

partnership

summer 2009

Recession swells volunteer numbers

Sylvia Parris has a simple explanation about why she took time out of her months-long job search to answer the phone at Jericho Partnership's welcome desk. "I liked the idea of volunteering under the banner of Christ," she said. "It sounded like a wonderful opportunity."

Sylvia and scores of others like her who have lost their jobs in the current recession are finding that volunteering does more than just fill in some vacant hours during the week; it has a transforming effect on their own lives and outlook as they do their part to help transform lives in Danbury's at-risk communities.

Sylvia, who lives in Danbury, lost her 15-year position as an information technology project manager in White Plains last December, and then began her — so far — fruitless job search. But as economic realities stretched that search into weeks and months, she began looking for volunteer opportunities in the area.

"I checked out Children First and a couple of other organizations, but nothing much came of it," she said. Then she heard about Jericho Partnership at her church, New Hope Baptist in Danbury, and attended a Jericho volunteer training session.

She answered the welcome desk phone for a few hours two days a week before she began volunteering

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Michelle Cook, left, and Pathways Academy students Cyrus Walker, center, and Delton Rodgers look at books donated to the Academy library.

Teen collects 1,500 books

ARidgefield High School freshman working toward her Girl Scout Silver Award collected more than 1,500 books for the Pathways Academy resource center in Danbury in just four weeks, triple her initial goal of 500 books.

But the 15-year-old didn't just drop off the books. She recruited some friends to sort the books into categories — fiction, biography, religion — then volunteered to help log them into the computer and stack them on the shelves. And she's volunteered to be a Reading Buddy for Academy students, helping the sixth-graders with their reading skills, and said she'd volunteer at the Academy in any capacity needed when she begins work toward her Gold Award — the equivalent of the Boy Scouts' Eagle Scout award.

"I love helping people, and I thought this would be a great way help somebody in my own backyard," Michelle Cook said of the book drive. She learned about the Academy through her involvement with Wyld Life and Young Life Christian clubs in Ridgefield. "They told me the library was brand new and didn't have a lot of books."

Astonished by response

Michelle set a goal of collecting at least 500 books. "At first, I thought that was going to be a lot," she said. Many silently agreed. "I thought it was a pretty big goal, especially starting from scratch," said Lauren Armstrong, who told Michelle about the Academy's need for library books. Lauren is director

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From the Chairman



Bill Beattie

STUBBORN FACTS — TRANSFORMING OUTCOMES

I recently attended a ministry leadership conference in Manhattan that was called to identify and understand greater New York's "Five Stubborn Facts" — spiritual and social realities that define the region's ministry challenges.

Those Five Stubborn Facts are spiritual indifference among people in the region, global poverty that impacts metro New York, limited cultural influence by the community of faith, inadequate training resources for churches and ministries, and an educational crisis among youth.

Greater Danbury shares several Stubborn Facts with our New York brothers and sisters. (See sidebar.) But Jericho Partnership and our church and ministry partners are already addressing them.

Stubborn Facts are important because they are the attention-getting, sometimes shocking facts that can lead Christians to increased awareness of local spiritual and social realities, and can inspire collaborative action among churches and ministries that result in Spirit-filled outcomes for the glory of God.

Transforming outcomes

Each of the Danbury "Five" has a significant negative impact on the city's spiritual and social health. In future Partnership newsletters, I'll talk about

each fact and the collaborative strategies our partnership of churches and ministries are mounting to deal with them. We pray the strategies will glorify God in achieving these outcomes:

- **Significantly increasing** the number of Danbury youth embracing a Biblical worldview.
- **Significantly reducing** the high school dropout rate and achievement gap of at-risk youth in Danbury.
- **Fostering** sanctity of life and

personal responsibility within the Danbury community.

- **Offering** hope to at-risk male adults in Danbury as they battle substance abuse and homelessness.

Please join us in this local work and experience God working in a powerful way. We serve an awesome God. •

Bill Beattie is the founder and chairman of Jericho Partnership.

Metro Danbury's 5 Stubborn Facts

1. Spiritual indifference is rampant among our youth. I sense our youth reflect the national statistic of less than 15 percent embracing a Christian worldview, leading to antisocial attitudes and behavior.

2. Dropout rates are epidemic among at-risk youth. It's estimated that about 50 percent of those within Danbury's at-risk community will drop out of school before graduating from high school, costing society up to \$2 million per lifetime in supportive services.

3. Christian values have limited cultural influence in the at-risk community. Abortion strikes heavily in at-risk communities, and fatherlessness of newborn children has grown nationally by more than 223 percent since 1970. Fatherless homes contribute more than 85 percent of the runaways, children with behavioral disorders and youth in prison in our country. Postmodern values lead to greed, self-centeredness and rejection of absolute truth.

4. Affordable housing and health care are inadequate. The need for affordable health care and housing locally has been aggravated by the economic downturn and loss of jobs and insurance.

5. At-risk adults lack shelter, treatment and training. The city of Danbury annually spends between \$35,000 and \$150,000 on supportive services for each chronically homeless person, based on national estimates by the federal Interagency Council on Homelessness. But faith-based supportive housing offers more stable lives for a fraction of the cost.

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Jericho Partnership, Inc. • 13 Rose Street • Danbury, CT 06810 • Phone: 203.791.1180 • Fax: 203.791.1675 • E-mail: info@jerichopartnership.org • Web site: www.jerichopartnership.org

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Serving Together



Carrie Amos

THE VOLUNTEER ARMY GROWS — 500 TO BE HONORED

Each day the Jericho 3000 is growing, with dedicated Jericho Partnership volunteers and donors working to reverse the negative effects of Danbury’s “Five Stubborn Facts.” (See box on previous page.)

Our goal is to recruit, train and place at least 3,000 volunteers from the region, mobilizing them to help transform lives in Danbury’s at-risk communities and the city itself. We’re calling that small army of Christian workers — and donors — the Jericho 3000, and a growing number of them are active throughout our nine ministry partners serving Danbury’s at-risk youth and adult

populations.

Becoming a Jericho 3000 worker is simple. Just commit to a relationship with us and be willing to be used in the transformation of the lives men, women and children we have been called to serve.

This summer Jericho will honor with membership pins the nearly 500 Christ-centered volunteers and donors and their congregations who are already Jericho 3000 members, giving their time, talent and treasure in service to our Lord Jesus Christ — for being His hands and feet.

And on Saturday, July 18, we invite all our partners, partner congregations, volunteers and

their families to join us at our 13 Rose St. facility in Danbury for a BBQ and Block Party. It will be an afternoon — from noon to 5 — to meet and mingle with other Jericho ministry partners and congregations, volunteers, donors and friends. It’s free and a time to celebrate how God is using His people to transform lives in Danbury.

For more information about the Block Party or the Jericho 3000, contact me at 203.791.1180 or carrie@jerichopartnership.org. •

Carrie Amos is executive director of Jericho Partnership.



Growing Together



Michael Ronan

THE POWER OF TRANSFORMATIONAL GIVING

John and Maria Parille have experienced the heart transformation that comes with being generous stewards who are rich toward God.

The couple own New Fairfield Press, and their employees, customers and competition all know Jesus Christ is Chairman of the Board, and His guidance is sought routinely for business decisions.

When the economy tightened, John and Maria prayed about how to give sacrificially to charity despite economic conditions. They discerned the exact amount they were called to give, and “we knew we needed to make the donation soon,” John said.

They had confidence that God would provide the funds, even though there was no extra money in their budget. John remembered three dormant savings account passbooks and asked Maria to retrieve them, thinking they could cobble together the gift.

Maria held the passbooks up like three cards saying: “Pick a passbook, any passbook.” John chose the middle one, which Maria took to the bank. They were astonished when the updated balance was the exact amount they had been called to give, due in part to deposits they had made years earlier!

Through friends and their pastor, Chuck Ferrara at New Life Community Church in New Fairfield, God directed their attention to Jericho Partnership. John and Maria were “knocked over” during a building tour. “We didn’t understand this existed here,” John said, adding that they knew God was directing them to support Jericho’s word-and-deed partners.

With transformed hearts, the Parilles are co-laborers in the city, returning to God what is His. •

Michael Ronan is treasurer and director of development at Jericho Partnership.

Ridgefield teen surpasses goal

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of the Ridgefield Wyld Life club for middle school students. Michelle was a Wyld Life member before entering high school and joining Young Life.

“Fill the Shelves”

Michelle ran her book drive idea past her Girl Scout Troop leaders, then sent e-mails to her friends, Scouts, her parents' friends and other adults. She spoke at a Young Life meeting, created a flyer, culled names from organizations her parents belong to, created a spread sheet of donors. She even had a name for her project: “Fill the Shelves.”

“I talked to everybody about what I was doing,” she said, then began collecting the books on Saturday mornings with her father. “After the first pickup, I had huge boxes full of books. I was, like, astonished by how many books I had collected.”

When the Academy's volunteer librarian, Anita Rice, heard about Michelle's goal, “I thought this was an ambitious task, that if she reached half the goal, she'd be successful.” But “I was surprised when she was creeping toward 1,000 books and was astounded when she



Michelle Cook sorts books at Pathways Academy.

reached 1,500,” Rice said. “She's a great role model for the boys, setting a goal and surpassing it.”

“I was surprised her heart was moved to do it,” said Carrie Amos, Jericho's executive director, “to take the time, put the plan together and orchestrate it, that at her age she's thinking about other kids who don't have her advantages. I'm not sure Michelle fully realizes what she's done, which is neat.” •

Some Academy bookshelves still sparse

Michelle Cook's book drive went a long way toward filling Pathways Academy's resource center shelves, but some are still sparse, said Anita Rice, the Academy's librarian.

“Fiction, Reference, Series, Math and Science and Geography and History are relatively full,” Rice said. “We can use Mysteries and Scary Stories, Poetry, Religion and Sports books — although some sports-related books can be good for Fiction or can wind up in Biography. Shelves for Classics and Biography are beginning to fill.”

Other sparse categories are Animals and Games and Puzzles.

Donated books that are not age- or gender-appropriate (boys in sixth through eighth grades) will be set aside and donated to other nonprofit organizations.

The Academy is still accepting books. For more information on specific category needs, call Anita Rice at Pathways Academy at 203.205.0954.

Pathways Academy readies for second year

Pathways Academy's first group of 11 students will move to the seventh grade in September when a new batch of 24 sixth-graders will enter the Christian academy. Plans call for an enrollment of about 60 sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade boys by the 2010-2011 school year.

“The students have a hodgepodge of different skill levels, attributes and behavior,” said Ced Rice, the Academy's principal. “We have to figure out how to reach each individual in the class. We can't do the same thing for all students.”

For example, “we have one student in the 95th percentile in math, and we have to make sure we meet him at that level,” Rice said. “And we have another student in the same class who has the math test read to him because we want to make sure his reading isn't the reason he may not do well on the test.”

The Academy opened in September in the Jericho Samaritan Center on Rose Street with goals that include reducing the dropout rate among at-risk Danbury boys and reducing the achievement gap between upper and lower income students. This year its students averaged a 3.025 grade point average, Rice said, compared with a 2.19 GPA for at-risk boys at Danbury's two public middle schools.

The Academy students' grades were earned by hard work, he said. “It's not like they get a free pass. You can flunk classes here. But we do everything we can — including after-school work and re-testing — so that doesn't happen.”

“The kids know they have to be here every day and be here wide awake,” he said.

Forgiven, set free, and blessing others

It's impossible to calculate how many lives have been saved or transformed by Linda Cochran's hands-on pro-life efforts and the four books she's authored or co-authored. But when she counsels expectant moms about alternatives to abortion, or post-abortion moms traumatized by their decision, she reaches into her teenaged past and her own experience that was transformed by the love of Christ.

She was a senior at Roger Ludlow High School in Fairfield, 17 and pregnant. "There were no pregnancy centers, nowhere to go," she said. "The local ob-gyn gave me the number of an abortion clinic in New York City. My parents didn't know."

And she didn't know what was in store for her. "I was extremely surprised at the intensity of the grief and guilt I felt," she said. "I was told it was my body, my right, my choice." It wasn't until years later when she discovered forgiveness through Jesus Christ that she was set free from the guilt. But the experience set her on a path that eventually led her to Danbury as executive director of Hopeline Pregnancy Resource Center.

Transformed lives

Linda really wanted to be a landscape artist, but "Mom and Dad thought nursing would be a better fit," so she followed in her mom's footsteps and became a registered nurse in 1979. A year later, while backpacking in Scotland, she met her husband, Paul. They married in 1981 and began raising their family.

She began volunteering at pro-life centers almost accidentally. She and Paul had made a job-related move to Tucson, Ariz., and a volunteer from a local center spoke at their church. "Paul actually volunteered me. That's how I started out." But once she began, "I just loved it," she said.

She began writing Bible studies on forgiveness for women and began

post-abortion support groups. "I loved seeing people transformed when they got into the Word of God." By 1986 she turned the studies into her first book, "Forgiven and Set Free." Three others followed, all focused on healing from various trauma. (See sidebar.)

When Linda and Paul and their three daughters moved back east, she volunteered at the Poughkeepsie, N.Y., center as a counselor and board member for two years, then as executive director. But the commitment proved too much. "It was 40-plus hours a week with a 45-minute commute, and our daughters were 10, 7 and 4," she said.

She said yes to the opportunity to become interim executive director of a new Hopeline office in Danbury — about 20 minutes from their home in Patterson, N.Y. "The Lord had been speaking to my heart that I was going to be home. I thought it meant home with my kids, but it meant Danbury."

A change of mind

Hopeline had begun in Bridgeport in 1986 and opened its Danbury executive offices ten years later. The Shelton and Bridgeport offices send moms to Danbury for ultrasounds.

The offices see between 700 and 1,000 client visits a year for pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, post-abortion counseling, abstinence counseling and referrals.

Generally, Linda said, the offices see three types of expectant moms — those who have decided to carry their pregnancy to term but don't have enough support in their lives; those who are abortion-vulnerable and may have people pressuring



Linda Cochran

them to have an abortion; and abortion-minded women "on their way to an abortion clinic, but God sees fit to have them stop here for a pregnancy test or ultrasound and hopefully they'll change their mind." •

Linda's books

"Forgiven and Set Free" (1986, Baker). A Bible study that "helps women heal from the trauma of abortion."

"Healing a Father's Heart: A post-Abortion Bible Study for Men" (1990, Baker), to help men recover from abortion. "Sometimes the father wants the baby, but has no rights," Linda said.

"A Time to Heal (1994, Valley Publishing), uses the same principles for healing other trauma such as divorce or a child's suicide.

"The Path to Sexual Healing" (1996, Baker), to help women recover from sexual abuse trauma.

Volunteer needs

Hopeline counts on 75 volunteers among its three offices. Danbury needs nurses, ultrasound technicians, receptionists, people to organize donations, and counselors.

Hopeline trains volunteers, "people with a compassionate heart for moms in crisis," Linda said.

Call 203.791.1180 for information.

Recession swells volunteer numbers

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at her brother's business after he had to lay off his administrative assistant. "Since I'm doing this and still looking for work, I can't help out at the welcome desk," Sylvia said.

But she still has time during evenings to volunteer. She helped plan Jericho's Easter Party for some 75 disadvantaged children in April, and is leading the volunteer steering committee planning the packing and distribution of 100 school backpacks for Danbury children who can't afford the backpacks or school supplies. "I haven't had a lot of experience in event planning," she said, "but I have good organizational skills."

Her volunteer efforts at Jericho "give me a sense of being obedient to God's command to love others," she said. "It's one of the most meaningful things I can do with my life."

Who's steering?

Pat Barczak knew the economic downturn was taking a toll on the Norwalk company where he had

been sales development manager for the past dozen years. "A lot of our material goes into the automotive market, and business just kind of disappeared last October and November," he said.

Everyone knew times were tough, and "there was some discussion about shorter work weeks and things like that, so we knew something was going to happen." But when what happened happened to him, he wasn't quite prepared for the mid-December layoff.

"It wasn't a great time for it, but, hey, I wasn't going to beat myself up over this; it wasn't my fault," Pat said. "I thought of that song, 'Jesus, Take the Wheel,' because somebody needs to be steering and I'm not sure I am."

Pat had a record of volunteering in his community when his children were in youth sports, and at his church, St. Rose of Lima in Newtown. That's where he first learned about Jericho Partnership and its Maple Avenue overflow shelter for

homeless men this past winter. "I figured I could do some grunt work, so once a week while I was trying to job hunt, I'd go there and sweep and wash and dry blankets and linens.

"At one point I had a conversation with one of the residents, a young man just out of rehab and looking for a job," Pat said. "I guess the thing is, here's a young kid maybe 23 or 24 years old, and I've got a son that age, and I sit there and think that, but for the grace of God, he could be my kid. It doesn't take very long to fall off the edge and wonder how you got there."

Pat had an opportunity to tour Jericho Partnership and its ministry partners at 13 Rose Street while he volunteered at the overflow shelter. "I didn't realize all the things that are going on down there — a free clinic, the Academy, the teen center. I had no idea. I was very impressed."

But more than that, volunteering "was something I was wanting to do," he said. "I just hope I contributed at least a little bit." •



Sylvia Parris, standing left, and Kia Bradshaw review plans for Jericho Partnership's Fall school backpack distribution.

coordinate a summer celebration of Jericho 3000 volunteers at four partner churches, is involved with planning the July BBQ and Block Party on Rose Street, and is helping plan the August distribution of 100 school backpacks to Danbury children.

"I've been wanting to do something like this for a long while, but never had the time," Kia said. "This feels right, like its all been worked out under His divine plan."

Kia's story

Kia Bradshaw was an event manager at a Stamford company for the past three years when the recession began peeling employees from the company's payroll. "I figured it was coming down the pike," she said of her turn to be cut loose. But when it happened, "I was really disappointed and stressed out."

Her husband was still working, however, and she had been scheduled for major surgery and a six-week recuperation the week after she lost her job, so she took a broader look at her circumstances and began volunteering for Hopeline Pregnancy Resource Center — one of nine Jericho Partnership partner ministries.

"I just love kids and have a passion for youth," Kia said, "and I thought it was a great service Hopeline provided." She began by planning a Teen MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) program for young moms to learn biblical parenting skills, and by answering Hopeline's phone, but soon branched out into other ministries. She is helping

Making the ‘pause’ worthwhile

When Jim Wiley left his 32-year career at Metro-North last September, “I really didn’t think there’d be a problem, with the money they gave me out the door.” After all, he thought, “I’m a college graduate and I’ve been with one company for more than 30 years.” He had plenty of time to find a new job.

But the economy crashed, and Jim began sending resumes into the deepening recession to no avail. Recently, to bring in extra money, the 52-year-old Danbury resident began working as a caddy at the Greenwich Country Club. Even so, he said, “there are so many people worse off than I am.”

Shortly after he left Metro-North, Jim’s wife, Maureen — a part-time nurse at Jericho Partnership’s free pediatrics clinic — suggested he volunteer to answer the phone at Jericho’s welcome desk. But “volunteering was not in my vocabulary,” he said of his attitude for most of his life. “If it didn’t benefit me, I didn’t want to do it.”

But now something powerful was working in his life. “It was as if God had put my life on ‘pause,’” he said. “Prior to September ’08, I was a very self-centered non-believer. I tried to do everything on my own, until everything started to crash around me.” He had no job, no prospects, and three children in college. “God took me out of work and got me saved,” he said. “I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior.”

Seeing the rewards

Jim began volunteering at the Jericho welcome desk on Mondays, answering the phone and directing people to the various ministries in the building. To his



Jim Wiley at the Jericho Welcome Desk.

surprise, his seemingly inconsequential efforts turned out to be “very, very rewarding, spiritually, emotionally and for my mental stability.”

“I would see parents with faces of despair and uneasiness go into the clinic with their children, and then, an hour later, they would leave happy and joyous and smiling.

“The same thing was happening with the Hopeline crisis pregnancy center. You could see the burden the women and girls were carrying as they walked in to face the biggest decision in their life, and then see their expression walking out. I just can’t put it into words.”

Following His lead

“I was hooked on volunteering,” Jim said. “I just needed to see its rewards.” This past winter he signed up to be a once-a-week overnight volunteer at Jericho’s homeless overflow shelter. “In my prior life, I would have laughed at you if you asked me to do that,” he said. “But I was just following where He was directing. I was there to pray for them, and blessed to be there the last night to see their faces and hear their appreciation. It really meant a lot. I got to see the rewards.”

Jim still sits at the Jericho welcome desk on Mondays when he’s not caddying in Greenwich, “and I guess I’ll be going back to the shelter in October or November.”

“My whole life was turned around, and it has to do with Jesus and following His lead. A big part of the change is volunteering, giving back to the community. I recommend it highly. It’s up to you to make that ‘pause’ worthwhile.” •

Volunteer opportunities

Are you looking for an opportunity to give some time to help transform lives in Danbury’s at-risk communities? Jericho Partnership and its nine ministry partners have a continual need for volunteers.

“Our current needs include mentors for boys, tutors, volunteers at the soup kitchen, being part of teams that regularly clean Rose Street and Maple Avenue of trash, and summertime Reading Buddies for children who want to improve their reading skills,” said Carrie Amos, Jericho’s executive director. “It would be phenomenal if we had help with strategic planning or with planning a fundraising event.”

Other needs are more administrative, like grant writing or data entry, she said.

For more information about volunteer opportunities, contact Carrie at 203.791.1180 or carrie@jerichopartnership.org.

A SPECIAL INVITATION

FOR ALL JERICHO PARTNERS, CONGREGATIONS, VOLUNTEERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES!



WHAT? A summer block party. This catered event will include entertainment for the whole family!

WHEN? Saturday, July 18, noon to 5 p.m. Rain or shine!

WHERE? Under the tent in the parking lot at the Jericho Samaritan Center, 13 Rose Street, Danbury.



Watch your mailbox or church bulletin for more information!



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Carrie L. Amos appointed executive director

Carrie L. Amos has been appointed to the newly-created position of executive director of Jericho Partnership. She assumed the new responsibilities on July 1.

Bill Beattie will remain as chairman, leading the board and focusing on Jericho strategy and development issues in Danbury.

Hal Wibling, president of the Savings Bank of Danbury, and retired IBM executive Creighton Lee of Danbury, will assume the newly-created positions of vice-chairmen of the executive board.

Carrie joined Jericho in 2007 as director of operations, providing strategic planning, program development and other support for Jericho's ministry partners. As executive director, she will lead the Jericho staff team and maintain direct contact with its partners. She will also be responsible for implementing Jericho's strategic plan to physically and spiritually transform the city of Danbury by mobilizing up to 15 Christ-centered ministry organizations and recruiting 3,000 Jericho volunteers.

She holds a master's degree in social work from Fordham University, where she is a faculty adviser for social work students. She and her husband, Ed, and their three children attend New Hope Baptist Church in Danbury, and are involved in several volunteer activities in the Danbury area. She is a recipient of the Fairfield County Business Journal 2008 "40 Under 40 Award" for her leadership in the local nonprofit community.

Gospel on the Green

The annual Gospel on the Green event, sponsored by Jericho partner Highways and Hedges, is set for Sunday, July 12, from 3 to 8 p.m. on the City Center Green in Danbury. Come on out for praise and worship in both English and Spanish, Gospel speakers, praise dancers, face painting, lots of food, and the opportunity to unite with others to defeat HIV/AIDS and homelessness. "Without unity ... there's no community!"

Also, check out Highways and Hedges' new Web site at highwaysdanbury.org.

Tour the Partnership

If you or someone you know would like to tour Jericho Partnership and its ministry partners in Danbury, contact Carrie Amos, executive director, at 203.791.1180 or carrie@jerichopartnership.org.