



At the Heart of
Community

United Community Ministries

Leadership Notes

An Update for UCM Insiders

UCMAGENCY.ORG

February 2015

MISSION

UCM mobilizes the power of community to equip, educate, and empower people to measurably improve their lives.

VISION

No member of the UCM community will ever be hungry, homeless, helpless or hopeless.

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Executive Director

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Program Spotlight:

Healthy Families Support Workers Help Young Families Thrive

Last month, our Healthy Families Program Manager, Jeanne Mitchler-Fiks, spent a day with Prevent Child Abuse Virginia (PCAV) at the Virginia State Legislature advocating for funding to improve child health and strengthen families. "UCM's program results are well above expectations," Jeanne told the legislators. "For example, the mothers in our program consistently keep their prenatal doctor appointments.

"This prevents premature births, which are known to result in an additional \$15,000 in medical costs, so there's a measure of positive economic impact in addition to the emotional support provided by our home visits."

Every year, our Family Support Workers (FSWs) provide positive parenting advice during ongoing home visits to 150+ pregnant women and first-time parents. UCM's program is affiliated with Healthy Families America, a nationally accredited program to prevent child abuse and neglect.

At-risk families in our area are referred to UCM's program, typically by the Fairfax County Health Department, regardless of living situation or income level. Our trained, caring FSWs educate parents about positive child-parent interactions and healthy child-rearing practices, screen children for developmental delays, assess the home environment for potential risks, help



UCM's Healthy Families support workers are (from left): Jeanne Mitchler-Fiks, MSW (program manager), Sonia Fratti, Elizabeth Aguilar, Halima Amir, Judith Reggiardo (supervisor), Lizzet Bustamante, Elena Bonilla, and Martha Becar.

families develop goals, and refer parents to available community resources and services.

"We know 93% of the young children in our program are fully immunized, much higher than the state average," Jeanne continues. "This is just one example of how Healthy Families Improves public health and the quality of life for everyone in our community."

Healthy Families Fairfax is just one program in UCM's continuum of services that help families thrive, which also includes our Early Learning Center and after-school programs.

From Nichelle A. Mitchem, UCM Executive Director

Because of you and your support, UCM is truly a network of connected and engaged individuals who ensure the well-being and livelihood of our entire Mount Vernon community. We are so thankful and proud to know that you are one of them.

Your support ensures that UCM can continue to provide comprehensive life-changing programs and services that make a positive, meaningful difference in the lives of countless children, youth, and families. Your support for UCM is a sound social investment that helps people become self-reliant members of our community.

There is a dire need for UCM's programs. Annually, we serve more than 11,000 of our community's most vulnerable members. An average 500 families receive groceries at our Pantry every week. None of these accomplishments would be possible without all that you do to make our organization a vital and continuous resource to help people in need.

Together, we are changing lives – and lifting up hearts. Words cannot entirely express how grateful we are for you and your support. We could not do it without you. We look forward to continuing to partner with you throughout and beyond 2015.

With warm regards and immense gratitude,

New Members Join UCM Board of Directors

UCM's Board elected officers and five new members at its December meeting. Pictured with 2015 UCM Board Chair Gigi Hyland (at far right) are new Board Members (from left): Claudia Creo, retired third grade teacher, Hybla Valley Elementary; Suzy Coffey, President, The Friends of UCM; Abigail Arms, retired Partner, Shearman & Sterling; and Diane Brooks, hospitality industry executive. Not pictured is Kenneth Disselkoen, recently retired Director, Fairfax County Dept. of Systems Management for Human Services. We thank them for their service!



Congratulations to our Newest Citizens!

Help us congratulate these two recent graduates of UCM's Progreso Center for Literacy and Citizenship and our newest US citizens:

- **Judith** is from Mexico and enrolled in our Citizenship class last Fall. She passed the exam on Jan. 15. She is so proud and grateful: "The UCM class helped me to be confident. I felt relaxed and prepared for the exam. Thank you."
- **Safia** from Pakistan came to Progreso for ESL and Citizenship classes, after failing the exam. On Dec. 22, she passed! "Thanks so much for helping me pass," Safia said. She also baked a cake to thank our Progreso staff and volunteers!

Capitol Steps Raises more than \$72,000



Sunday, Jan. 25 was a sold-out, record-breaking evening for our 23rd annual Capitol Steps Benefit, hosted by The Friends of UCM. More than \$72,000 was raised to help families with Basic Needs assistance – thanks to all our attendees, generous event sponsors, and volunteers. And especially our volunteers par excellence, the tireless Friends of UCM, whose energy, talents,

and dedication never cease to amaze us! Thank you for an inspiring evening of fun and fellowship. This annual event is moving to a Fall date and bigger venue – already set for Sunday, Nov. 8, 2015, at the US PTO, Madison Building. Save the date!

Upcoming Events:

Details at www.ucmagency.org

- **Business Networking Breakfast**, Tues., Feb. 24 at 7.30am. 8400 Radford Ave., Alexandria. Greg Wise, Managing Director of Pareto Operations, will demonstrate 3D printing and discuss 3D printing business opportunities.
- **Harmony Heritage Singers Concert**, Sun., Mar. 1 at 3pm, Mount Vernon Unitarian Church.

"The Magic of Giving" Spring Gala - March 21

We hope you'll join us on **Saturday, Mar. 21**, when The Friends of UCM host our annual **Spring Gala**, at the elegant Madison Building, US Patent and Trademark (US PTO) in Old Town. This year's theme is "The Magic of Giving." Enjoy a luxurious evening of cocktails, live and silent auctions (featuring more than 2 dozen 4- and 5-star resort packages), gourmet dinner, and dancing with the band, Tower House.



We are grateful to our many event sponsors (listed at the UCM website). Be sure to reserve your seat or sponsorship soon, via check or credit card (including online). Again this year, \$25 raffle tickets are on sale to win a 4-day, 3-night stay in the Dominican Republic at Casa de Campo, a 5-star resort. A maximum 600 tickets will be sold, and you need not be present to win!

Save the Date Estate Planning Seminar

Join Julie Parks from Parks & Schaffer, PLLC, of Old Town Alexandria at UCM on April 16 for a discussion of wills, trusts, and other estate planning documents. The firm focuses on estate plans for you and your family. It is so important to select the appropriate estate planning tool to fit your personal and financial situation. Julie will be available to answer general estate planning questions after her presentation. The event is at 7pm. Please RSVP to christine.lucas@ucmagency.org.

For questions or for more information about UCM's programs and how your support makes an impact to change lives, contact UCM Director of Development Christine Lucas at 571.255.8985 or christine.lucas@ucmagency.org.

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