

Project URGE, Inc. – 2008 Annual Report

Project URGE (**U**rban **R**evitalization, **G**od **E**xperienced)

BREAD RUN:

The Bread Run Team has now been operational for five years. In 2008 there were approximately ten families and/or individuals who continued the weekly Saturday and every other Sunday deliveries of baked goods and desserts to Recovery House of Rochester, Women's Place (CFC), Nielsen House, Outreach Temple Home Mission, Sanctuary House, Mercy Residential, Grace Community Village, Eastern Service Workers, Francis Center and if there were remaining goods, they are taken to House of Mercy, St. Joseph's Hospitality House and the Open Door Mission. This team consists of folks primarily from Crosswinds Wesleyan Church in Canandaigua, who pick up the items from Tops in Canandaigua



and then journey to Rochester for the deliveries. The round trip is approximately 60 miles, taking about two hours or so. This year service was halted a couple of times due to Tops realigning priorities of which non-profits would receive the goods in Canandaigua. Working with Ms. Graim in the Buffalo offices, we are now picking up the baked goods at the Lake Avenue location. This continues to be a ministry appreciated by the many organizations we serve, who in turn, serve under-resourced neighborhoods.

CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES DEVELOPMENT:

Helping churches to partner with **summer camp activities** has been part of the Project URGE strategy since the year we began. The first step is making churches aware of the opportunity to either host a summer camp for two or three days or to assist with volunteers, financial camp scholarships or



with drinks and snacks. These opportunities primarily exist within our Project URGE "family" of affiliates such as, Community Lutheran Ministry, Rochester Family Mission and Grace Community Village. We promote this through our general meetings, newsletter, website and through our bi-monthly e-briefs.

Throughout the year there are numerous opportunities within our affiliated organizations and in Project URGE with training, mentoring, angel-to-angel and after-school programs working with under-resourced children. Since many of our volunteers work during the week, it is often difficult to secure those who can serve consistently in these areas. We continue working to build new relationships as well as exploring the possibilities of college student internships and experienced retired workers as possible solutions to this problem.



In March we held our first **Urban/Suburban Youth Mission** event. This inaugural event had youth from five urban and suburban churches coming together to volunteer at soup kitchens, preparing and serving a community breakfast, sorting clothing and renovating an older church. The day concluded with bowling and pizza. We seek to create new relationships through work, discussion, prayer and

worship and recreation. Both youth leaders and volunteers expressed their affirmation of support for the weekend and a willingness to continue to support this effort.

The second project was having the youth from six urban/suburban churches organize and conduct the 2008 Concert of Praise. It was held at Grace United Methodist Church in November. The worship service included praise songs, dancing, prayer, drama and more. The goal of this ministry continues to be to involve the youth in service-oriented ministry, while at the same time working at breaking down the barriers of poverty and race in the name of Jesus Christ.



Kids learn about art from David Haygood, Jr. at Gallery One in the Executive Office Building

Late in 2008 we began the **Saturday Sonshine Program**, which occurs twice a month on Saturday mornings. Hosting the program at Grace United Methodist Church was a logical tie in to the WIN Project (noted later) and with the Deacon's Table Breakfast. While the age group is generally 9-12, it is open to kids 6-16 yrs. of age. This is a collaborative approach with Grace Community Village (WIN), Child Evangelism Fellowship and Project URGE. It is educational, entertaining and edifying. The program consists of a free breakfast, Bible study and field trips to a variety of places, such as parks, museums, hiking trails and art galleries.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & 4 POINT PLAN

General Meetings – in an effort to communicate what's happening in our circles, build relationships and share information, each general meeting features one or two organizations discussing their needs and what they are focused on. Greater participation from our affiliated organizations will be required going forward in 2009. Not having organizations represented at meetings costs time, money and in turn dilutes the goals and objectives of maintaining effective collaborations.

We continue meeting once a month with FACT (Faith and Communities Together) and CUPP (Community University Partnership Project). Project URGE was part of this consortium of organizations with Foodlink as the lead organization for the Capital Compassion Fund (more later on this subject). After the CCF grant process was finished we continued to work on ways colleges can work with FBOs and CBOs in the community. Additionally, training sessions correlated to capacity building are being established and will be presented in spring of 2009. Project URGE will participate in the Collaboration training session and distribute the information to it's organizations affiliates.

While the "4 Point Plan" (see past articles and www.projecturge.org for more information) continues to be slow in materializing, this effort continues to be a priority for our organization. The 4 Points refer to four areas designated within the "poverty crescent" of Rochester. Two of the four areas are working in collaboration with a number of organizations that will serve these areas in integral ways. One of the groups established is **WIN** (Wellness In the Neighborhood), with the lead organization being Grace Community Village, working to build involvement by people living and working in those specific neighborhoods. WIN is funded by the Greater Rochester Health Foundation, which is looking at a grassroots approach to Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) that applies to creating healthier neighborhoods. This encompasses a wholistic approach to solving the challenges confronting urban centers, which Project URGE had first encountered through Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) leaders.

The second collaborative we have been involved with is the **South West Community Roundtable**, which also meets once a month at School #29, off Genesee St. Their mission is: To provide enriched and supportive school and community environments for youth, families, and seniors by promoting cooperation among service providers who have complementary objectives as they relate to holistic “community health” (physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, educational, nutritional, economic, environmental, and safety).

It is our hope the two remaining areas will begin an organic process to build their core plans by being inspired and learning from these efforts preceding. There has never been a more appropriate time to focus on building stronger alliances through a collaborative approach. Our advantage is in the fact that Project URGE takes the posture of a servant and seeks ways that we may strengthen others, by way of our resourceful connections and talents being applied where needed.

FORTH (Faith Organizations Restoring and Transitioning the Homeless): After two years this plan remains to materialize. The stumbling block to starting this program is one of finances. We have submitted two grant applications (07 & 08) for this program, but were denied. In late 2008 we found a board member who will champion this proposal. It is based on the successful program from *Bridge Communities*, in Illinois, which began with one family and has successfully expanded its impact for the past twenty years. They continue to transition homeless families into independent living with no government support.

Hearts In Homes – This program has been in discussion for quite some time (though not initially under this name). A core group has been meeting since late last winter to revive and simplify the plan, using some elements of the FORTH plan (from Bridge Communities) to strengthen the viability of the program. A flow chart was constructed of obtaining a home, renovating, distribution of funds and implanting the sustainability of the program was near completion. Recently, we met with a city official, working with the Focused Investment Strategy, who is part of Economic Development. Grace Community Village and WIN have been involved in discussions toward the development of the community surrounding Grace UMC. It makes sense to consider involvement in areas where our connections to the community are the stronger.

COLLECTION of Clothing & Food – “URGEncy Collection”:

The 2008 collection of clothing and food was again held in tandem with the URGEnt Presentation and Tour. These items were distributed to organizations dedicated to serving the under-resourced in the City of Rochester. Our success in this effort has remained steady, though we would like to increase the amount of food we collect – noting that the food collection has only been touted for the last two years. The results were as follows (we continue to collect more):

Womens - 10 bags of 15 each or 150 coats
Mens - 8 bags of 15 each or 120 coats
Kids - 5 bags of 25 each or 125 coats
Total coats: 395
Hats - 100
Mittens/gloves - 50 pair, overwhelmingly children's
Scarves - 50
Blankets - 5 bags of 5 ea. or 25 blankets
Sheets- 1 bag, Towels - 1 bag, Shoes - 5 pair, Clothes - 8 bags



New items: (provided to homeless shelters for Christmas gifts)
Hats, mittens & scarves - store bought and many hand-made
1 hoodie, 1 electric blanket and 40 pairs men's socks

Distributed to: Catholic Family Center's Sanctuary House & Francis Center, Salvation Army, Grace Community Village, Mercy Residential Services, Community Lutheran Ministries and a handful of walk-ups with compelling stories. Many additional items came in after the collection, which will be distributed to organizations serving those in need as well.

CONCERT of PRAISE:



In November the Project URGE praise concert was held at Grace United Methodist Church, on Driving Park Ave. The event was youth-led with six urban/suburban churches involved and approximately 300 attending.

As in past years the worship service included praise songs, drama, prayer, dance and mime, proving to be an inspiring service of honoring our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, absent of the typical divisions we find in many of our churches.

FUNDRAISING:

Churches and individual donors continue being our main source of funding. In June of 2008 we held our first dinner-fundraiser, which helped raise over \$2000. In the fall we participated in the Walk for Prosperity, organized by the Let Justice Roll organization, which brought in nearly \$400. Our impact and depth around initiatives that go after the systemic causes of poverty are compromised by due to lack of funding for the programs. Our ability to hire a full-time director also hinges on being able to obtain additional support in 2009. The number of individual donors consistently contributing amounts of \$100 or less has increased in late 2008.

GRANT & RESEARCH TEAM:

- Compassion Capital Fund Grant, FACT (Faith and Communities Together) & CUPP (Community University Partnership Project)
 - a. In regard to the Capital Compassion Fund Grant, we originally worked in regard to planning and technical assistance with 5 organizations. One dropped out of the funding and technical assistance process after two or three consultations.
 - b. The remaining organizations received benefits of funding, technical assistance, consultation and a series of classes which all correlated to capacity building. This work was the culmination of working with Foodlink as the key agency, in consortium with a number of other area organizations and universities. Most of the work Project URGE accomplished was also in tandem with Professor, Len Erb, of Roberts Wesleyan College.
 - c. While working directly with the organizations created an additional revenue source for Project URGE; however, it also placed a burden of time constraints, which slowed work on other initiatives. In addition, it does not take into account the many hours of meetings over a three-year period, which led to the actual commencement of the grant work. No funds were received to support these efforts.
 - d. Participation in the grant work has brought us into view of many Rochester organizations while creating important and stronger alliances, not only for Project URGE, but for our affiliate

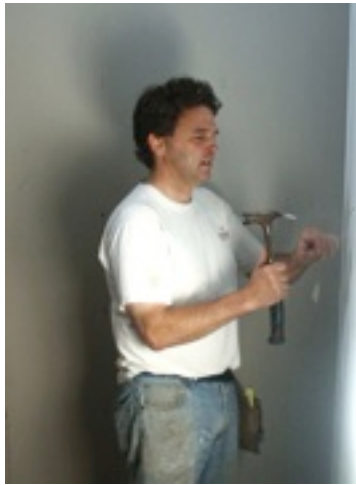
organizations as well. The work we performed was timely and professional, as well as sacrificial. Foodlink deserves much credit for their perseverance and leadership.

- e. The future hope of securing additional funding to continue the work of this consortium has been impaired due to the current economic climate. This obviously put a damper on the potential funding that could have benefited many Rochester FBO's and CBO's, that were not chosen to be participants in the CCF Grant by the Federal Government. This also could have helped in sustaining the momentum of the progress realized by some who received the benefit of the grant.
- f. We are presently trying to put together a list of things we can do together to benefit the community without funding. This was a point that I made early on in our discussions. We also continue to ask, "What can this consortium of organizations do as a voice of advocacy for grassroots efforts involved daily in serving the under-resourced?"
- g. Some participants remaining at the table are Foodlink, Nazareth College, U of R, Roberts Wesleyan, MCC, Progress Rochester and ABC.

In 2009 we'll be looking to revamp this team and find new leadership and direction. There was some discussion in the past of finding a person to write grants for the Project URGE collaborative; however, the logistics and more serious dialogue among the grassroots leaders will need to take place for this to become a reality.

JACOB'S LADDER:

The Jacob's Ladder Team has been active for over five years, painting, patching walls, dry-walling, insulating, making bike racks, scraping floors, yard clean-up, sorting and delivering coats, building shelves, and much more. The team centers around helping to restore and renovate facilities of organizations who serve the under-resourced and who operate on highly restricted budgets. In 2008 the Jacob's Ladder team worked at Risego, R Community Bikes, Parsells Ave. Community Church, RAIHN (Rochester Interfaith Hospitality Network), Community Lutheran Ministry, Seedtime Harvest (Wayne Co.), Eastern Service Workers Association and Women's Place (Catholic Family Center). The 240 work hours saved these organizations an estimated \$8000, which helps their finances go toward the needs of others. A



priority is given to those demonstrating a willingness to collaborate with others affiliated with Project URGE.

PRAYER TEAM:

The prayer team's responsibility is to pray for the organizations, initiatives and people working and volunteering with Project URGE and the collaborative affiliates. They pray for shalom and city transformation. The prayer requests are sent to the team as they are received. Prayer Team members have specific prayer times individually and they pray prior to each Project URGE meeting and/or event. Communication between team members occurs primarily through the internet or by phone. The prayers are focused on various Project URGE initiatives, the city, organizations and individuals affiliated with Project URGE. Our hope is to increase the size of this team and meet corporately more often for 2009.

PUBLICITY (includes **URGEnt Presentation & Tour**, Newsletters, Website, Letter Writing, Booklets, Brochures, DVDs & Speaking Engagements):

In late 2008 we began preparing for a complete overhaul of our website. People will find it more “user friendly”, as well as, easier to access important information regarding meetings, events, volunteer opportunities, programs and follow links to our affiliated organizations. We are relying more upon our website in the coming year for several reasons which include: 1) the information relating to our friends at the affiliated organizations changes frequently throughout the year, 2) amount of time it requires to compile the booklet changes and 3) the cost of producing the booklets. Since the booklets were very helpful to many in the past (especially those with little or no internet exposure, we will consider producing additional booklets every two to three years. In 2008 we distributed approximately 50 booklets, nearly 200 brochures and about 10 DVDs. We also mailed hundreds of cards, letters and invitations to social events, seminars and community collaborative workshops. Our website, booklets and brochures provide information to groups and individuals about affiliate organization needs and what volunteer opportunities exist if they chose to become involved. Our E-briefs (e-mail alerts) are sent approximately twice a month to approximately 200 organizations and individuals to keep participants informed about needs and upcoming events.

The “URGEnt Presentation & Tour was once again held on the first Saturday in November which is the sixth year we have sponsored this event. This allows the opportunity for people to talk with representatives from twenty organizations and ministries and to visit some of the facilities. There were approximately 30 participating in the event. Despite our increased effort in advertising, phone calls and



e-mails, turnout was lower than the typical 55-70 that had attended in past years. This is the first year we’ve met in the city and the economic downturn had begun. It should be pointed out that the number of people attending does not always relate to a higher percentage of involvement. This year reflected a higher number of participants from church congregations. We had hoped that hosting the event from Grace UMC on Driving Park would elevate the number participating from urban churches. This clearly had no impact on that focus. Once again, approximately 80% of the participants were unaware of the majority of these organizations and ministries prior to

attending the presentation. The organizations have the primary responsibility for tracking their sign-ups and following up on prospective volunteers. All but two participants found the tour both informational and helpful in learning about the various organizations. Some still remain involved with volunteering since the very first tour held six years ago!

We continue keeping our community, organizations, volunteers, public servants and donors informed as to what has transpired and what is about to take place through our newsletter. This is both mailed out and posted on our website. In 2008 we cut back to issuing two newsletters due to the cost and placing a greater financial emphasis on what we felt were priority items.

SOCIAL EVENTS:

Our volunteers’ work together all year long. In keeping with our mission of breaking down barriers and creating relationships, we are intentional about social events that help us become better acquainted and provide an opportunity to celebrate our efforts to reflect God’s “kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.”

In March 08 approximately forty people attended our annual dinner and fellowship at the Fairport United Methodist Church, where people had a chance to acquaint themselves with other volunteers. The event consisted of prayer, music, and icebreakers, along with a presentation on what took place in that weekend with the Urban-Suburban Youth Mission activities. The Fairport UMC Youth Group once again did a terrific job of cooking and serving as well. The proceeds went to their summer Reach Mission trip

In July we held our annual picnic in Ellison Park, where about fifty adults and children attended from a variety of organizations and churches involved with Project URGE, along with guests. We had canoe rides, games, great food and lively conversation. Bobo the Clown (from Clowning Glory Ministries) entertained the children and even some adults with face painting, games and prizes.



VOLUNTEER COORDINATING:

Project URGE organized service projects and volunteer opportunities for approximately 500 plus volunteers from high schools, colleges, church groups and individuals to organizations such as: Community Lutheran Ministry, Eastern Service Workers, Foodlink, Grace Community Village, His Hands Nursing, His Branches, Homeless & Housing along with Catholic Family Center's Resource Center and Elder Care, Mercy Residential, Outreach Temple, Parsells Ave. Community Church, Volunteers of America, Risego, Inc., and others.

The groups serving have been from Williamson High School, Project URGE Youth Mission, the Baptist group of Lott-Carey, students from Roberts Wesleyan, R.I.T. and Nazareth colleges, as well as a church group from Tennessee. Several youth groups from various churches hosting the 30 Hour Famine participated in helping many organizations. We also continue to find suitable service opportunities for families and individuals on Project URGE teams as well.

Williamson High School continues to be a major highlight each year. For four years their service day has been a win/win for our affiliated organizations and the school. They typically have visited twice a year, serving 7-8 organizations each time.

At a recent Nazareth College volunteer fair there was a young woman signing up to volunteer with one of the organizations she served at the very first Williamson High School service day in 2005!



We find ourselves receiving more calls and e-mails requesting this service. One of the primary goals of Project URGE is to introduce people to ways they can become involved and serve others.

A conservative estimate of value in regard to hours of In-Kind-Service volunteering for Project URGE totaled \$50,446 (not including the 500 plus volunteers we coordinated who served other organizations).

A BRIEF GLIMPSE INTO 2009:

The economic downturn seems to be on the lips of everyone these days. People are genuinely fearful of their future. Most organizations will need to trim their budgets and many non-profits will suffer severe financial hits. On the other hand, we, as Christians now have one of our greatest opportunities to live out our call.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Philippians 2:3 & 4

“It really boils down to this: all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects us all indirectly.” - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Hebrews 10:23 & 24

In 2009 we'll begin by lining up service projects for three groups, including Williamson High School once again. Project URGE will continue its participation in the WIN Project, SW Community Roundtable, FACT (Faith and Communities Together), along with our various teams like Jacob's Ladder and the Bread Run. There is excitement around the Saturday Sunshine Program and the promise that it holds for children and youth to experience biblical relevance in tandem with entertaining activities. Our goal is filling their lives with positive reinforcement that will deter their involvement in unhealthy lifestyles. Additionally developing more high impact ministry efforts around this program such as, Hearts In Homes, FORTH, Jobs for Life and the Parent Project around these efforts will further stabilize families and contribute to transforming neighborhoods.

Project URGE will be continuing it's annual URGEnt Presentation & Tour, as well as our coat and food drive, the first Saturday in November, in an effort to help sustain our affiliated organizations with goods and volunteers, as well as prospective financial supporters.

In closing, we once again plead for churches to join all of us in working together to discover ways they can aptly and passionately serve. “Love your neighbor as yourself. If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.”

Your support will continue to keep Project URGE's current programs operational. Despite the economic illness worldwide our belief is that in 2009 supporters of our mission will rally to allow us to dig deeper into the systemic causes of poverty. We have the plans and much of the expertise. Our hindrance is financial. If you currently are a donor or volunteer, we offer our sincere thanks. For those standing on the sidelines, we invite you to participate with us. Join us to see what God can do through you and in you!



Our mission:

Connecting and uniting churches, organizations and individuals to work together in breaking down barriers of poverty, race and despair in the name of Jesus Christ.

1 John 3:18 “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”

Goals & Objectives:

- 1. Assist churches** to unite in ministering together, in an effort to promote and spread the Gospel message by working on problems that deal with (a) poverty, (b) racism and (c) raising awareness of opportunities to serve and helping to facilitate the involvement of more volunteers in a variety of ministry settings.
- 2. Provide information** listing ministry titles, needs and contacts. Collect and distribute materials that may be helpful to ministries and organizations affiliated with the Project URGE family.
- 3. Be a catalyst for church partnering.** Linking those who are willing to serve in specific areas, with those who might benefit most with regard to available strengths in resources, talents and gifting.
- 4. Create a forum for dialogue** on how to implement change and forming subgroups to work on specific initiatives.
- 5. Encourage cross-cultural exchange**, both in worship, teen ministry and outreach in general.
- 6. Establish workshops**, seminars & task force meetings as needed, in regard to the development of the various ministries and Project URGE itself.

Matthew 5:15 “Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds, and praise your Father in heaven.”

Respectively submitted,

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Director/Founder

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