



ALIVE! *Wire*

Alexandrians Involved Ecumenically

Fall 2004

President's Message

Heroic Efforts

Recently, I heard the efforts of ALIVE! volunteers described as "heroic." That is a very apt description of what ALIVE! people do if ever I heard one. Giving up time from work, or holidays and weekends, or time with family and friends, is a sacrifice made by each of our volunteers.

The chairs of the various committees, the officers, and some people who are just plain dedicated, are responsible for ALIVE! taking care of people who need help. Many of these volunteers put in 20 or more hours each week. This is on top of full time jobs, taking care of family, or volunteering for other organizations, and some of those responsibilities carry a lot of stress. I'd say that's heroic.

And what about the people who only put in a few hours or so each week? Having a full schedule myself, it amazes me how many people are able to show up every week to answer phones, do data entry, sort food, or read to children in the Child Development Center or at ALIVE! House. Without them, ALIVE! couldn't function.

Then we have people who volunteer once a month, and others who help with special projects like the Fools ALIVE! gala, or the Fannie Mae Help the Homeless Walkathon, or helping with our computers or handiwork around ALIVE! House.

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Leaving Homelessness Behind

This is the story of *Clavel, her husband, and their three children. The family had been struggling to make ends meet for some time. They were living in a shelter in 2002, but the parents separated and Clavel moved to an efficiency apartment with her children. Clavel worked full-time in the laundry of a senior living facility, and got up early every morning to get the 5:15 am bus. She had to take 4 buses each day, changing buses to take her son to ALIVE! Child Development Center, her daughter to her babysitter, and another bus to work. Clavel worked an eight-hour day and then took four buses in the evening to pick up her children on the way home. In talking with her about her story, she remained positive. Her comments were about how helpful the bus driver was, getting the stroller on the bus and giving extra attention to her young son. However, Clavel found herself pregnant with her third child and was having trouble paying the rent even for such a small apartment.

ALIVE! gave the family a donated car, which was a great help with transportation. However, Clavel, following the doctor's orders, had to leave her job due to her high-risk pregnancy and was then unable to afford her apartment, making the family virtually homeless. At this point, Clavel was referred by the Department of Human Services to ALIVE! House and the family moved in on December 12. Clavel and her husband talked of reconciliation and in January her husband was invited to move in with the family at ALIVE! House. He was a great help with the children and on January 12, 2003, they welcomed their youngest daughter, Renee*. At the same time, her husband found employment in maintenance at the facility where Clavel had been working. Clavel was such a good employee that the supervisor held her job for her and she soon returned to work.

The family stayed at ALIVE! House for a little over three months, until a Section 8 voucher became available. ALIVE! House requires residents to save 70% of their income, so the family was able to make the security deposit and pay rent for the first month. Once again, ALIVE! helped, this time with furniture and housewares. Since three car seats wouldn't fit in the original car, ALIVE! House, through Catholic Charities, donated a used station wagon to the family; in turn, Clavel donated the smaller car, that she had previously been given, to the Purple Heart Society.

Clavel's son graduated from the ALIVE! Child Development Center and attends kindergarten through Alexandria Public Schools. Her middle daughter currently attends ALIVE!'s preschool, while her youngest is in home care. Clavel continues her personal growth through individual counseling and in return for his strong work ethic, the employer is sending Clavel's husband to school for an air conditioning and plumbing certificate. ALIVE! remains a strong support system for the family and their future now appears promising.

***All names changed for the sake of privacy of family.*

FOOLS ALIVE! COCKTAIL BUFFET/AUCTION

Saturday March 5, 2005

What a great evening is planned to benefit ALIVE! Get ready for some merriment, as we will once again celebrate Fools Alive! on Saturday, March 5, 2005. Everyone loved it last year so we are returning to the George Washington Masonic National Memorial, and we are fortunate to have Kerry Donley return as our auctioneer!

Come one, come all to celebrate a glorious fun-filled evening, to meet your friends, view and bid on one of a kind auction items, dance to a swing band, enjoy wonderful hors d'oeuvres, sip a little spirits and most importantly contribute to ALIVE and its worthy work.

A special thank you to all who sponsored, donated items, volunteered and attended last year! With your assistance we can do it again this year.

Tickets are \$60 per person or \$110 per couple, and include open bar (beer, wine and soft drinks). To order an invitation and tickets see below.

We will need great items to make a great auction. If you have an **item** you would like to donate to the silent or live auction please send the form (to be enclosed in the newsletter) or contact Lesli Creedon, Creedon@rrf.org 703-684-1598.

We love our sponsors! If you are interested in becoming a **sponsor** please contact Mary Jo Johnson, mmaryjojohnson@yahoo.com 703-370-9109.

And we still need **volunteers** for the Committee. If you would like to join us (it really is fun) please contact Mary Jo Johnson or Lesli Creedon, as above.

Enclosed is a check for

\$_____made payable to ALIVE! Inc. for _____ tickets

at \$60 per person or \$110 per couple.

Please charge my _____ VISA _____ MasterCard

Acct. No. _____ Exp.date _____

Cardholder's name _____

Cardholder's signature _____

Address _____

_____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Please mail to

Kerry Whitlock

1651 Hunting Creek Drive

Alexandria, VA 22314

703-299-0810 (home) Email: kerrywhit@comcast.

Tom Balmer, A volunteer Making a Difference

Critical to the success of ALIVE! are the dedicated volunteers who donate their time and talents to the organization's many community outreach programs. Tom Balmer is one such volunteer whose quiet, giving spirit allows ALIVE! to make a difference in the lives of so many needy Alexandrians.

As he has for more than three years, Tom was one of the first to arrive at the Cora Kelley Recreation Center one recent Saturday morning for ALIVE!'s Last Saturday of the Month Food Program. Looking over the stacks of canned goods and boxes of food that are to be distributed, Tom's task is to make order out of chaos. Methodically, he coordinates how the food is to be sorted and later, bagged by the volunteers for distribution to the approximately 200 families patiently waiting outside.

"Each month's food distribution is very different," notes Tom, "The non-perishable food is delivered to the center on the previous day by very hard working individuals who have a limited time to accomplish their task. Consequently, there isn't much rhyme or reason to the placement of the hundreds of cases of products throughout our workspace."

The food comes from various sources, including the Capital Area Food Bank in Newington, which provides USDA surplus food, and the Capital Area Food Bank in DC, which provides perishable items. Food also is donated from ALIVE!'s member congregations. In all, nearly 500 families receive food at three locations in Alexandria at each Last Saturday of the Month program, with the need growing each year.

"The variety and quality of much of the food items has really changed over the past several years," says Tom. "Convenience foods are appearing that we didn't have just a few years ago. Between jobs and family responsibilities, I am sure that many of the clients find these time-savers very helpful." Tom works for a trade association representing the dairy industry, so he has more than a casual interest in food and nutrition. "Hearts and minds work best when stomachs are full. With that in mind, I believe that the fulfillment of basic nutrition needs within our community is an obligation we need to take very seriously."

For his fellow volunteers, Tom has nothing but praise, but says more are needed.

"We are especially in need of an individual or two to help serve as a volunteer leader on a regular basis. The commitment is 4 to 5 hours on the last Saturday of each month."

Tom has encountered many people over the years at various food distribution programs, including his wife, whom he met when they both were volunteering at a food distribution center. Tom and his wife are members of Alexandria Presbyterian Church where she serves on the church staff.

ALIVE! is grateful to have volunteers like Tom Balmer, who is helping us make an important difference in our community.

ALIVE! House's Automotive Angel



ALIVE! House would like to recognize Brian Stefanish, who has always come through for them at a moment's notice. Whether it is moving furniture or appliances from one floor to another, helping with sidewalk sales, or fixing the children's bicycles, he has responded many times without regard to his own schedule. ALIVE! House has benefited from his hobby of rebuilding cars. For the last several years this volunteer has been called upon several times to make repairs to resident's cars. He has volunteered his time to do everything from replacing a master cylinder for a resident's brakes, to replacing all four tires of a resident's car whose tires had been slashed. Brian Stefanish, we thank you for all of your hard work.

ALIVE! Annual Potluck Celebrating Our Volunteers!

ALIVE! celebrated its 35th Annual Potluck Dinner in celebration of our volunteers on November 9th. The entire evening was a success, and the focus of the event was to honor our volunteers.

The Rabbi Brett Isserow welcomed us to the Beth El Hebrew Congregation, and began our dinner with a beautiful and heart-warming prayer. Then everyone took part in a wonderful meal.

We were delighted to have Bill North-Rudin, Executive Director of the Alexandria Volunteer Bureau, as our honored guest speaker. Bill talked about how important and precious volunteers are, and that every little bit of time that a volunteer puts in to helping someone else is worth so much. He pointed out that often volunteers do the jobs that you can't pay anyone else to do.

Laura Rogers, ALIVE! President, followed Bill's speech with a warm speech of her own, focused on our volunteers at ALIVE! and what a family ALIVE! really has become over the years. She explained that even though we don't always agree, we still find a way to make things work. She followed this with telling each one of us to turn to our "brothers, sister, aunts, uncles, etc." and congratulate them on the great job they have done this year to help Alexandrians in need.

The evening ended with the ALIVE! volunteers reading responsively the recommitment to volunteer for yet another year. Vivian Webb, our Correspondence Secretary, led the reading.

Our special thanks to our hostess team, Mike and Linda Oliver, who represented the Church of St. Clement, and made all of the arrangements for the event, and Don and Doris Mela, who helped the Olivers arrange the event space at Beth El Hebrew Congregation. We also thank Rabbi Brett Isserow, along with Beth El Hebrew Congregation, for making us welcome and providing us with the space to host the event, and Church of St. Clement, for providing the materials necessary to make the night happen. And our appreciation to the ALIVE! Child Development Center's staff and children for providing our beautiful centerpieces for the tables.



Rabbi Brett Isserow welcomes ALIVE! members to the Annual Potluck Meeting

Opportunity at ALIVE!

ALIVE! is taking a major step in growth this year. After much research, deliberation, and discussion, the Board of Directors has decided to hire an Executive Director. This was not an easy decision for any of the people involved, but the Board thinks that it is the best strategy for the organization.

We have had one administrative position that started as part-time, going to full-time four years ago. ALIVE! has missed funding opportunities that could have helped to serve even more people, because of the lack of experienced and trained personnel. We believe a professional experienced director can help channel our resources more productively, and better assist our volunteers in their service. This is an investment in our future.

The emblem for ALIVE! is a tree with many branches, representing the numerous ways that we help needy Alexandrians. That tree has deep roots that have grown strong over the decades through the dedication of the people who have volunteered for ALIVE! Without deep roots a tree that grows this quickly would topple over.

We started with only one program thirty-five years ago, and we now have seven programs serving families in Alexandria. The work can be increased with the help of a trained executive who understands our roots.

There may be a short but tough period of adjustment to the new circumstances - every organization has growing pains. But an organization that has been fighting poverty for three and a half decades will not only overcome the growing pains, but will continue to thrive. This is a wonderful opportunity for ALIVE! and the people we serve.



Left to Right: Haven Cushman, Cathy Thompson, Laura Rogers, Constance Richardson, Susanne Arnold, along with members of the Economic Opportunities Commission, accept a Proclamation from the City of Alexandria, celebrating 20 years on the War on Poverty on October 26, 2004. Photo taken by Allison Silberberg.....

The ALIVE! Family Emergency Program

The ALIVE! Family Emergency Program has been helping Alexandrians in need of food and financial assistance since ALIVE! began thirty-five years ago. The small office where a dedicated group of volunteers answers the phones and takes referrals from caseworkers and member congregations is surrounded on three sides by shelves of food.

The FEP has grown from its small beginnings to assisting over one thousand households a year with a three day supply of food packed and delivered daily by volunteers and by assisting over two thousand households a year with financial aid. For years ALIVE! was able to respond to every request for both food and funds. But something has happened in our city to the disenfranchised members of our community. The requests for both food and funds have skyrocketed. The Family Emergency Program runs out of money every month, having the resources for only about 15 out of 30 days. This leaves the referring agency caseworkers and ALIVE! congregations clergy with the difficult job of trying to find other resources to assist needy people to pay for rent, utilities, prescriptions, transportation, etc.

The following story is an example of how the Family Emergency Program works with the referring agencies and congregations. Christ Church has a Lazarus Ministry program where caseworkers interview people who come to the church needing food and financial assistance. After screening the client for eligibility the caseworkers call ALIVE! Family Emergency Program to request up to \$100 to save the client from eviction or to keep the electricity from being turned off or to pay for an essential prescription, etc.

Volunteer Laura met with Ms. "M" who had come to Christ Church after her estranged husband (she was in the process of getting a divorce) had been released from prison after serving time for abuse. She had a restraining order against the estranged husband, but she had not been informed of his release. Additionally, despite the restraining order, he was able to pick up his belongings at the house and while doing so he kicked down the front door scaring Ms. "M". She came to Christ Church in a panic needing to have her front door replaced, which would cost \$279.00. Although she worked, she lived on a very tight budget and did not have the money for this unexpected but essential expense.

The caseworker was able to put together the resources to pay for the door with ALIVE! contributing \$100.00.

Laura wonders if she will ever see Ms. "M" again. In many ways she hopes not--for that means she is making it on her own. But Laura speaks for all of us who are in the ministry of helping others when she says, "This woman remains a gift to me. I always receive much more than I give on each day that I volunteer."

President's Message continued from page 1

Why do they do it? Why do they take on such monumental responsibility, week after week, year after year? The reasons are as varied as the people who volunteer, and each of those volunteers is a hero.

There are many heroes in ALIVE!, and we are honoring them this month. In the month of November we celebrated our volunteers at our Annual Potluck Dinner. Also, in this issue of ALIVE! Wire you'll read about some of our volunteers. Join with me in celebrating their efforts, and if you recognize yourself in one of these stories I hope you'll realize how much we appreciate you and the work you do. It's because of you that ALIVE! can serve so many people every year.

Sincerely, Laura Rogers, President



Ah! The Turkey Trot!

On Thanksgiving morning good will, joy, wet jogging shorts and gratitude were abundant as thousands ran, and a few walked, the 5 K through the streets of Del Ray and Rosemont in the annual Turkey Trot. ALIVE! extends a tremendous thank you to Potomac West Business Association, who sponsors the race. They encourage all who participate in the race to donate canned goods. As a result, we loaded close to sixty large boxes of food - nearly 80 lbs in a box - into the ALIVE! food bank.

ALIVE! salutes the Grand-Marshalls: Helen Manich, ALIVE! and human rights volunteer supreme, and Nora Partlow, owner of St Elmo's and winner of the State of Virginia Governor's Volunteerism

Award, who led the "Trot" riding with Jack Taylor in one of his new convertibles. (See photo at left)

ALIVE! also salutes Governor Mark Warner, Mayor Bill Euille, the wonderful host of state and city officials who participated, Waterford Public Relations, the volunteers who packed the truck and all who made the Thanksgiving Turkey Trot a memorable community event that brings us together in Alexandria. Keep up the tradition!

ALIVE! Launches Pilot Program to Feed Children During The Summer

One of ALIVE!'s member congregations, Westminster Presbyterian Church, identified a concern in the community: children were going hungry in the last few weeks of summer. Louise Anderson, Chair of the Westminster Missions Committee and Joan Burchell, co-chair of ALIVE! Last Saturday Food Distribution (LSFD), met with Mary Beth Flowers, Supervisor of Food & Nutrition Department for Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS). ACPS administers the Summer Food Service Program, funded through the U.S. Agriculture Department and serving almost 800 children each day at schools and recreation center locations around the city. However, there was a gap. The City's Summer Feeding Program ends simultaneously with the end of Summer School. For the 3-week interim until the new school year began there would be no food safety net for children.

ALIVE! proposed a pilot interim feeding program to address the two weeks before Labor Day, testing the availability of volunteers and the ability to outreach to families when the children were not attending summer school. Two areas of the city with substantial numbers of at-risk children were identified for the pilot. Those areas were Charles Houston Recreation Center serving north Old Town where there are many housing projects, and Cora Kelly Elementary School in Arlandria where there is a large Hispanic low-income population.

The City Recreation Department agreed, at Ms. Flowers' request, to serve summer lunches at their Charles Houston site for an additional two weeks. The Arlandria gap remained. St. Rita's Catholic Church, through ALIVE! congregational representative Suzanne Arnold, volunteered space to serve lunches. Ms. Flowers secured a federal grant for the lunch service for two more weeks, and 35 volunteers from a dozen congregations staffed the effort.

The "bridge the gap" lunch program, though modest, had a lasting impact from several perspectives. The City's summer feeding sponsors (Alexandria Public Schools and the Recreation Department) have re-examined the Summer Feeding Program and plan to expand coverage of all recreation centers between the end of summer school and commencement of the new school year. Although the turnout was lower than expected, our volunteers made meaningful connections with the children and parents, and they are eager to help again. Also, there were significant lessons learned about using a variety of strategies including word-of-mouth to outreach to the immigrant Arlandria population.

One 'gap' is now addressed, but others remain. ALIVE! hopes to engage in strategies to assure students eat not only a nutritious breakfast, but also a lunch. And the City must still address the challenge of feeding children who receive free and reduced lunches during the school year, but do not participate in summer school programs. The number of children left out exceeds those who now receive at least one meal through the City's summer feeding program.

Many thanks to Mary Beth Flowers of the ACPS, to Susanne Arnold for providing the venue and hours of daily supervision, and to all the volunteers who made this opportunity possible.

The following excerpted letter was sent to the ALIVE! office by John Fleming's grandson, Michael Schubert. John Fleming was mentioned in our last newsletter.

Dear ALIVE!

On June 7, my grandfather passed away. He was 77. In his memory, and on this 78th anniversary of his birth, I make this meager (but well-intentioned) donation.

Growing up, I felt my grandparents' house in Alexandria to be quite literally a magical place: a place where my siblings, cousins, and I felt more comfortable than almost anywhere else in the world. My grandparents spared no emotional expense in making our trips ideal, and there's not a member of my generation who doesn't cherish the years of summer weekends, Christmases, and Thanksgivings that we've spent happily on Timber Branch Drive.

In recent years, regrettably, as my cousins and I grew older, less and less of the time we spent at my grandparents' house was devoted to actually interacting with my grandparents. A notable and particularly vivid exception to that rule has arisen each November for the past several years. On the Friday after Thanksgiving, I've been shaken awake (usually between 8:00 and 8:30 in the morning, which is the grad-student equivalent of the crack of dawn) to go sort the food that's been received during ALIVE!'s various Thanksgiving-day food collection drives. My little brothers and I, along with my younger cousin Nick, have piled into the car with my grandfather, groggy, bleary-eyed, and sullen. We've spent a few hours helping sort, box, and transport the canned goods, and then headed home in the early afternoon for naps and general laziness.

I think my grandfather had two reasons for wanting us to go: first, the food had to be sorted, and we were able-bodied (and outside of our annual food-sorting jaunt, maddeningly inactive) workers. But second, and perhaps more importantly, he wanted to impart to us the recognition that there's really no comparable feeling to the one you get after making a sacrifice (even if it's just sleep) to help someone else. Along the same lines, we had two reasons for getting up and going: first, we knew it would make my grandfather happy. And second, we recognized (perhaps begrudgingly) that his lesson was right.

I don't do nearly as much as I could, or should, but I think that my grandfather would be happy to know that we've at least learned that one lesson: helping others is truly an amazing thing.

In that spirit, I make this donation in his name, on his 78th birthday (September 8, 2004). John Fleming was a tremendous man with an enormous heart, and he made no secret of the fact that he loved ALIVE! and the work that it does. Best wishes, and God bless you for what you do.

Sincerely,

Mike Schubert



Laura Rogers, ALIVE! President with Suzanne Walker; Executive Assistant to the President of MOAA

Our sincere thanks to the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) for the very generous donation to ALIVE!. MOAA sponsors an annual fundraising campaign for their staff, and they have designated ALIVE! to receive those funds. This year the MOAA employees were successful in raising over \$6,000.

That money will go quite far in helping us to serve the needy of Alexandria. We truly appreciate the support of our mission.

ALIVE! Wine

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Alexandria, VA 22302
703-837-9300
www.alive-inc.org
E-mail: alivetoo@aol.com

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ALIVE! is a nonprofit organization founded in 1969 to help Alexandrians facing emergency situations become self-sufficient community members. ALIVE! has grown from a handful of organizations and volunteers to a vigorous organization of 39 congregations and many volunteers.

ALIVE! offers needy Alexandrians help through ALIVE! House Shelter, Furniture, Housewares, Food Pantry, Family Emergency, Child Development Center and Last Saturday Food Distribution Programs.

Contact ALIVE! at 703-837-9300 or by e-mail at AliveToo@aol.com or on the web at

www.alive-inc.org

Winter 2004 /2005 Calendar

January:

4 - ALIVE! Board Meeting; held at Fairlington UMC @ 7:00 pm

29 - *Last Saturday Food* at Church of the Resurrection, Cora Kelly Rec Center, and Ladrey High Rise

Food Collection: Ebenezer Baptist, First Baptist, Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill, St. Rita's Catholic

Furniture Pick up: Washington Street UMC, St. Rita's Catholic

February:

1 - ALIVE! Board Meeting; held at Fairpark Baptist Church @ 7:00 pm

26 - *Last Saturday Food* at Church of the Resurrection, Cora Kelly Rec Center, and Ladrey High Rise

Food Collection: Alexandria Baha'I Assembly, Emmanuel Episcopal, Fairlington Presbyterian, St. Andrews UMC, Del Ray UMC, Beth El Hebrew Congregation, Roberts Memorial UMC

Furniture Delivery: Beverly Hills Community UMC, Fairlington Presbyterian

March:

1 - ALIVE! Board Meeting; TBA

5 - Fools ALIVE! Gala (see details inside)

26: *Last Saturday Food* at Church of the Resurrection, Cora Kelly Rec Center, and Ladrey High Rise

Food Collection: Alexandria Church of the Nazarene, Alfred Street Baptist, Beverly Hills Community UMC, Church of St. Clement, St. James UMC, Third Baptist, Washington Street UMC

Furniture Delivery: Old Presbyterian Meeting House, First Agape Baptist Community