



**Anoka County Human Services, Faith Communities and Non-Profits  
linking resources to strengthen our community.**

*When everyone brings something, there is more than enough.*

**November, 2008**

## **Working Together in Hard Times**

Jim Scheibel, former St. Paul Mayor and servant leader in VISTA, Senior Corps, and Project for Pride in Living in Minneapolis, addressed over 60 representatives from local faith communities, government agencies, and non-profits at the 2008 Fall Faith Forum held at Emmanuel Christian Center in Spring Lake Park. Jim challenged participants to get people more involved in community activities by:

1. Identifying their passions – people are willing and excited to be involved if it's something they are already passionate about
2. Doing things they're good at.
3. Giving them an opportunity to learn.
4. Offering them a chance to connect with the larger fabric of the community.
5. Giving them an opportunity to work on bigger issues, such as building homes for Habitat for Humanity.

In keeping with the forum's theme, Scheibel used a quote from President John Kennedy - "What we need is not a nation of spectators, but a nation of participants in an active life." Scheibel's words had integrity, since he not only spoke of involvement, but gave examples of how he has been involved in a variety of organizations, including mentoring a young boy and volunteering with Habitat for Humanity.

Scheibel suggested a book "The Citizen Solution: How You Can Make a Difference" by nationally known community organizer Harry Boyte, published by the Minnesota Historical Society, which further discusses these ideas. He also directed his audience to a helpful Web site, [www.servicenation.org](http://www.servicenation.org) for information on involvement at a national level.



After Jim Scheibel's speech, through speed networking, participants had the opportunity to connect with local resources about their services. Attendees also had the option to attend two of the six break-out sessions. Topics included: Advocating for and Finding Employment, Helping the Homeless in Anoka County, Transportation Options, Feeding the Hungry, Proactive Health Care and Maintaining Good Mental Health. The networking and informational sessions offered the attendees an opportunity to connect, explore, and collaborate on how to help our community meet its needs during the current economic downturn.

The goals of this Faith Forum were to:

1. Serve as a catalyst to connect volunteers with meaningful volunteer opportunities.
2. Highlight successful active programs that help people meet basic needs.
3. Provide an opportunity to network.
4. Offer resource materials and hands-on tools.

Based on the feedback received and the connections people made, this fall's event was successful on all levels.

The monthly Circle of Influence meetings, which are held the 1st Thursday of the month at Emmanuel Christian Center, will continue the discussions and networking in meeting the current social service needs in Anoka Country. All are welcome. (1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.)

- Mary Jo Loftus, CAN Advisory Board

## **GOOD JOBS ARE KEY – ADVOCATING FOR AND FINDING EMPLOYMENT**

The topic of employment was tackled during the 2008 Fall Faith Forum from two different perspectives. The first perspective was from JOBS NOW Coalition. JOBS NOW Coalition is committed to the idea that all Minnesota workers will have the opportunity to earn a family-supporting wage. The Coalition advances its agenda through research, education, and advocacy. Collete Lafond, Research Director explained their mission and demonstrated their "Wage and Budget Calculator."

This calculator provides a method to enter household expenses and income. The expenses include food, housing, health care, transportation, child-care, clothing, and taxes (based on resident county). It provides a monthly total cost and the annual cost along with the hourly wages required to meet basic family expenses. The Wage and Budget Calculator may be used by anyone with access to the Internet. This website also links the participant into the DEED (Department of Employment and Economic Development) website, which contains job openings, job descriptions, labor market information, resources, job training opportunities, workforce centers, etc.

JOBS NOW Coalition is an advocacy and research organization. Their latest findings (October 2008) found there are "76,000 unemployed workers in the Twin Cities metro region competing for only 30,000 unfilled jobs-or 2.5 unemployed workers for every unfilled job." To access the wage and budget calculator go to <http://www.jobsnowcoalition.org/> or call 651-290-0240.

Marsha Woods from Anoka County Workforce Center identified the services provided by the Anoka County Workforce Center. The Blaine Human Services Building has many of the services needed by people looking for employment. Anoka County Workforce Center led the way in putting many different state and non-profit agencies in one building for better access for the clients. The Workforce Center brings together state, county, and non-profit agencies in one location to provide comprehensive job seeker and business services. The services provided by the Workforce Center include: resume' builders, career research, keyboarding tutorials, telephone center, workshops, veterans services, specialized services, unemployment benefits, copying resumes, and visits by businesses. Contact Information: 763-783-4800.

In previous months there were approximately **2,500** people accessing the services at Anoka County Workforce Center. Last month **5,000** people accessed the services. The Workforce Center does not predict a decrease in clients any time soon. Therefore, the Workforce Center is always looking for volunteers to assist clients.

Both presenters were informative while providing suggestions on how best to use the tools to assist clients in pursuing employment. Contact information for the Hunger Program: Sue Kainz, GMCC, March Foodshare Campaign Coordinator, 612-721-8687x326, Annetta Willers, Family Service Manager, CEAP, 763-450-3671 and Rick Johnson, Saca Director, 763-789-2444.

-Jamie Morrow, CAN Advisory Board

## **Feeding the Hungry—What Can We Do?**

We were very fortunate to have on our food panel Sue Kainz, Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches, Rick Johnson, Director SACA Food Shelf, Annetta Willers, Family Service Manager, CEAP Food Shelf. The panel discussion included perspectives, challenges, and goals from the food shelf providers and their focus on feeding the individuals and families in their local community and in Minnesota.

Like any other organization food shelves do have their own dilemmas, and political aspects. There is always the issue of having enough nutritional food to feed the clients and their families. Last year there were 47 million pounds of food distributed throughout MN Food shelves through MN Foodshare. There were 2 million visits to Minnesota Food Shelves. Minnesota is fourth in the United States in providing food for individuals and families. The food shelves reported a significant increase in visits to the food

shelves in the past year, while having somewhat of a decrease in the food they were able to buy from food shelf distributors. There appears to be an increase in donations from businesses and a decrease in donations from individuals. The food shelves are bracing for a large increase in first-time visitors to local food shelves as the cost for basic needs are increasing along with unemployment. The food shelf providers suggested food drives of nutritious food, fresh vegetables, and meat for food shelves that have refrigerators and/or freezers, along with cash donations. The cash can be used to buy food at a much-reduced rate from the food distributors. Food Drives/cash drives by churches, businesses, neighborhoods, grocery stores, etc, can provide a community with the food needed to keep people from going hungry in Minnesota.

- Jamie Morrow, Can Advisory Board

# Getting From A to B—Transportations Options in Anoka County

Basic transportation, such as getting to work, medical appointments and running errands, can be a challenge in Anoka County due to its large territory and limited public transportation routes. Renee Sande, Executive Director of the Anoka County Transportation Management Organization (TMO), helped us explore transportation options and approach the barriers creatively. Some of the options she mentioned were:

- *Northstar Commuter Rail & Coach – Route 888* which offers bus service from Elk River and Coon Rapids-Riverdale park-and-ride lots to the 5th Street Transit Station in downtown Minneapolis eight times between 5:30 a.m. and 8 a.m. weekdays along with eight (8) return trips from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays ([www.mn-getonboard.org](http://www.mn-getonboard.org))
- *Ramsey Star Express – Route 856* offers bus service from the Ramsey Municipal Parking Facility to downtown Mpls. Eight (8) times/day during the week (<http://www.commutercoach.org>).

- *Metro Transit Rideshare* – helps riders locate & coordinate carpools to & from work (<http://www.metrotransit.org/rideshare>)
- *Van-Go!* - a regional Vanpool Program sponsored by the Metropolitan Council offers vanpools made up of 5-15 people commuting to and from work together on a regular basis (<http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/vango/vango.htm>)
- *Car Sharing/Hour Car* – gives access to cars on a per-trip basis ([http://www.hourcar.org/index\\_home.html](http://www.hourcar.org/index_home.html))

TMO also works with local volunteer transportation programs to help people get where they need to go. Contact Info: Renee Sande – 763.862.4260

- Gayle Alexander, CAN Advisory Board

## What Did our Participants Have to Say About our Fall Forum?

“Information on medical/dental really stood out for me.”

“Very organized—well done.”

I noticed just how many people are trying to make a difference.

“I gained awareness on transportation options.”

“Great! I liked the breakout sessions.”

“I learned how to donate to my local food shelf”

“Super people and agencies—liked speed networking”



## Proactive Healthcare-Serving the Uninsured and Underinsured

In the face of rising healthcare costs, many Twin Cities residents cannot obtain needed medical care for themselves or their families. A local organization working to address that situation is St. Mary's Health Clinics. Barbara Dickie, Executive Director for the clinic system, gave an informative presentation about this clinic network, which provides access to basic health services free to those without healthcare coverage. She presented a thorough snapshot of how the clinics work, who the populations served are and what community partnerships St. Mary's Health Clinics has forged to serve even more people. As we heard from Ms. Dickie's talk, this wonderful community ministry would not be possible without the volunteers who support the clinics in many ways: from financial donations; to the doctors, nurses and other personnel who give their time free at each clinic site to provide medical care. In addition, it was mentioned that the St. Mary's Health Clinics organization also is involved with advocacy work for healthcare system reform in collaboration with other local advocacy groups. Ms. Dickie concluded her presentation by telling the audience how they could network with St. Mary's Health Clinics by referring people for services, making a monetary contribution, or volunteering their time and talent. For questions about eligibility and/or appointments: Call 651-690-7029



- Ellen Raeker, Can Advisory Board



### Apple Tree Dental

*Improving the Lives of People with Special Access Needs*

Dr. Michael Helgeson, CEO of Apple Tree Dental gave an informative and eye-opening presentation at the 2008 Fall Faith Forum on their approach in improving the dental healthcare system.



Apple Tree Dental is a great resource to provide dental care to those who don't have the finances or have special needs. They are a non-profit organization that works to improve oral health. Apple Tree

works to make dental health affordable and most of their patients are public program recipients. In addition to offering dental clinics, Apple Tree has several Mobile Services. They can bring all their equipment and set-up to serve nursing homes, group homes, Head Start centers, schools and assisted living facilities. When it comes to oral health – we already know the answers! A patient may just need one procedure to end an infection that could be fatal. Let's spread the word about Apple Tree Dental and help them help our community. Contact Information: Apple Tree Dental, 763-784-7570.

- Elisa Thibodeau, CAN Advisory Board

## Home Base-Helping the Homeless in Anoka



News about increasing home foreclosures and lack of affordable housing resulting in increased homelessness is being heard more and more frequently.

One local organization whose mission is to help homeless families find housing and regain self-sufficiency is Families Moving Forward (FMF). Leslie Frost, Executive Director of FMF, gave a very informative and heartfelt presentation about the people affected by homelessness, especially the children. She discussed how the FMF program works and how it partners with faith communities and volunteers to help families struggling with homelessness. She noted that in the current economic downturn, FMF is receiving more requests for help than they have resources and capacity to handle. More networking and partnership building is needed to meet that challenge and could make it possible for FMF's very effective program to expand services and have a greater presence within the Anoka County area. Contact Information: 612-529-2185

# Volunteer & Communications Mail Group

*"When everyone brings something, there is more than enough"*

In the true spirit of collaboration, the Compassion Action Network has established a Yahoo Mail Group dedicated to Volunteerism and Communication. Whether you are interested in volunteering or are in need of a volunteer, or you have important information to share, please follow these simple procedures to get your information posted on the CAN mail group.

***It's as easy as 1-2-3:***

## **1 - Set-up Your Yahoo Account**

Access the Compassion Action Network Website – [compassionnet-mn.com](http://compassionnet-mn.com).



Select the Yahoo Groups Icon

Select "Sign-up"

Enter all required information, including your primary email account.

## **2 - Verify Your Yahoo Account**

Open a second internet session and access your primary email account.

Open mail from yahoo and activate your new account.

## **3 - Join canvolunteer mail group**

Go back to the Yahoo website.

Select "Add new email address" and enter your 'primary email address.

Enter encrypted code to finish.

**Note:** By entering your primary email address, you will receive all correspondence relating to the **CAN volunteer/Communications** mail group. If this proves too much mail – simply change it back to your Yahoo ID account. You can then see all correspondence via Yahoo.

Once you have joined the mail group, you will receive a welcome letter with further information and instructions using the site.

- Sue Kennell  
763-754-9638



**Compassion Action Network**

**Mission Statement**

*To mobilize community organizations to recognize the value and benefits of working together, because when everyone brings something, there is more than enough.*

**Vision Statement**

*Working together to serve our community, every community organization will recognize and utilize its own unique gifts and resources.*

**Advisory Board**

Mary Jo Loftus, Co-chair  
St. Katharine Drexel Church

Gayle Alexander, Co-chair  
Anoka County Human Services

Lyla Pagels  
Mercy & Unity Hospitals

Ellen Raeker, Secretary  
St. William Catholic Church

Jamie Morrow  
CEAP

Elisa Thibodeau  
Emmanuel Christian Center

Sue Kennell, Newsletter/Website  
R.S.V.P.

**Contact Information**

13233 Lily St. N. W.  
Coon Rapids, MN 55448  
763-218-0650

**Email:**

Compassionnet\_mn@yahoo.com

**Website:**

[www.compassionnet-mn.com](http://www.compassionnet-mn.com)

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# Holding It All Together - Good Mental Health

Mental health influences every area of life and is often overlooked or ignored altogether. The stress of the economic downturn and the fear that it brings is enough to severely rock one's proverbial boat. At the 2008 Fall Faith Forum, Bob Dykstra, director of Men's Ministry and Recovery Ministry at Emmanuel Christina Center shared his observations and experiences as a counselor working within a community of faith. After telling his own story of homelessness, life transitions and what he learned in that process, he shared a couple of tools: one that helps individuals identify the level of stress they are experiencing and another that can help to identify healthful ways of coping. He offered a very holistic view of the importance of realizing how stress affects our physical bodies, our emotions, our mental state and our spirituality.

Mental illness, challenging on many fronts, is especially difficult when resources are scarce -- too few psychiatrists, too few appropriate inpatient beds, shortage of appropriate housing for the mentally ill and/or chemically dependent, and shortage of services that are less intensive than inpatient hospitalization. Craig Malm, executive director of Community Health Improvement at Mercy & Unity Hospitals presented information about the new Medication Access Program (MAP). Collaborating with Anoka County, mental health clinics, primary care clinics, pharmacists, primary care doctors and psychiatrists, this new model was developed to "improve access to, and management of psychiatric medications for a defined population that is encountering barriers in obtaining and/or managing needed medication." MAP is only one program aimed at the broader goal of improving mental health care in our area. Anoka County, Mercy & Unity Hospitals and the Anoka Metro Regional Treatment Center are currently exploring ways to collaboratively improve outcomes and reduce obstacles to timely care.

- Lyla Pagels, CAN Advisory Board

**Circle of Influence Meeting**  
 1st Thursday of every month  
 1:30 p.m.  
 Emmanuel Christian Center  
 7777 University Ave N E  
 Spring Lake Park  
 Everyone welcome to talk about community resources and to network