

NETWorks' Good Neighbor Newsletter

A Cooperative Christian Ministry in Northlake, Embury Hills and Tucker, Georgia

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Director's View

We are blessed to be supported by many in our community. Volunteer hours, donations of food, and financial support all work together to support our needy neighbors! Most of our donations come through checks mailed to us or through one-time gifts made online. Now we have a new option. Donors can set an amount to be automatically donated each month. Would you consider giving to us on an on-going basis? Recurring gifts allow us to plan a little better. To give online, just go to www.networkscoop.org/donate. The donation box offers "one time" or "monthly;" choose "monthly" and an amount to set up a recurring gift. Thank you, and may God bless you for your generosity.



David Fisher

Faith & Finances is on the money

Students in NETWorks' fifth class of "Faith & Finances" completed their course work in late May, following 12 weekly lessons in how to apply Christian values to household budgeting.

This educational program was designed by the Chalmers Center, a non-profit which helps churches work to break "the spiritual, social and material bonds of poverty."

NETWorks' Board President Nancy Phillimore and Executive Director David Fisher, both certified trainers for the Chalmers course, conducted the weekly classes.

The course covers a range of topics helpful to people on limited incomes. Participants learn how to create a realistic spending plan, set savings goals, manage debt, and prepare for emergencies.

The lessons are reinforced by "allies,"

volunteers from the community who work with the students outside of classroom sessions.

Each weekly meeting begins with a dinner donated by a NETWorks member church or partner, followed by a 90-minute class. Child care is provided.

Student Tara Middlebrooks, a mother of two who works for a clothing company, says, "I'm more aware now of what I'm spending and I stick to my budget."

Classmate Tomesha

Anderson hopes some day to open a restaurant. "This has taught me to plan out how I spend," she notes. "Now I judge something less for what it costs and more for how it fits with my faith."

Anyone interested in taking the class or serving as any ally should contact our program director, Stephanie Suggs.



Grocery co-op grows to more than 25 households

With resources obtained through a grant from the Atlanta Community Food Bank (ACFB), NETWorks' grocery co-op program is attracting new members. The program which began in 2014 with five households is now helping feed five times that number.

The group meets twice a month. For a small fee, each participant receives a large basket or two of food including staples, fresh produce and meats. The members run the program, conducting discussions on issues that arise and dividing the supplies according to specific rules.

Sandra Young, a co-op member for three years, serves as coordinator. For each meeting, she calls in an order, then rides in NETWorks' refrigerated truck to pick up the food at ACFB's distribution center in downtown Atlanta.



At a recent meeting, participants received items ranging from kale chips, chicken breasts, a whole chicken, canned chili, and biscuits to pasta, chocolate wafers, beef stew, canned ravioli, crackers, roasted peppers, russet potatoes, breakfast cereal, and fresh tomatoes.

Jennifer, a co-op member for a few months, is raising a special needs child and noted that her husband recently lost

his job. "This program is such a blessing," she said. "We're able to pay all our bills and still feed our family. Now I don't have to make one meal stretch for three or four days."

Laurie, a woman in her 50's, joined the co-op after losing a long-term job. "The food is a great help. I get fruits and vegetables, and real meat," she explained. "More important, this group ended my isolation. I made friends. Having the fellowship of community made all the difference. I would not have made it without the co-op."

A grant from ACFB enabled the program to grow with purchase of a refrigerated truck and a commercial cooler. In the past year, NETWorks grocery co-op doubled the volume of food distributed, to more than 6,000 pounds per month.

Good Neighbor stores provide dignified, affordable shopping

At its Good Neighbor Back-To-School Store, held at the Baptist gym on Main Street July 29-30, NETWorks rang up over \$1200 in sales, more than twice as much as last year.

Good Neighbor stores offer low-income parents an opportunity to purchase items for their children at discount prices. The Back-to-School store sold new goods donated by NETWorks' member churches as well as by local citizens and organizations. According to NETWorks President Nancy Phillimore, the shop this year sought donations of larger and pricier items such as binders and backpacks.

NETWorks' stores date back to 2012 when we partnered with FCS Ministries on a Christmas shop located in Chamblee. The next year NETWorks ran its own Good Neighbor Christmas Store in Tucker, enabling

dozens of parents to select gifts for their children from hundreds of new toys and purchase them at greatly reduced prices.

Last December, our Good Neighbor Christmas Shop featured more donated items and more satisfied customers than ever before. As a shopper named Beverly explained, "At this store I could buy my granddaughter the toys she asked for, at a price I can afford. It makes my holidays brighter."

To conduct a Good Neighbor store requires efforts from many volunteers. Some inventory donations, some set up displays, others work during the store's open hours, stocking shelves and running the check-out registers.

We are already asking donors and volunteers to begin planning for Christmas. Please visit our website for more details.



Member church profile

Briarlake Baptist keeps focus on service

This is a congregation with a deep commitment to serving the larger community in a variety of ways.

With athletic fields on the church campus, leagues for baseball, basketball and soccer draw hundreds of children from the surrounding area, providing them faith-based recreation.

There is an emphasis on helping refugees. Volunteers conduct classes in conversational English and citizenship preparation. Others have laid out a community garden and completed construction projects for immigrants in Clarkston.

A men's group regularly does handyman chores for low-income homeowners, building wheelchair ramps and doing minor roof repairs. Similarly, church members tackle maintenance jobs at five local schools.

The congregation sponsors an annual mission expo, highlighting volunteer opportunities with more than 40 mission partners. There are monthly drives to raise donations of peanut butter and soap for those in need, as well as special offerings throughout the year to raise funds for those seeking immediate help with rent and utility bills.

Given this focus on serving others, it was natural that Briarlake Baptist Church would be an early member of NETWorks Cooperative Ministry. As Pastor Tommy

Farrell explained, "As much as we want to help others, no single church can honor all the requests that come to us. It makes sense to join with other churches to address the challenges."

Pastor Farrell especially noted the capabilities available to a larger organization. "NETWorks can develop expertise that we can't offer. The people at NETWorks can delve deeper into an individual's situation, they can coordinate resources from many agencies, and they can keep track of who has been helped."

One church member who has witnessed the effectiveness of NETWorks is Kathy Morrison. She visited NETWorks just over a year ago, when a Good



Kathy Morrison and Pastor Tommy Farrell

Samaritan had donated over 100 pounds of canned food and dried goods. "I started sorting these items in the food pantry," she said, "And I was there the whole morning."

Once she retired from her job, she began volunteering at NETWorks one day a week, packaging food from the pantry and answering the telephone.

"It's mind-blowing to me how many people are in need, some who have lost a job and even some who are working," she said. "There's a need in me to help others and serve God, and NETWorks is a great place to do that."

News Briefs

Taste of Tucker set for Oct. 7.

NETWorks will once again participate in the Taste of Tucker street festival, scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 7, on Tucker's Main Street, 1-6 p.m.

The eighth annual Taste of Tucker will feature delicious food samples from more than 20 area restaurants, plus live music from local bands.

Special attractions include a children's play area and a farmers market selling local produce.

Admission is free. Attendees purchase \$1 tickets to exchange for food samples, with "tastes" costing between one and four tickets.

NETWorks will supply volunteers to sell tickets and count proceeds, and will benefit as one of four local charities sharing in the proceeds.

For more information on participating restaurants and bands, visit www.tasteoftucker.com or www.facebook.com/tasteoftucker.

Pilot project tests Saturday hours for emergency pantry.

NETWorks' emergency pantry is designed to provide a neighbor in a crisis with one to two days worth of food. The pantry has been open each Monday, Wednesday and Friday, but this summer NETWorks opened the pantry one Saturday each month. This allowed neighbors who work weekday jobs to receive supplies, and volunteers who work during the week to serve the community. Staff are now examining the results and may institute Saturday hours on an on-going basis.