

Christmas Newsletter 2008

Volume 2, Issue 3



People line up to receive food and hear the Gospel message

On November 23rd, the Family Center received 150 boxes of food and frozen chicken from CityTeam Ministries, a partner organization, which were distributed to local families. All afternoon, a team of volunteers unloaded, stacked, and distributed boxes to people lined up far beyond the front gate of the Family Center.

In our neighborhood, the weakening economy and drastic rent increases mean that many parents must worry about providing basic food items for their children. During the distribution, board member Hector Barraza shared the Gospel to encourage people to place their trust in Jesus Christ in these times of

uncertainty. He described the new life that Christ offers us and pointed out that though the food being distributed would be gone after a week, the food Jesus has would last forever. After his message, families were given the opportunity to indicate on response cards if they were interested in receiving prayer, having a new life in Jesus, speaking to someone about God, joining a Bible study, or finding a church.

Prayers for open hearts were dramatically answered: 47 people indicated that they wanted new life in Jesus, six expressed interest in talking with someone to learn more about Him, and 18 wanted to join a Bible study. Sixty-four individuals

also asked for prayer for illness in their families, sudden deaths, domestic conflict, unemployment, and spiritual darkness.

Since the Thanksgiving food distribution, Family Center volunteers, along with neighborhood young adults, have been busy following up with people who indicated they wanted a relationship with Jesus. These bearers of the Gospel have been warmly welcomed by many, and even had the opportunity to pray with several individuals to accept Christ's mercy in their lives. Praise God for raising up a rich harvest in our neighborhood, and for using our small efforts to reap eternal blessings!

Thanksgiving Outreach by Mia Sakai

Parent Appreciation by Eron Eguavoen

The Family Center held its first Parent Appreciation event on December 7th, and it was a huge success! Many of the parents we have been building relationships with over the years, about 30+ people, came to enjoy a night dedicated to celebrating them.

During the event, parents had a chance to hear the powerful testimony of how

board member Hector Barraza came to Christ. His background is similar to that of many in the audience. The parents were deeply moved by his story, and we know that God used his words to minister to people's hearts.



Parents listen as Hector shares his testimony and the Gospel

Following the testimony, each parent was honored through words of affirmation for their hard work and dedication to their children by a staff member, as well as given a gift from the Family Center. Some of the parents both surprised and touched us by spontaneously taking that opportunity to thank the Family Center for the

ways it has impacted them and the lives of their children. We give praise to God for how He is answering our prayers to draw adults to Himself and to help us connect more deeply with them.

Rent Crisis Update and Looking Ahead

by Matt and Susan Martin

The property company that owns the majority of housing in our neighborhood has been steadily raising rents by large amounts over this past year, making it less and less affordable for the low-income working families we serve. Many of our volunteers, board members, and neighborhood families have been active over the past six months informing residents of their legal rights, advocating for families, and assisting with community efforts to uphold our city's rent control law. Unfortunately, there have been some key legal decisions in court lately in favor of our landlord's actions and tenants' legal options are dwindling. It is becoming likely that if the owners are able to continue their strategy, most families will be priced out or forced out of their homes and the demographics of our neighborhood will undergo a complete change in the next 1-2 years.

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My Relationship with Grace by Selina Cardoza

Since I joined the Family Center as a volunteer staff, I had been excited about working with the older youth of the community. After the 2008 Summer Program, I wanted to start a Bible study for the older youth in our community that we hired as interns. The first three weeks were hard; no one came. However, the fourth week, Grace* did, and the two of us have been meeting ever since.

My relationship with Grace has developed over the past few months. Our meetings have ranged from talking about updates in her life to reading a Bible passage and praying. She's beginning to open up to me and share some of the deeper issues in her life. A couple of weeks ago, we

prayed together. The next week she came back and told me she felt God was not answering those prayers because she had sin she needed to confess. So we prayed through that. I was grateful for her willingness to share and open up to me.

Another great thing about Grace is that she works so well with younger girls. She has volunteered to help out at Girls' Bible Club each week. It's really cool to see her interacting with the girls and asking them questions about Bible passages. Grace has really stepped up and the girls look up to and respect her. We can rely on her to help out every week which contributes to the consistency and tone of Girls' Bible Club.

Boys' Bible Club by Johann John

The Boys' Bible Club continues to meet Friday evenings. The group size has varied, but some weeks there are as many as 12 or 13 boys! I was personally very encouraged by one of our 8th grade boys who has brought a couple of friends to the Bible Club on his own initiative.

As before, we have a "fun and games"

portion to the Bible Club, often in the beginning. The addition of a basketball hoop in the front and play park in the back of the Family Center have been immensely popular. We've spent many fun hours playing "Knockout" or "Around-the-World."

During the Bible Study part of the Bible Club, we encourage the boys to engage with Biblical truths through Bible stories and discussions of these stories. Some of the topics we've talked about

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are: telling the truth despite facing opposition, respecting authority, thankfulness and gratitude, forgiveness, and doing the right thing despite peer pressure. Several discussions have been very encouraging, and we are happy to see the changes in behaviors and attitudes in many of the boys.

Rent Crisis Update (continued)

What does this mean for the Family Center? We have been sensing an increased urgency to invest in the parents of children we work with while we still have the opportunity to do so, and to provide material support to families in need. In the middle of this crisis, God has been providing abundantly. Through partnerships with Abundant Life Christian Fellowship, CityTeam Ministries, the Isaac Bruce Foundation, Feed the Children, and the Vineyard church we have been able to provide hundreds of boxes and bags of food to families each month since August and will be holding a free "store" for parents to do their Christmas "shopping" for their children. As we provide physical "bread" we are impassioned to use these opportunities to share Christ who is the true spiritual bread from heaven (John 6:32).

The rent crisis also means that we are beginning to research some possibilities for a contingency plan of moving the Family Center to another neighborhood with similar needs and demographics in case our families have to relocate and our community is no longer a "high need" area in the near future. In the midst of all this, we continue to trust that God has a good plan for us and for His people.

Interested in partnering with us? We are looking for partners in the following areas:

- Prayer
- Financial giving
- Volunteering

Please use the enclosed response card to indicate your interest.

Prayer Needs

- Pray for those who responded to the Gospel message during the Thanksgiving Outreach and Parent Appreciation, and for our follow up efforts.
- Pray as we continue to invest in the lives of individuals such as Grace.
- Pray that Bible Club boys would engage not just with the "fun" activities of Bible Club, but also with Bible stories and lessons. Pray also that the leaders of the Club would be able to engage both the younger and older boys at the appropriate levels, without neglecting either group.
- Pray for our board and volunteer staff as we seek God's guidance and begin to research potential directions for the future of the Family Center.

*Name has been changed for privacy



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