



The Family Update

The Newsletter of Family Empowerment Centers

June 2009

Staff Contacts

F. Scott Manke
Executive Director
scottm@familyempower.org

Thomas Csora
Director of Family Care
tom@familyempower.org

Chris Kuehnlenz
Urban Immersion Intern
chrisk@familyempower.org

Janeen Scott
Urban Immersion Intern
jscott@familyempower.org

Rob DeLano
Urban Immersion Intern
rob@donateyourboat.org

Schedule of Events

- AMIGA Moms Group
Wednesdays 9:30-11:00
- The Gathering —
Sundays at 6:00pm: a
time of worship and Bi-
ble study.
- Women's Bible Study—
2nd and 4th Tuesday of
the month at 7:00pm
- Miracle League Basket-
ball—Tuesday and
Thursday evenings
through July 18
- Soccer Camp with Living
Faith Alliance Church and
Grace Alliance Church—
July 13-17, August 3-7
- City Clean—August 2-8
with kick off BBQ Aug. 1
- Kane County Cougars
Game Friend Raising
Event—August 29

Final Matching Grant Update *by Angel Diaz*

Good news! Thanks to you, we met our matching grant goal of \$50,000! Meeting this goal is confirmation from God that we are under His care. The work we do here is kingdom work and it is centered on serving and loving people...this is how we bring glory to God. By donating to this mission, you are a collaborator with us in this good work. This means that you are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with us as we take a stand here in Rogers Park for the sake of the Gospel. What higher calling do we have as sons and daughters of God than to “go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19)? What a blessing to receive your financial contributions as an expression of your faith and an expression of your love for us and those you haven't met, but you love nonetheless...the apostle Paul would be proud! If you have never been here, please make every effort to plan a visit, we would love to see you the week of July 12-17 if you'd like to visit us while a missions team is in town. Again, Thank You, and please join us in prayer as we thank God for His blessing upon each of you and each person who comes in contact with this ministry.



Thanks to our donors, Hope and Giovanni can enjoy events like Family Fest every year.

**Glorifying God...Loving Our Neighbors...Strengthening Urban Families
by What We Do...How We Do It...and Whom We Do It For**

Family Fest 2009! *by Chris Kuehnlenz*



(Above) Aura was one of the lucky winners of the Grand Prix car race!

On Saturday June 13, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. the northern Chicago skies were cloudy and rainy. Our leadership team was huddled in a classroom praying over Family Fest. It was scheduled to start in three short hours, and we asked God to make the event successful with or without rain. Regardless of the ominous weather conditions, set-up began at 11:30 and by 12:00 the rain had stopped! There was no doubt that God had allowed for the clear skies and sunshine. As

the event unfolded, teams from our Rogers Park community and Blanchard Alliance Church manned the different stations in Schreiber Park, located across the street from the Center. With about 500 attendees, Family Fest was once again a successful opportunity for Family Empowerment Centers to reach out and love our neighbors for God's glory.



Grace enjoys a few moments spent with friends between the festivities.



(Above) The Mis Amigas Moms Group supervised the Sesame Street bounce house for preschoolers, one of several inflatables that were enjoyed throughout the day.

Face painting was a hit all day long!



(Left) Everyone gathered around the raffle table to see who would take home the bikes donated by Target and Wal-Mart.



Families took pictures in front of a fire truck, donated for the day by John Roman, an FECC supporter.

A Leap of Faith *by Scott Manke*

I can't help but get excited when I encounter people who are willing to take significant risks in their lives to pursue God. Some of you may have already met Angel or will possibly be hearing from him in the near future, but he is on just such a journey.

He first came to visit Family Empowerment Centers in April because he was looking for a place to attend a Sunday worship service in the evening instead of the traditional morning time...which is hard to find in the city and also in the evangelical world. Angel said this to me not too long ago: "From the start, I knew I had found my new church home because I liked everything...the people, the worship, the teaching, it was exactly what I was looking for—and it was a relatively short commute. The best part of this church was that it lived out its mission seven days a week through its nonprofit structure of operations. The next best part was that before hearing about FECC, I had a vision for this type of church structure as the ideal method for Christians to live out their faith...I was excited to have found this model in action! After five years of working and studying the nonprofit landscape, I have found no other mission or organization to be so worthy a cause as the work of FECC. There is nothing of greater value on this earth than human life, yet my greatest investments so far were in education and real estate. These are not bad investments, but they are not the treasures of heaven."

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure, hidden in a field, that a person found and hid. Then because of joy he went and sold all that he had and bought that field." Matthew 13:44

At 36 years of age, Angel is looking at life and saying, "I will not live forever. I realized that I didn't want to be 50 or 60 years old and thinking of what I coulda, shoulda, woulda done for

*"I see
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Chicago"*

God (or worse, I'd hate to have regrets as I bow before Jesus). I know that I want to be welcomed into heaven as a good and faithful servant. The question then is...what does this mean? After ten years of being a Christian it finally sank in...I need to be a servant. I see FECC as a hidden treasure in the great mission field of Chicago, and more specifically in this cor-

ner known as Rogers Park. You don't come to church here and place an offering in the collection plate. You come to FECC and offer yourself as a living sacrifice...there is no room for benchwarmers here...it's simply not in the game plan."

With obvious passion and resolve Angel came to me and said "I want to work here and help strengthen donor relationships and raise the money it needs to continue doing such a great work even if you can't make a commitment to pay me. I will work for two months full-time for free, and if God provides a way for me to continue at the Center, great." Angel's commitment is far larger than a two month commitment to the Center; regardless of how things play out financially for us he will continue to help us in areas of development.

One of Angel's next steps is reaching out to some of you to see how we might improve our relationship with you and gain your feedback on the organization and the things you have been hearing. If he calls feel free to ask him about his journey. Also, he is putting together a Clean City 2009 fundraiser in which we are going green and cleaning up our community with a hope of raising some money at the same time. One last comment from Angel recently was that, "If I were to die tomorrow, I would die happy, because I gave my life for a worthy cause. I pray for God's will to be done in my life and at FECC."



First ESL Class in the Books *by Tom Csora*

As of the end of May, Family Empowerment Centers accomplished another first in what we hope will be many more. We offered a seven-week ESL (English as a Second Language) class that saw 6 students successfully complete the class and receive a certificate of completion.

The class could not have been a success if not for the teachers who worked diligently every week preparing, teaching, and building relationships with the students. Thanks to Tanya Hirchy, Tanya Zaya, Janeen Scott, and Ana Maria Sinitean.

Many of the students appreciated the fact that the class was small, making it more intimate and a better learning environment compared to other ESL programs they've enrolled in. They expressed their desire for us to start the next level as soon as possible. The next scheduled date for the class will be in mid-September assuming we have people willing to teach the course. No experience is required to teach, as long as volunteers have the desire to be committed a few nights during the class. If anyone has access to ESL material they would like to donate or has further questions on how to participate in this great outreach please contact Tom Csora at tom@familyempower.org. A great way to reach the people of the world in our own backyard. Get involved, you won't regret it!

Electronic Funds Transfer

We accept credit cards and electronic fund transfers directly from your account to ours. The process is fast and secure. When you use our EFT process you can track and manage all your giving to our organization quickly. Visit www.familyempower.org and follow the instructions on our donation page to get started today.

Prayer Support

We believe that our ability to do what we do comes from the grace of God providing our team with wisdom in making decisions and guiding our daily activities. Praying for us daily would be a great encouragement to our team and a powerful tool in our goals of glorifying God and loving our neighbors well. Send us a note letting us know of your commitment to us in prayer.

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One Summer Missions Team Down, Two to Go! *by Rob DeLano*

Family Empowerment Centers recently hosted a missions group from Eagle Alliance Church made up of High School and Jr. High students from June 21 till June 27. This group was engaged in a variety of projects throughout the week in and around our center in Rogers Park. Some of the activities were more traditional 'missions trip' type labor intensive projects like moving plants in a local park, refinishing the outside of our building to protect the wood, and sterilizing playground equipment in another park that recently experienced flooding.

Aside from the labor intensive work, part of their time was spent engaging people on the street. This was done through a few different means: handing out complimentary water to passers-by or people at a bus stop, playing music down near the Loyola campus, or simply walking up with a smile and making eye contact. This personal contact with strangers was foreign to most of the students and proved daunting to many. Fortunately for them, they had been trained by our very own Scott Manke in sessions throughout the week. These sessions did not focus on evangelistic strategy per se, but rather on being open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, recognizing the spiritual warfare that is constantly going on around us, and seeking to reach others through acts of love and service. Once the group got a taste for engaging our neighborhood as part of God's creation that He wants reconciled to Him, they could not get enough of it.

Soccer Camp

One of the central pieces of all of our missions trips this summer is an evening soccer camp that we run in Schreiber Park, across the street from the center. Each night of the camp starts with skill training stations and ends with a game time for the kids to try out their new skills. In the middle of the evening is a time for us to share with the kids and their parents why all of us are really there running the soccer camp. During this time we sing praise and worship songs, watch a skit, and then have a brief sharing time that talks about a different part of the gospel message each night. Our first camp of the summer was a little crazy as we had about 75 kids registered throughout the week. This number of children in a confined area is sure to

yield some chaos, but we witnessed the Holy Spirit's mighty work despite our shortcomings. The least of these was simply seeing kids' attitudes changing throughout the week. It is amazing to witness how even a couple of days of loving interaction can draw out the most introverted child, or calm the fiercest inner storm.

Aside from this understated, constant work of the Spirit, there were two more dramatic moments that stand out from the week for me. The first was when I happened to walk up to a team as a little girl was praying with her coaches to accept Jesus as her savior. I have heard reports that she and her brother would go home in the evenings and share the memory verse from the week (John 3:16) with their parents, and tell them all about what they had learned that day. On the final day of camp, she was the child who remembered the theme of all five lessons from the week and won the prize.

The other work of God that stood out to me was done in the heart of one of the missions group members. This young man did not really show any indication early in the week that he was here for anything other than a vacation with his friends. While he was engaging the kids at the camp, his eyes were opened. The closer he grew to the kids, the more he began to care for them as individuals and children of God. He noticed that two of the kids were not wearing good shoes for playing soccer. One of them was wearing slip on dress shoes and the other was wearing Crocs. When asked why they were not wearing proper gym shoes, they replied that they did not own any. The young man was moved by the Spirit to buy the kids some real athletic shoes. The final day of camp, the two children were discretely taken aside one at a time and given their new shoes. They never knew who bought the shoes for them, simply that God had wanted them to have new shoes.

These are the moments that spur us on in our work. The moments when we stop and recognize the infinite ways that the God of the Universe is constantly working in and around us. Please pray with us that our upcoming groups from Living Faith Alliance Church in Vineland, NJ and Grace Alliance Church in Middleburg Heights, OH can continue to build on the quality work that God has accomplished through the Eagle Alliance Church group.

