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OPERATION MANNA

2006



Learning music and making friends at The Lantern Community Music School.

Calgary church starts affordable, fun music school for all ages

An affordable music school for Calgary residents living in the inner communities of Inglewood and Ramsay is bursting at the seams after 18 months of operation.

For as little as \$3 a session, students are being exposed to the instruments of guitar, piano, voice and drums. Recently, dance, drama and drawing have also been added to the church-affiliated program.

"We continue to be excited about the possibilities," said Ed Top, pastor of The Lantern Community Church. "Many families facing financial challenges simply can't afford \$25 an hour for music lessons."

Top said the school has given students an opportunity to discover whether or not they have a natural inclination for an instrument without having to fork over big bucks in the process.

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WHAT IS OPERATION MANNA?

Operation Manna is one of the ways in which Diaconal Ministries Canada (DMC) is partnering with churches, diaconates and community ministries to bring the healing love of Christ into neighbourhoods across Canada. Together we are transforming communities in Christ.

Operation Manna provides development services and funding that supports the growth of new community ministries. In 2006, Operation Manna (OM) has the privilege of working in partnership with 20 projects coast to coast – the largest number of partners in OM history (listed on page 4). DMC celebrates new partnerships in Calgary, Kamloops and Abbotsford following the recent expansion of Operation Manna in Western Canada.

Stories from several partners are highlighted here for you to read. It is DMC's goal to raise \$220,000 during the annual May offering for Operation Manna to support the work underway in these communities. DMC encourages you to pray for these projects; seek out a project in or near your community; and, consider how God may be calling you and your church to connect with people in need of Christ's love and compassion.

Music school

Continued from p. 1.

He admits it's a little unusual for a church to be involved in community music lessons, but this is the heart of The Lantern's vision. From the church's inception in 2004, its members were committed to not only knowing their community, but serving, inspiring and loving it too.

As they discerned the vision of this new church, they poured all their energy into being Christ's hands and feet in the neighbourhood. Members joined associations, clubs and organizations; they volunteered wherever there was a need; and, the church sponsored activities that drew the community together to celebrate and get to know one another. The music school was one such endeavour and now has served almost 100 residents.

“When I see the music school in action, I know that ... we, too, are miracle-workers.”

“I always said I was jealous of Jesus,” added Top. “If our members could raise people from the dead, heal people, bless them like Jesus did, who wouldn't be attracted to our church and our great miraculous God? However, when I see the music school in action, I know that as his followers, we, too, are miracle-workers.”

The church discovered that much more than just music lessons were beginning to take shape. Christian teachers and students were starting to bond and friendships were developing.

“My job as a pastor is to be as creative as possible, putting Holy Spirit-filled people in settings where people far from God hang out. What can't God do with that!”

The sessions run for six weeks and then stop for a two-week break. “If the classes go well, students have the option of continuing for another six weeks,” Top said. “The classes are a fabulous way for community folks to get to know each other.”



Time Out for Teen Moms: participants, staff and volunteers celebrate at Christmas.

There are no limits on how wide God reaches to touch the lives of others.

When Iona Buisman and a team of volunteers from Immanuel CRC in Brampton, Ont., invited four teenage mothers to participate in the Time Out for Teen Moms (TOTM) program, they could not imagine the circle of people who would be affected by the growth of this ministry.

Within a year the number of young moms

participating grew to 16. The change in these young women affected countless more people. A young woman who had lost custody of her daughter gained the skills and confidence to be a great mom, and her family is being rebuilt.

The number of volunteers continues to grow as more teenage moms attend. For each volunteer there is the blessing of receiving more in new friendships and experiences than they

ever expected.

Friends and even strangers have been touched by these young women. Through their time with TOTM, the young moms have been learning to see beyond their own needs and at Christmas they made greeting cards and cookies that outreach workers at a local agency could distribute to their clients.

This community of caring continues to grow and reach into the lives of many people.

An invitation to the feast

The parable in Luke 14 paints a picture of an impatient host waiting and longing for his house to be filled with guests.

The eventual feast is shared by a gathering of people who probably had not received invitations like this one before.

So it is with many of Operation Manna's partners. They seek out and welcome in many who are seldom invited to the feast.

Operation Manna has been supporting “meal” ministries for many years. It began with a collective kitchen at First CRC in London, Ont., in the late 1990s. Their experience was shared with the deacons at New Life CRC in Guelph, Ont. They in turn have been sharing their experience with nearby churches in Listowel, Exeter and beyond through workshops at various Days of Encouragement.

A collective kitchen offers the opportunity for people to learn healthy and economical cooking skills while preparing food together in groups of two, four, eight or more!

As Derek Miedema says, his experience with the Collective Kitchens at New Life CRC went much further than broadening his cooking skills.

“It reminded me that there is joy in cooking together, and fellowship around food,” says Derek. “Whether I made a masterpiece or a massive mess, collective kitchen was always a great time of growing in community.”



Derek Miedema shares in the joy of cooking with others.

YOUNG MOMS GAIN SKILLS, FRIENDS

reaching into the community

MANY HANDS BUILD YOUTH CENTRE

doors open in spring



High school students and volunteers contribute to final renovations of a new youth centre in Brighton, Ont.

Before the final coat of paint is applied to the wall at the entrance of the new youth centre in Brighton, Ont., everyone who has been involved will have an opportunity to write their name on the wall.

Fortunately it is a large wall because the number of people involved is staggering.

There are few businesses, churches and service organizations in this small town that have not in some way put their mark on the development of the youth centre. Students from the local high school have been learning trades and contributing their labour to the renovation project.

The doors will open this spring to young people in need of a safe, positive

place to have fun and interact.

When Fellowship CRC in Brighton undertook a Community Opportunity Scan with Diaconal Ministries Canada (see sidebar) in 2004, they discovered that many public leaders and service providers were concerned about the lack of recreational alternatives for young people in the area, particularly those youth who often cannot or do not access other community programs for economic or social reasons.

God continues to richly bless the initiative of Fellowship CRC to seek out the common needs and interests of the local community, and draw together its resources to create a safe and enriching place for young people in the community.

Sharing God's heart in Thunder Bay

It is Valentine's Day at the Thunder Bay Christian Community Centre, but not too much is said about it. Many of the people gathered here this morning have experienced broken marriages and relationships.

The faces around the room are familiar to the staff because they have journeyed together with people from the Centre's neighbourhood for many years.

Sonya Cahais, coordinator of the food hamper program, is writing each person's name on their bag of groceries. She draws hearts around their names or decorates the bag with small hearts.

She gently touches a young woman on the hand as she finishes drawing and says, "You know God loves you very much." She adds with a smile, "You know that, don't you?"

Families involved in the Number Fun

class also experience the support and encouragement of the Centre's staff.

A community like this one grows where people are able to share together their concerns and struggles, as well as their triumphs and joys.

Operation Manna's partners choose to walk alongside people who experience the brokenness and isolation created by poverty. They are the community builders who listen, who share, who teach, and who wait patiently to celebrate God's grace and the gift of hope in another person's life.

“Operation Manna's partners... are the community builders”

A COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY SCAN

Finding Opportunities

New and established churches are discovering creative and collaborative ways to share the message of God's love with their neighbours.

The process of discerning those opportunities also requires creativity and collaboration. In Northeast Edmonton, three Christian Reformed churches—Trinity, Bethel Community and Maranatha—participated in a series of Sunday evening services called “Walking with the Poor.” Organized with the help of Diaconal Ministry Developer Anna Feddes, each service offered time for discussion and reflection on how to turn awareness into action.

As those attending the services learned, there are already many positive activities happening in their neighbourhoods, and numerous opportunities for individuals and the churches to come alongside and contribute to building healthier, safer and more just communities.

A desire to better know their community has led several churches to undertake a Community Opportunity Scan. This DMC resource outlines a comprehensive process of getting to know the people, organizations, resources and needs of a community first-hand. With this information a church can discern unique opportunities to:

- Create awareness of local issues;
- Engage in community partnerships;
- Evaluate existing programs; and,
- Begin new initiatives.

How is God calling your church to love your neighbours? DMC staff and Diaconal Ministry Developers have resources available that will help your church discover the opportunities in your neighbourhood.

may open a door for our message.” —Colossians 4:2-3.

OPERATION MANNA

Coast to Coast

*Thank you
for your
gifts that
bless
Operation
Manna's
partners and
the people
they serve.*

Operation Manna is a program of Diaconal Ministries Canada providing funding and development services to churches and agencies.



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Abbotsford, BC: The Cheerful Giving ministry will equip and encourage volunteers in their service to residents at Ebenezer Home.

Bancroft, ON: The Circle of Friends Pregnancy Care Centre supports women throughout their pregnancy.

Brampton, ON: Time Out for Teen Moms is a partnership between Youth Unlimited Toronto and Immanuel CRC.

Brighton, ON: Commitment from several local churches, Northumberland Youth for Christ, and municipal leaders contributed to the opening of a new youth centre.

Calgary, AB: The Lantern Community Music School provides opportunities for families facing financial challenges to participate in music, art, drama and dance programs.

Cambridge, ON: Cara's Hope is a residential ministry for young women facing a crisis pregnancy.

Dunnville, ON: The Haldimand Community Life Centre supports young women through the challenges of a crisis pregnancy and single-parenthood.

Flamborough, ON: Drummond House provides temporary transitional housing and support services to women and their children.

Georgetown, ON: Georgetown CRC is offering "Just Me & the Kids," to help parents and children dealing with the pain of divorce and separation.

Guelph, ON: Members of the Collective Kitchens at New Life CRC prepare nutritious meals together while building a community of care and fellowship.

Hamilton, ON: Homestead's Director of Education is working with communities to develop sustainable housing options for people with mental illness.

Hamilton, ON: RE-create is an arts studio available to street-involved youth in downtown Hamilton.

Kamloops, BC: The Edge is a ministry of Sahali Fellowship CRC that seeks to connect with people living in the North Shore community of Kamloops.

Listowel, ON: Home with a Heart is a 12 week training and mentoring program for teenage single moth-

ers offered by the Upper Deck Youth Centre.

London, ON: The Sudanese Ministry Centre provides a valuable meeting place and training opportunities to members of the Sudanese community.

St. Catharines, ON: Camp SHOUT gives neighbourhood kids a summer day camp experience that is supported by area CRCs.

Stratford, ON: The House of Blessing's new maternity home, Sara's Place, welcomes young women in need of shelter and support during their pregnancy.

Thunder Bay, ON: Preschoolers learn basic numeracy skills during Number Fun Family Math at the Thunder Bay Christian Community Centre.

Winnipeg, MB: Hope-Links Network promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities into the life and worship of the church.

ServiceLink connects volunteers from across Canada with opportunities to serve close to home or aboard.

**Community ministry resources and contact information for
DMC staff and Diaconal Ministry Developers in your area
are available at:**

www.diaconalministries.com