



United Community Ministries, Inc.  
Building Strong Families, Strong Communities

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### UCM's Back Porch

A great place to find hidden treasures and to donate your gently used clothing, household items and furniture. Stop in today!

10 am - 6:30 pm Mon.-Sat.  
Noon - 6:30 pm Sunday

Donation Drop Off: 10 am - 5 pm Mon. - Sat.

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Your generosity helps community members in need build brighter futures. Thank you!

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Thank you! Your generous support is changing lives for the better, every single day.



### National Letter Carriers Assn. Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive Saturday, May 12, 2013!

Fill the plastic bag from your letter carrier & leave it by your mailbox. The Post Office will get the food to UCM's Food Pantry.

## Help Out for "Back to School" this Fall

It seems like spring break was just here... but amazingly, plans are already in the works for UCM's Back to School campaign this Fall! Our program would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of scores of caring UCM volunteers to organize the supplies, fill the backpacks, and assist when the families arrive to make selections.



Last Fall, community members donated new backpacks and money for UCM to purchase discounted school supplies, so that 1,088 local children started school ready to succeed! Thanks to a partnership with Fairfax County Public Schools and Kids R First, UCM is able to convert each \$10 donation into about \$40 worth of supplies to fill a backpack for one needy student.

Our lead volunteers (who prefer to remain anonymous) never cease to amaze us with their planning and logistics skills to organize our program every year. More information about our specific volunteer needs and signups will be coming soon at our website. We hope you'll start thinking ahead to this July and August to plan how your family or group can organize a backpack collection drive — or volunteer to help out!



# United Community Ministries

Building Strong Families, Strong Communities

Spring 2013

# Community Connections

News for Supporters of United Community Ministries

## Friends of UCM Hosts Successful Events

Once again, the Friends of UCM group outdid themselves with a phenomenal Capitol Steps Benefit performance on February 10 and the annual Friends of UCM Spring Gala: *Light Up the Night in Black & White*, held on April 6.

The Friends of UCM is an extraordinary volunteer membership organization that builds community spirit through fundraising and public awareness activities for UCM. Through their efforts, over \$1 million has been raised since the group's founding in 2001. "And just as important, thousands of local residents have learned about the needs of their low-income neighbors and about how they can help UCM provide solutions," says UCM Executive Director Shirley Marshall.



**Capitol Steps 2013.** A record number of community members came together to support UCM at the Knights of Columbus Hall for this year's Capitol Steps Benefit. Attendees roared with laughter at the group's antics, had the opportunity to win fabulous raffle baskets, and raised more than \$56,000 to help UCM continue to help people in need.

**Spring Gala: Light Up the Night in Black & White.** The April 6 Spring Gala at the Mount Vernon Country Club was a special evening we won't soon forget. More than 200 attendees walked the red carpet to be treated to a sumptuous dinner, fabulous silent and live auctions, dancing, and fun for all. More than \$123,000 was raised to bring a brighter future for thousands of people in need.



"We count ourselves extraordinarily fortunate to have our Friends support us with these major fundraising events," continues Shirley. Hundreds of volunteer hours and tireless dedication and hard work go into their planning and execution. These events raise critical funds for people in crisis. Thank you – Friends of UCM rock!"

We are especially grateful to the event co-chairs and to our event sponsors, listed on page 4. All our generous sponsors are acknowledged at [www.ucmagency.org](http://www.ucmagency.org).

Would you like to learn more about the Friends of UCM? Email President Diane Tollefson at [diane.tollefson@gmail.com](mailto:diane.tollefson@gmail.com).



## From Shirley's Desk

Dear Friends,

Spring is our time of year to celebrate the dedication of our awesome supporters. Their generous involvement makes UCM's work possible.

Last year, volunteers dedicated 20,971 hours to making UCM programs happen:

- From the dedicated volunteer who delivers food every week to a homebound 82-year-old,
- To the caring volunteer who reads to a young child,
- To the knowledgeable volunteers who teach technology to youth and adults at our community centers.

Volunteers are truly the heart of UCM. They change lives for the better, one person at a time, each and every day.

I encourage you to get involved with our work in a way that inspires you to make a difference. We have scores of volunteer opportunities available to accommodate varied interests and busy schedules – for individuals, groups, families, teens, and businesses. Too busy to volunteer right now? We welcome your financial support.

Thank you, volunteers and donors, for being part of our programs and impact. You make it possible for our clients to have someone to turn to in their times of trouble.

Shirley

Shirley M. Marshall  
Executive Director



## Families that Volunteer Together.... Have Fun Together!



Volunteer groups are needed each month to provide and serve a meal at the Life Skills Dinners for UCM's transitional housing program families. This is an ideal opportunity for families, teens, or work colleagues who have busy schedules but want to help out.

Thank you to the Edison High School students who volunteered with their parents to host our February and March dinners. They earned community service hours for the time preparing & serving a meal for families in our supportive housing programs. The teens have been friends almost their whole lives. Over winter break the families traveled together to visit colleges. During the trip, one of the teens received an email from UCM calling for volunteers – and they decided to participate together.

In photo below, from left are: UCM housing program case managers Caitlin Hollis and Stefanie Bass; mothers Marge McConnell, Tina Musleh, Monica Rodgers; Sophia Musleh and Kelly McConnell, both juniors at Edison; Andy Rodgers, eighth grader at Mark Twain; and Orlis Perla, junior at Edison. (Pictured at above right: Tina Musleh, Walt Dandridge and son Harrison, Edison junior; and Margaret Roberts. Not pictured but participating were her daughter Katie, also a junior; and Norma Perla, mother of Orlis.)

Meals can be cooked from scratch or restaurant carryout. Volunteers are asked to underwrite the tax-deductible cost of the food and to prepare and serve the meal to the group of 20 to 30 adults and children. And volunteers are welcome to stay to listen to the program speakers on topics such as positive parenting and relationship building.

"We are grateful to our volunteers for the delicious dinners and assistance," says Caitlin Hollis, MSW, case manager for UCM's Journeys program. "Our client parents really appreciate and look forward to a home-cooked meal with other families. The workshops provide a chance to interact and share with other parents who are dealing with similar challenges on the path to self-sufficiency."



## Volunteers, You Inspire Us!



Our community's generous involvement ensures our neighbors in need have the opportunity to achieve and maintain stability. We have a wide variety of volunteer opportunities for individuals, groups, families, teens, and businesses. Join us and your neighbors today! Visit our website for more information and our volunteer applications for both adults and youth. Or send us an email at [volunteer@ucmagency.org](mailto:volunteer@ucmagency.org).



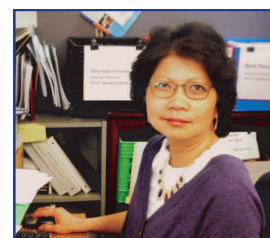
The friendly face of Eileen Friedman greets families who are applying for assistance. She serves as a volunteer Basic Needs Counselor: "I am glad to be able to help people through a crisis and get to see their progress. The staff at UCM makes us feel like an integral part of the team. We are all working towards the same end goal."



Golden Giddings is retired from the federal government and volunteers at UCM's Sacramento Neighborhood Center: "I live in this community and want to give back. My 8th grade grand-daughter enjoys being at the Center after school. I love being here on Fridays at the front desk. I get to meet and interact with so many different and friendly people!"



Zantel is an eighth grader at Mark Twain Middle School. He enjoys the after-school activities at UCM's Sacramento Center and now volunteers too, mostly helping younger students with their journaling: "I just wrote a proposal for my idea to create a 'Caring is Important' team. My friend Roberto and I could be counselors to the younger kids who tell us they had a not-so-great day at school. I hope we get to do it!"



Ann Clay recently retired from her technology career with the federal government: "My hours at UCM can be flexible, and I enjoy using my database and training skills to help UCM. I have helped organize the Help the Homeless campaign data, as well as the donations and volunteer databases. I am happy to give my time to help people."

## "Those Who Can, Do...."



It has been said that "Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer." That is certainly true of all our UCM volunteers – but it especially describes Mike Damitz.

Chances are, if you've spent any time at all at UCM's offices, you've encountered Mike's smiling face and warm heart. On Wednesdays, he typically can be found making food deliveries to UCM clients who are homebound. During the holidays, Mike drives to pick up the Toys for Tots we receive from the Marines. Throughout the year, he's always willing to be "on-call" for special needs as they arise.

Mike is retired from Exxon Mobil, and in addition to his commitment to UCM's mission, he also participates in the company's "Dollars for Doers" program that translates his volunteer hours into an annual cash grant to UCM.

Many employers (even small to mid-size) offer these volunteer grants as a way to give back to nonprofits that employees care about. To find out if your employer will give back in this way, contact your Human Resources Department to let them know you support UCM.

## Early Childhood Care & Learning



UCM is an essential resource for working families who are struggling to make ends meet. A key path to their success is our Bryant Early Learning Center, which provides full-day quality, affordable early care and learning. The majority of the children, ages 6 weeks to 5 years, are from low-income families.

One of our most critical needs is volunteers to interact with the infants and toddlers. Jennifer Marks is a long-time supporter of UCM, having co-chaired fundraising events like the annual Capitol Steps benefit and served as a board member. But once retired from a career at the US Census Bureau, "I really wanted to get back to interacting with the families and children that UCM serves," she says.

And as you can tell from these photos, she sure is! Most Friday mornings you'll find Jennifer at the Center, assisting the lead teacher in the Infant Room. "The early years are so critical for a child's development," says Jennifer. "Just by being here to play with or read to the children for some extra one-on-one attention is so gratifying. It's fun to see them learn and grow. And I get my exercise too!"

This opportunity is perfect for retired teachers or any adult who likes children. If you or someone you know would like to volunteer, email [marcos.castillo@ucmagency.org](mailto:marcos.castillo@ucmagency.org).



## It takes all of us to help our neighbors in need... Volunteer at UCM!

## Volunteers Make Community Center Programs Happen

You probably know that UCM's community centers provide many after-school activities and field trips for youth and families, thanks to generous community support. Creekside Village fathers and children enjoyed a recent bus trip to the Baltimore Science Museum trips, made possible thanks to the Mount Vernon Kiwanis Club.

But did you know that our Community Centers offer numerous volunteer opportunities for both adults and especially for teens to "give back" in a peer-to-peer capacity?

**Sacramento Neighborhood Center.** UCM's Youth Programs promote positive youth development and leadership, with a passion for a lifetime of learning. On weekdays, high school students can volunteer to interact with elementary school children for Homework Help, Reading Buddies, Learning Clubs, Computer Clubhouse, and Activity Clubs like art and yoga.



Pictured at right, Leslie is a junior at West Potomac High School. She's enjoying community service hours at the Center providing after-school Homework Help with younger students. She also served as a volunteer chaperone for the field trip to the Udvar-Hazy Center during spring break. "It's fun working with the kids. I encourage my fellow students to volunteer at Sacramento."

**Creekside Village Community Center.** Teen volunteer Nina (pictured at left) developed and led a workshop at Creekside Village during spring break 2013 for her Girl Scout Gold Award project. Activities for the grade schoolers focused on environmental awareness, recycling, and how to keep our watershed clean and trash free. Nina has been volunteering at Creekside since elementary school in Alexandria and is now a sophomore at Thomas Jefferson High School. Helping her out were friend Maura, West Potomac High, with sister Maddie, an eighth grader at Carl Sandburg.



Be a role model volunteering with children at UCM's neighborhood centers!

