

Wood County Area Ministries Minutes

Date: April 7, 2011

Attendance:

Erin Hachtel, FUM
Mary Jane Fulcher, St. Thomas More University Parish
Helen Dukes, BGMA
Leslie Cady, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
Brent Pomeroy, First Christian Church
Bob Barr, Salvation Army
Nancy Ketner, St. Aloysius
Wib Miller, St. Mark's
Bill Thompson, UCF/The Common Good

Notes from Erin on the meeting:

Our Vision:

Wood County Area Ministries seeks to meet the basic needs of the people in our community through faith and compassion by empowering them to live self-sufficient and spiritually fulfilled lives.

How are we doing at equipping and organizing WAM members to serve the underserved:

We have a basic structure in place with the regular WAM meetings, church-based ministries, and the Emergency Relief Fund via The Link. This is a good start, but we have always dreamed of doing more.

We would like to develop opportunities for WAM members to use their gifts and talents in serving others. We know that people who serve others are not only fulfilling God's commands but also experiencing deep and lasting joy. We will use a variety of methods to increase involvement in serving. For example, we want more people from local congregations to serve as phone volunteers. In addition to listing this opportunity in bulletins or newsletters or email, we must individually invite people who have gifts that fit this opportunity. Qualities would include – good listener, attention to detail, likes talking on the phone, an encourager, has a few hours each week or every other week, patience. Do you know someone like that? Will you ask that person to be involved?

Additionally, we will develop a mentoring process for people struggling with unemployment or underemployment. Many people have become hopeless after dealing with rejection after rejection in job interviews. Many people just squeak by on minimum wage and never have time to feel valued and connected because they're always worried about the next bill. Our follow-up process is the first step in connecting people who've had financial aid from WAM back to local churches.

Mentors will be people who are encouragers, are willing to share their workplace or organizational experience with someone, could meet someone for a cup of coffee or at the library or at a church to talk. Do you know someone like that? Will you ask that person to be involved? We also hope to learn from churches that have been there and done that, so we are inviting some speakers to upcoming meetings.

How are we meeting the basic needs of people in our community:

Basic needs are things like food, shelter, transportation, and utilities. We have services in place with church-based ministries, and the Emergency Relief Fund via The Link. We are meeting some basic needs, but we know there will be increased need, so we need to continue to fully support and fund these services.

How are we helping people in our community live self-sufficient lives:

Financial assistance from the Emergency Relief Fund is provided when it helps secure self-sufficiency. It is not provided when it is a temporary solution to an ongoing crisis.

We hope that the above mentioned mentoring and relationship building practices will be fully lived out in local churches to help people live self-sufficient lives – not so that they have to go it alone at all times, but so that our community becomes stronger by virtue of having both contributing and serving members.

How are we helping people in our community live spiritually-fulfilled lives:

This was a particularly fruitful and fascinating area of discussion! As we talked about the isolation and loneliness faced by people living in poverty, we also explored our sense that people who attend churches who aren't in financial need are also disconnected from one another, from their call to serve, and may not be leading spiritually-fulfilled lives. So our first step is to check in with ourselves to ensure we are engaged in things that connect us with our loving and saving God. It is almost always from a place of fulfillment that we can invite others to be filled.

We also hope that learning how to mentor and learning how to engage people's giftedness will help WAM members engage people in congregations to spiritually connect with each other and with our neighbors in need. Finally, having experienced the great joy that comes from serving others, we are going to invite people who have been served through a ministry to serve either in that ministry or another one in the future.

As WAM nears the completion of our second year, I thank you for your contributions to its existence and ask that you continue to lift it up in your prayers. We serve an amazing and loving God, and we are so blessed to have this ministry to share that love with the world. Erin

Financial Reports: distributed by Denise Foos. Greater needs than we are able to meet financially.

Feed the 5000 Food Drive: Going very well. Please deliver donations to FUM on Easter Monday before 1:00 p.m. for picture. Bowling Green Food pantries may shop for food after the picture.

New Projects for WAM churches to work together on include:

Backpacks filled with school supplies which will be distributed by Salvation Army with supplies collected by area churches. Campaign will be from July 1 to the end of July.

Winter Coats for all ages. Collected by area churches in October. Distributed by the Salvation Army.

Article of Interest on Mentoring in Michigan: in the American Association of Christian Social Workers Magazine

Employment Fair/ Mentoring

Programs in existence mentioned and will be contacted for further information:

Employment Workshops run by Joe Catalano at Blessed John XIII in Perrysbury.

Mary Jane will talk to Joe.

Monroe United Methodist Church, Pastor Karen Shepler Neighborhood Center which includes the Dress for Success shop, job counseling, food, health checkups etc. Erin will talk to Pastor Karen Shepler.

The advantages of a mentoring program were discussed at length and include job coaching, engaging people in church to help, identifying gifts and talents, better preparation and support for those people who are seeking and trying to keep employment.

WAM needs to engage more people in their work.

The first Support group dinner and meeting for people helped by WAM is scheduled for April 26th at the Common Good House.

Bob Barr from the Salvation Army is offering a program on Balancing the Budget at the Wood County Senior Center on Wednesdays from 10:30 a.m. until Noon. This is a five week course and registration is through the Senior Center.

Pastor Brent offered assistance to Bob Barr who is in need of transportation for a woman to the train station in Toledo.

Respectfully Submitted, Mary Jane Fulcher