and upon his exit, it was discovered the envelope containing his monthly rent was missing. Michael receives a fixed income and had no way to compensate for his loss. *(continued on page 3)*

Holiday Toys

In addition to the plans to distribute food baskets at the holidays, we will do our usual toy program for children. This year we have almost 300 children signed up for the program, ranging from birth through high school. We welcome toy donations for this program, including gift certificates for the older children. If you want to get involved in this program and provide a special holiday for a child, please contact Vicki at the Outreach Center.

The Road to Self-Sufficiency (continued)

Michael became aware of the services provided by the Pottstown Cluster while living in a community halfway house, and he called to inquire about eligibility requirements for financial assistance. At the time of his inquiry, financial assistance was available and he received assistance for one month's rent from the Cluster.

Fast forward two months, and Michael is self sufficient. Michael has been on time with rental payments and payments for his other bills. Most importantly, he is maintaining his sobriety and is attending regular support meetings.

He credits his success with having the assistance with his rent, which alleviated a stress that for him seemed insurmountable and got him back on his feet. He also

stated he is more cautious of whom he allows in his home.

The Pottstown Cluster has been an invaluable resource to households that need one month's assistance to maintain ongoing expenses. Michael is one of many who are able to get back on track financially and be successful with a **"helping hand"** from the Cluster. Michael's genuine expression of "thank you" to the Pottstown Cluster also goes out to the community as well for making it possible through the support provided us in this mission.

From The Editor's Desk

This issue was made possible by the generosity of three Pennsylvania State University students through their business writing class. In this class they were given a project to help out a smaller business by producing deliverables. Bryant Wilhelmy, Brett Cox, and Andrew Egan all worked on this newsletter for the Cluster.



Holiday Food Basket Plans

This past year we have seen a steady increase in clients for the Food Pantry. Each year we offer a holiday basket to families requesting assistance, with all the fixings for a Christmas Day dinner. Last Christmas we gave out 225 Holiday boxes. This year we are anticipating a need for and preparing to serve 250 families. As of the end of October, 148 families have applied to receive a meal. Every day a few more families come in to register. Helping us to meet our goal and provide a full meal for families on this special day would be a great assistance to us.

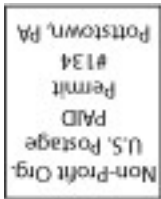
Here is a list of our most pressing

needs for donations to complete these baskets. We can always use grocery store gift cards as well.

- Sweet Potatoes- 650 of 20-40oz cans
- Canned Corn-450-15.25 oz
- Brown Sugar-200-1 lb
- Pumpkin Pies-250
- Stuffing-200-Stove Top type
- Butter-250- 1lb
- Mashed Potato Mix-400
- Rolls-315 packs
- Gravy-300 10.5 oz cans
- Mushroom Soup-225 - 10.75 cans



If you are interested in helping to meet any of these needs, please call Sherrie at the Outreach Center. If you are interested in helping to distribute the boxes we will be doing that on Monday December 20 from 8-12 at the Outreach Center. Thanks for your help.



Newsletter

Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities
137 Walnut Street
Pottstown, PA 19464

PottstownCluster
OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Nourishing Lives. Strengthening Families.



137 Walnut Street
Pottstown, PA 19464
Phone: (610) 970.5995 Fax: (610) 970.6385
clusteroutreach@verizon.net
www.pottstowncluster.org

Staff:

Executive Director	Barbara Wilhelmy
Pantry Manager	Sherrie Fazekas
Meals Coordinator	Diane Darby
Caseworker	Amy Rossman
Receptionist	Mercedes Jackson
Volunteer/ Clothes Closet Coordinator	Vicki Bumstead

Emergency Food Pantry:

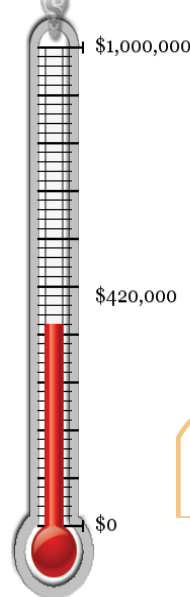
Wednesday and Friday
9:00 AM–12:00 Noon

Clothing and Household Items:

Appointments Tuesday and Thursday

Capital Campaign Facts

As of mid-October, progress towards our \$1 million goal



Did you know that a substantial portion of the nominal \$1 million dollar Cluster Capital Campaign goal will be used over the next three years to develop the programs and hire the case workers required to realize the dream of supporting clients on the road to self sufficiency? Please visit the website for up-to-date information about our progress on the project and our overall financial plans for the project.

RAISING HOPES

Building Dreams