A different summer journey

Many of us will be blessed to take some time away over the summer. And sometimes, it may feel as though we have to work twice as hard just to get ready to go! We’re getting the maps, guides and websites in front of us to figure out exactly where we want to go and what we want to do.

This image has special meaning these days at GUM as we enter a time of strategic planning. Our Board and staff are gathering those guides and resources. We’re seeking advice. We’re talking with groups that have taken this trip before us.

Strategic planning is a special sort of journey for an organization to undertake. It requires time to pore over many maps, passion to argue over the best route, and honesty if it turns out the suitcases are packed with great stuff – but not the stuff you really need.

We’re excited about the challenge, but it’s a big task ahead. We invite your prayers, support and suggestions.

Where does the community want and need GUM to serve going forward? What resources will we require so we can serve as many people as we can, as effectively as we can, for as long as we can, as simply as we can?

We invite you, our friends and partners, to journey with us as we seek to answer these important questions. Through interviews, surveys, focus groups and other conversations, we will learn more.

And, of course, key guides along the way will be our clients and guests, those in our community for whom we at GUM exist to serve. Unfortunately, these neighbors will have no time away this summer from the daily grind of poverty. They turn to us for help in creating their own map toward help, hope and greater independence. This strategic planning journey we are all on is for them and for a stronger community.

The need is great, and our ability to work to meet the need is exactly proportional to the financial and volunteer support the community entrusts to us. Your support is vital, valued and critical.

Please read on in this newsletter and on our website to learn about people who are working to build a stronger community through GUM, and clients who are rebuilding stronger lives through GUM. Together, with God’s help, we are making a difference.

We are changing and saving lives! Thank you for staying with us on the front lines.
Volunteer Profile: Rich and Mandy Lerner

They say one act of giving gives way to subsequent acts of kindness. In Rich Lerner’s case, that age-old saying held true.

The local musician decided to start Groove Jam – an annual music festival showcasing local bands and benefitting Greensboro Urban Ministry – after attending fellow musician Warren Haynes’ own music festival in Asheville for Habitat for Humanity.

About two months after he came up with the idea, he called up Greensboro Urban Ministry and laid out his plan.

Six years, $30,000 dollars and 5,300 pounds of food later, Rich and his wife, Mandy, have built the annual concert, Groove Jam, into a great grassroots festival that brings musicians and the local community together to raise food and funds to support men, women and families with kids facing crisis in our community.

It boasts “local bands for a local organization at a local address,” says Rich, who recently completed a term on GUM’s Board of Directors.

The concert has been held from the beginning at Doodad Farm, which provides its space as an in-kind donation.

Mandy is a great event organizer; Rich is the musician. Mandy took over the event aspect, and Rich took charge of the music element. Friends from each of their respective circles have helped them along the way.

But even with all of the work it takes to put on the festival, Rich and Mandy don’t see themselves stopping anytime soon.

They do it, Rich says, because of another saying: “To whom much is given, much is expected.”

If you’d like to help, volunteers are needed, especially for post-festival clean-up. Please contact Rich Lerner at 336-314-3336 or richlerner@triad.rr.com.

With two stages – one larger, main platform and a smaller one for acoustic performances – the music won’t stop from the time the first band begins at 2 p.m. to when the concert ends at 1 a.m. This year’s event will be Sept. 16.

Local bands The Mighty Fairlanes, Ladies Auxiliary and CC3 will play this year – as will Rich’s band, Rich Lerner and The Groove. Food trucks and vendors will be on site. Alcohol is not served; coolers are permitted.

The concert’s proceeds have soared in the five years since it began, with $1,200 dollars in the first year giving way to $12,000 last year – and the first year’s 600 pounds of food more than doubling to 1,500 pounds this past year.

Rich and Mandy say the festival’s success can be attributed to hard work – and friendship.

L.J., pregnant and caring for three young children, was blindsided.

The four of them moved in with L.J.’s grandmother, who was already allowing 8 other people to live in her home. L.J. and one child shared a sofa; two children slept beside her on the floor. Stress weighed on L.J. and she went into pre-term labor. Her doctor ordered bed rest. The situation became too difficult for her grandmother to manage, and she asked L.J. and the children to leave.

During her bed rest and medical care, L.J. met a hospital counselor who told her about Pathways Center, GUM’s studio-apartment shelter for 16 families on North Church Street. She hasn’t looked back since. After staying in our Pathways Center, L.J. and her family moved into an apartment at Partnership Village, a transitional housing community with support for men, women and families with children who have experienced homelessness.

Read more about L.J.’s journey and watch client stories on our website, www.greensborourbanministry.org, and our YouTube channel.

Family Matters

This August will mark two years since the day L.J.’s life turned upside down. “It was the first day of school. The sun was shining through the windows. And then there was a knock on my door,” L.J. recalls. “Two police officers were outside, telling me I was being evicted.”

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CROP Hunger Walk is Oct. 15

Greensboro Urban Ministry partners with Church World Service and volunteers on the annual CROP Hunger Walk, and 25% of all funds raised stay here in our community. Funds support GUM’s Potter’s House Community Kitchen, where staff and volunteers provide a meal to 400 or more men, women and families with children every day.

This year’s walk will be on Sunday, Oct. 15, at First National Bank Field in downtown Greensboro. The walk start/finish is moving to the back of the ballpark on Edgeworth Street. Walkers will begin and end in the owner/player lot. You’ll also find music and vendors there.

Are you a CROP Hunger Walk team captain? Do you want to learn about CROP’s impact in the world? Then we hope you’ll join us at an all-new CROP Kickoff Rally at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 29, at West Market Street United Methodist Church in the fellowship center, 302 W. Market St., in downtown Greensboro. Guest speaker Martin Coria is passionate about how CROP walks are changing lives in Central and South America. Coria is based in Buenos Aires and has worked with Church World Service since 2001.

Space is limited for the rally, so please RSVP by Friday, Aug. 25, to info@gumministry.org and include Rally RSVP in the subject line of your email. Be sure to include the number of people in your group.

For more information on The Greater Greensboro CROP Hunger Walk, visit greatergreensborocropwalk.org

Potters at the Wheel to Fight Hunger

Art Alliance, Earthworks Pottery and Center for Visual Artists are partnering with GUM this year again to help potters fight hunger and showcase their work in support of the annual Feast of Caring.

The Feast of Caring is the kickoff to GUM’s annual fundraising season. The simple meal of soup and bread takes place the Thursday before Thanksgiving, as a reminder to all of us that many neighbors will face hunger for the holidays. This year’s Feast will be open for lunch and dinner on Nov. 16.

Potters are invited to participate in the Feast of Caring by creating and donating handmade bowls, which will be featured in the Feast of Caring pottery room. For a minimum donation of $25, guests will be able to choose one of these beautiful pieces to take home.

Earthworks Pottery is generously providing clay at no charge for potters who want to create bowls for the event. CVA will showcase potters’ work on Nov. 3 at First Friday downtown at the gallery, 200 N. Davie St.

If you would like to participate, please visit GUM’s website to find out how you can get involved or call Earthworks at (336) 275-1202. Thank you!

www.greensborourbanministry.org | 336.271.5959
Read more online!

**Not small change:** Frazier Elementary students discovered this spring that there’s a lot of power in a penny, especially when you pool them to fight poverty.

**Taste testing:** Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services is sharing recipes developed for our food assistance program guests using items from our food pantry’s emergency grocery bags.

**Swarm Service:** Greensboro Swarm staff members kicked off a season of service at GUM, working in Potter’s House Community Kitchen and the food pantry.

**Angel’s Revival:** Watch the latest video in the “Finding the Way Home” series, sponsored by Flow Buick GMC.

Please like our Facebook page and find us on Twitter and Instagram (@gsourbanmin) to get the latest updates on the work that you make possible through your support of GUM.