A SEASON OF CHANGE

We are realigning some of our staff and resources this summer to better serve the needs of men, women and children who come to us for help. As the agency nears its 50th anniversary, it’s a critical time for GUM to look at how to stay healthy and strong for the next 50 years.

GUM has grown over the years, adding programs to respond to needs that have arisen in the community. To move forward effectively, we believe we must put priority on three key approaches for our next half-century: simplicity, sustainability and scalability.

We want to help as many people as we can, as simply as we can, for as long as we can – and be more nimble so GUM can seize opportunities to be a game-changer for those who need us most.

Our clients who work with case managers and receive financial assistance are making the greatest strides toward regaining stability. Thus, GUM is making a move this year to prioritize financial assistance for these folks. While it may seem logical to move all our financial assistance to our clients working with case managers, the reality is it would have a very negative impact on the people who count on us. GUM is the only consistent, monthly resource in town for some types of assistance. We’ll continue to provide the same one-time financial assistance, though at about 50% of the levels that we offered last year.

We will be sharing more with you this year about these changes and others. And we’ll tell you more about some blue-sky dreaming our Board, staff and volunteers are doing. Maybe our agency is not unlike ourselves, getting older and wiser … and noticing that we can’t do what we did at 20 nearly as well. But at 50, with a plan for healthy living, who’s to say the best years might not still be ahead?

That’s where you come in. You are a key part of our plan for GUM’s good health. You are so important to our guests and to us because you choose to support Greensboro Urban Ministry’s work. We invite you to come along and dream with us, and work with us to build the strongest community we can.

Please know I welcome your calls or emails and would truly value an opportunity to talk with you further and answer any questions you may have. Please reach me at 336-553-2639 or wilkins@guministry.org.

Thank you for your prayers and support!

Rev. Myron Wilkins, Executive Director

UPCOMING EVENTS

The one thing we look forward to more than anything else at our special events … is YOU! We’ve got four opportunities coming up in late summer and fall for you to come out and be part of the fun. So come on by and bring a friend!

Watch our website, Facebook and Twitter for further event information.

First Friday @ Center for Visual Artists
Friday, October 7
Featuring Potters from GUM’s Feast of Caring
200 N. Davie St., Greensboro

Groove Jam V at Doodad Farm
Saturday, September 17
4701 Land Road, Greensboro

CROP Walk @ NewBridge Bank Park
Sunday, October 16
408 Bellemead St., Greensboro

Feast of Caring
Thursday, November 17
First Baptist Church, Greensboro
VOLUNTEERING

Jim Balma has been volunteering in the food pantry at least once a week since he retired three years ago. But his connection with Greensboro Urban Ministry goes much farther back.

After the Air Force and a career in telecommunications, Jim went to work with the school district. He worked with Occupational Course of Study (OCS) students at Ragsdale High. Jim brought his students to the GUM food pantry to get work experience at least weekly for about 9 years. He’s sorted a lot of cans and packed many bags for hungry men, women and families!

We shared a bit about Jim’s story in our summer appeal letter. As he’s watched food insecurity in the Triad grow, he’s remained committed to the food pantry. He’s a terrific part of the GUM family, and we knew you’d like to know more. So we asked Jim what keeps him coming back to volunteer:

“I like to think of the people we help as my customers. I want them to feel that same level of service that you and I receive at the grocery store.

“I am grateful to have never really experienced lack of food or hunger. Sure, I came home from a few business trips to an empty fridge, but I just went out to the grocery store and picked up what I needed. Not knowing where your next meal is coming from? To me, that’s truly stressful. And the shame some folks feel when they come for help: ‘I don’t want to be in this situation,’ they say, looking away. It’s heartbreaking.

“Sometimes, people can be tempted to look at those who come for help and form an opinion: Maybe they drive up in a nice car. I say, you don’t know the story or what’s going on at home. You don’t know; don’t judge.

“I keep coming back because I enjoy being part of something – part of the team and the mission.”

THREE WAYS TO RESPOND TO NEED

Blessing bags: Kylie Coakley, 11 (right), works with her sister, Ansley, 8, and brother, Hudson, 4, to make blessing bags at their family’s kitchen table. Kylie was moved when she saw people experiencing homelessness asking for help outside a local store. She asked her mom, Brandie, if they could help.

“I felt sad. I wondered how will they ever survive,” Kylie recalls. They make the bags with a personal note and hand them out when they run errands.

You’ve often asked us what the best thing is to do when you encounter neighbors who are hungry, hurting or even homeless. Try to put yourself in their shoes for a moment – crisis can happen to any one of us, anytime. From this perspective:

1. **Engage.** Say hello, talk to the person seeking your help. Be willing to have a conversation. Find out what’s happening. Treat the person seeking your help with the same humanity and kindness you value.

2. **Give.** Keep a blessing bag or two in your car – a Ziploc of snacks and a water bottle, or a Ziploc with toiletries – that you can share with someone at the intersection. You can also share a caring card directing folks to our services at Greensboro Urban Ministry. We’ve provided a card below – you can download more printable sheets of cards from our website: www.greensborourbanministry.org/caringcards

3. **Advocate.** Raising your voice against the scourges of poverty begins with a willingness to learn about the issues and talk about them among your family, friends and associates. When those of us who enjoy greater prosperity make it a priority to speak up for those who do not, our community discovers the best opportunities to grow and thrive. What are the issues that greatly affect those in poverty? Lack of affordable housing, adequate food and well-paying jobs are three major barriers.

READ MORE ONLINE:

- Honors and Memorials for April-June
- Food Lion makes first gift to help GUM replace an aging truck
- News from our Board of Directors
- Thank you to our 2015-16 Corporate Grant Sponsors
- CROP Walk: Read more about our presenting sponsors, Syngenta and Harris Teeter, and find out how you can help make CROP Hunger Walk 2016 a success

Like our Facebook page and follow us @GSOUrbanMin on Twitter