

# MEETING EMERGENCY NEEDS WITH DIGNITY

*An Interfaith Emergency Food Network*

Quarterly Newsletter

Summer 2011

*"We are the light of God's kindness to the poor... Give them not only your care, but also your heart."  
—Mother Teresa*

## MEND Mission

An interfaith organization meeting the emergency needs of the disadvantaged of Essex County; working to support and facilitate their growth as self-sufficient individuals; assisting them in obtaining benefits to which they are entitled; and advocating for policies that will improve the quality of their lives.

## EIGHTH ANNUAL ESSEX COUNTY WALK TO END HUNGER

**The Eighth Annual Essex County Walk to End Hunger**, co-sponsored by Meeting Emergency Need With Dignity, Inc. (MEND) and Catholic Charities, was held on Friday, May 6, 2011. The event, blessed with a large turnout and a pleasant, sunny day, was remarkable for the obvious feelings of community and solidarity among its participants. Joining the Walk were representatives from 19 Essex County food pantries, churches, synagogues, temples and schools. In keeping with tradition, the Walk was held on the first Friday of May, commencing with a rally at Newark's Washington Park. Upon arrival participants were first directed to the registration tables and offered refreshments before relaxing and enjoying music provided by the Bob Lanza Blues Band. While



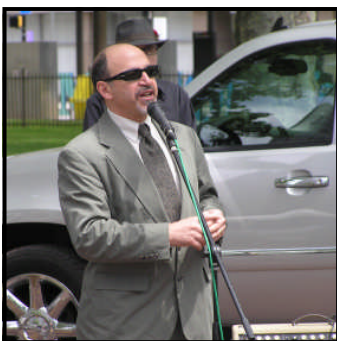
*Students from Christ the King Prep, Newark, holding the banner at the Eighth Annual Essex County Walk to End Hunger*

waiting for the formalities, participants were able to visit a health fair with health services and information provided by New Jersey Family Care, Faithfully Fit, St. Michael's Hospital, and Newark Beth Israel Hospital. About noon, Sharon Reilly-Tobin, Executive Director of MEND and a member of its Board of Directors, welcomed the Walk participants and reminded all that the purpose of the Walk is to increase awareness of the problem of hunger in Essex County and to raise funds for food and other needs of the members of our communities who come to the pantries for help. She noted that all funds received from pledges, totaling about \$12,000, given by supporters of the walkers will

be used solely for the purchase of food to stock participating pantries.

Following Ms. Reilly-Tobin's comments, the Reverend Rodwell G. Thom, pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church of East Orange, introduced the Honorable Jerry Fried, mayor of Montclair, and the Honorable Eldridge Hawkins, Jr., mayor of Orange, each of whom addressed the rally, acknowledging the importance of its purpose in these times that are difficult for so many.

After roll calls recognizing those who provide support



The Honorable Jerry Fried  
Mayor of Montclair



The Honorable Eldridge Hawkins  
Mayor of Orange

*(Continued on page 2)*

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and services to MEND's cause and a blessing of the walkers by Sister Linda Klaiss of St. Mary's Church, Newark, the



walkers, escorted, escorted by the Newark Police Department, set off for 50 Walnut. The walkers, chanting "Help Us Feed—Kids in Need—1 in 6 Are Hungry" were warmly greeted by pedestrians and shoppers along the route, some of whom joined enthusiastically in the chant or offered other signs of support. The walkers continued down Broad Street in an or-



North Star Academy students participating in the Walk

derly manner, reflecting the peace and unity that characterized the Walk from start to finish. After arriving at 50 Walnut, the walkers gathered on the steps of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Courthouse to hear comments by Lisa Pitz, Director of Outreach for the New Jersey Anti-Hunger Coalition before returning to Washington Park for pictures and cleaning up the registration area. before departing.

MEND is especially appreciative of the students from Christ the King Prep and North Star Academy who joined this year's Walk. Asata Hogans, an eighth grader at North Star, said the North Star students had all volunteered to participate. She added, "I know there are people out there who are hungry. The Walk was a positive way to help." Chalo Pope, also an eighth grader at North Star, felt, "The Walk was a good thing to do. It brings notice to the world about the issue of hunger." Both students said they would gladly participate in future Walks if given the opportunity. Eddie Shore, faculty advisor to the Christ the King Prep participants, reported, "They were a fantastic group. I think it led a few of them to take advantage of opportunities to learn more about activism and social justice. A few of them ended up going to the NJ Peace Summit at NJPAC a couple weeks later." MEND hopes to see these students and more next year!

## A Message from ...

Sister Linda Klaiss SSJ  
St. Mary's/Pierre Touissant Pantry

### The earth is full of the goodness of God. Psalm 33

As summer months approach we are aware of the goodness and abundance of the earth, a gift from God to all. There are acres of farmland, oceans teeming with sea life, private and neighborhood gardens. We feast our eyes on the vibrant colors of plants and flowers and summer produce of every kind.

Yet, with all the wondrous gifts of creation that fill our world there is hunger within our own country and overwhelming hunger in third world countries. How can this be, we wonder? In a country of abundance with an earth full of every resource needed to sustain a global family, how can people go to bed hungry?

We wait for the government to make hunger disappear. We wait for someone else to solve the huge problem of the environment. We say we are just one person, but what difference can we initiate to make the earth able to sustain a wholesome life for all.

Summer is a time when the rhythm of life changes a bit. Although we still have workdays and houses to keep life seems to take on a different pace. The days are longer and warm weather gives everyone reason to pause and rest awhile by the ocean or in the park or your own back yards. We are invited to notice the summer gifts of beauty that the earth provides and savor the summer tastes of fresh strawberries and other fruits and vegetables fresh from the earth.

As we change pace can we also introduce other changes into our lives that can be small ways to make a big difference! Easy, thoughtful, everyday changes can make a difference for us and for the future.

Why not...

- **purchase** a refillable water bottle or a filtered water pitcher for your refrigerator. Do you know that we are the world's leading consumer of bottled water, drinking over 26 billion liters, or approximately one 8-ounce glass per person every day. At as much as \$2.50 per liter (\$10 per gallon), bottled water costs more than gasoline. A surprising array of chemical contaminants and with 60 million plastic bottles A DAY to be manufactured, transported and then disposed of in U.S. landfills, "it's killing our planet, and for no good reason..."

- **look** for Fair Trade products such as coffee, bananas, etc. Fair Trade products ensure fair pay and just working conditions for workers harvesting so many of the products we consume.

- **support** local farmers at farm markets throughout our cities in these summer months. They need our appreciation and support for the labor of their hands if they are to continue.

- **plant** your own garden – a patio garden, a few containers work just fine even in a small space. Teach the young ones and share with neighbors and those in need.

- **commit** to use only biodegradable products when picnicking in the parks, on the beach or in our own back yards. Some of throw away products stay in our landfills for generations.

Don't litter! Don't waste! Recycle! Do take time to enjoy the summer gifts that come to us from an extravagant Creator. Be grateful and use well these gifts from the earth. The Earth Charter tells us: "We stand at a critical moment in the Earth's history, when humanity must choose its future..." Everyday we make choices. Let us choose wisely for the future of our earth and for the future of our world community.

A great source of reminders is Green America [coopamericanews@coopamerica.org](http://coopamericanews@coopamerica.org)

## St. Mary's Church/ Pierre Toussaint Pantry

The St. Mary's Church/Pierre Toussaint food pantry, along with St. Benedict's Prep and St. Mary's elementary school, is nestled within the Newark Abbey complex of the Benedictine monks. Although the pantry has been in operation for over 25 years, except for the third and fourth Friday and Saturday of each month when it is serving clients, a passerby on Martin Luther King Blvd. would not be aware of its existence.

But it has been there for all those years, faithfully serving those in need since its establishment by Sister Mary Magdalene, SSJ, known as "Sister Mag", who believed, "Miracles happen." Sister Mag, who passed away in 1993, was succeeded by Sister Linda Klaiss, SSJ, who was joined shortly thereafter by her colleague, Ambrose Amoakoh. They

have been working together as a team for going on 17 years. Although employed full time in their regular jobs, Sister Linda as a pastoral associate at St. Mary's Church and Ambrose as a social worker, they have been able to dedicate the third and fourth weekends



*Sister Linda Klaiss, SSJ, and Ambrose Amoakoh*

of each month to ensuring that the food pantry operates smoothly. Sister Linda focuses on providing assistance to singles on Friday mornings, and Ambrose assists families on Saturday mornings. On any given Friday, the pantry may serve anywhere from 30 to 60 clients. Saturdays are busier, naturally, as the focus is on families. Ambrose says that on a typical Saturday, the pantry may serve 70 families, or about 200 people in all, about 2/3 of whom are children.

As with all MEND pantries, Saint Mary's/Pierre Toussaint is dependent upon both donations and volunteers. It is blessed to have invaluable volunteers, especially Ms. Alice Moore and Mrs. Paula Roudette who come in regularly to assist in bagging and distributing food parcels. In addition 8th graders from St. Mary's school volunteer on Wednesdays to assist in packaging food, as do students from Seton Hall during the school year. Sister Linda notes that the young people who come in contact with the pantry's clients conclude that "They are really

nice people."

The pantry is particularly pleased to have the services of volunteer George Nwodili who has assisted for the past 15 years by picking up food donated to the pantry. Sister Linda explained, "We always get volunteers. That is how we manage. People always show up!"

In addition to residents of Newark and nearby Essex County communities, the pantry has recently noted that some new clients are coming from Union County, reflecting the greater need in this difficult economy. Sister Linda observes, "People are becoming more desperate. The pantry used to be used for emergency needs; now it appears clients need it as an on-going supplement to help feed their families."

Although the demand for food assistance is increasing, the St. Mary's Church/Pierre Toussaint pantry operates essentially in borrowed space and has no obvious possibility to expand physically. However, Ambrose points out, "We can serve more people here if we can get the food."

Of course, the question of how to increase their pantry's food supply is not unique to St. Mary's/Pierre Toussaint. It is an issue being faced by all MEND food pantries, St. Mary's/Pierre Toussaint, like the other pantries, has reached out in multiple ways to increase the food support it can provide to its clients. It has developed relationships with much larger pantries operated by Saint John's and Saint Ann's churches in Newark which graciously make available to St. Mary's/Pierre Toussaint food items that are in excess of those required for their own needs. The pantry also receives much needed support from Our Lady of Perpetual Help of Oakland, NJ and The Church of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Wallington, NJ. It is also pleased to benefit from food drives conducted by the students of St. Mary's School, St. Benedict's Prep and Oak Knoll School of the Holy Child Girl's High School.

With this support from other churches, from government resources, and from a grant by the Victoria Foundation used to acquire a large refrigerator, Ambrose states, "We have never had to turn people away, although we sometimes have to ration more than we would like."

There can be no question that Sister Linda and Ambrose are dedicated to doing all they can to satisfy the emergency food needs of their clients. But despite the demands of the pantry and of their "day jobs," they take an additional step in service. Each year with the assistance of Saint Joseph Church in Maplewood and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Oakland, and a dedicated group of "special volunteers," the pantry undertakes a program to provide gifts at Christmas for needy children (apart from the MEND Help a Family at Christmas).

Thank you St. Mary's/Pierre Toussaint.

# Cougar Soccer Club Tournament Benefits MEND Pantries

On Saturday, May 28, the MEND Ministry of Prospect Presbyterian Church, in conjunction with the Cougar Soccer Club of Maplewood-South Orange conducted a food drive as part of the soccer club's annual Memorial Day Weekend Soccer Tournament for 8 to 19 year-old youths.

This year the Cougar Soccer Club joined with MEND to help feed the poor in Essex County. The effort was coordinated by Prospect Presbyterian members Andrew Quirk and Jamie Anthony, who is also chairman of Meeting Emergency Need With Dignity, Inc., a coalition of 16 Essex County food pantries. Working with the tournament organizers, coaches and Sharon Tobin, Executive Director of MEND, Inc., Andrew and Jamie devised a program for the collection of food and its distribution to MEND food pantries.

Under the program, tournament players were asked to participate in providing food relief to th hungry. Participants could make their contributions in



Andrew Quirk and his wife Patricia



Jamie Anthony with daughter Ashley  
Credit Claire Sinclair

one or more of three ways. First, team members could choose to fill a plastic grocery bag with needed items from their home or purchased in a store. Second, team members could take promotional materials provided by MEND to their neighbors and ask them to help fill a plastic grocery bag with food or other needed items listed in the materials provided by MEND. The third option offered to participants was to solicit their parents and family members for tax-deductible cash or secure credit card contributions, with all such contributions to be used to purchase food for MEND pantries.

Participating team members were asked to bring all donated financial contributions and plastic bags of donated food items to the tournament sites before their first game on Saturday, May 28, and deliver the money or items to one of the MEND contribution tables set up

at each field.

It was a good day for soccer and a good day for food collections. Approximately 1,500 youths participated in the Memorial Day Weekend Soccer Tournament. Many



Ryan Morey and Michael Pierre at a contribution table  
Credit Claire Sinclair

of the participants supported the food drive with plastic bags of staple food or cash contributions. As a result, the MEND pantries received a much-appreciated 1,100 pounds plus of food and over \$200 from contributions from Saturday tournament participants.



Some food contribution  
Credit Claire Sinclair

These results will benefit the clients of the 16 inter-faith MEND food pantries in Essex County. The importance of this contribution is clear when one considers that thee has been a 30% increase in the number of families and individuals call-

ing on food pantries for assistance at a time when those pantries are experiencing increasing shortages of basic food items for distribution.

In addition to providing critical help for those in need, the Cougar Soccer Club believes that taking part in the food drive was a very meaningful and productive experience for its participating members and their coaches and parents. The club felt



Some typical staples contributed  
Credit Claire Sinclair

that everyone had the opportunity to enjoy a weekend of soccer while donating their time and efforts to help those less fortunate.

MEND certainly extends a big "Thank you!!" to the players, coaches, and organizers of the tournament and to all the volunteers from Prospect Presbyterian and the Maplewood-South Orange community who made this event and drive possible. MEND hopes that others will conduct similar activities for the benefit of the poor. And, indeed, others are beginning to come forward.

## MEND UPCOMING EVENTS

### Save The Dates

**“Hunger Doesn’t Take A Vacation” Food Drive**  
**June 27 to August 26**

**“Back To School Supplies” Drive**  
**July 18 to September 2**

**North Jersey Media “Action Against Hunger” Drive**  
**Sunday, October 2**

For details and promotional materials about these events, please contact the MEND Central Office at (973) 266-7941

### A UNIQUE GIFT IDEA

Commemorate a birthday, anniversary, or other momentous event in a meaningful way. For a minimum donation of \$5, MEND will send the person you designate a card noting your donation on their behalf to help feed the hungry of Essex County. Monies received will be used for the purchase of emergency food supplies for the 16 Meeting Emergency Needs With Dignity pantries. Mail your donations along with the information requested below to **MEND, 37 Evergreen Place, East Orange, NJ 07018** or call (973) 266-7941.

#### Please Print:

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name to be Shown on Gift Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Person You Wish to Designate: \_\_\_\_\_

Is Your Designee: Living: \_\_\_\_\_ or Deceased: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Whom should we notify of your gift:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

## MEND Board of Directors

Jamie Anthony, Chairman of the Board & President  
Sharon Reilly-Tobin, Executive Director  
Julie Brooks, Treasurer  
Helen Brooks, Secretary  
Garrett Gray, Assistant Secretary

## SHARE THE HARVEST

### A MEND Summer Project

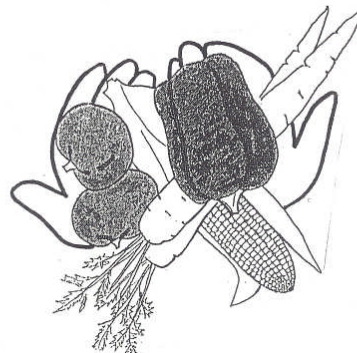
MEND, an interfaith anti-hunger network serving Essex County for over 30 years, is collecting surplus summer produce in order to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to the needy.

### Attention Gardeners!!

### There’s a Growing Concern!

Are you finding yourself stuck with too many tomatoes, a lot of lettuce, a cache of carrots? We need your help to bring fresh fruits and vegetables to the hungry of Essex County. During the summer months, many food pantries are desperately under-stocked. **SHARE THE HARVEST** with people in need by bringing in your extra produce. Please contact the MEND office at 973-266-7941 for more information.

## Help fight hunger in Essex County!



## PLEASE JOIN OUR EFFORT

**MEND is a local non-profit food assistance network serving communities throughout Essex County. We have many opportunities available for houses of worship, youth groups, schools, service organizations and individuals to help those in need. For information, contacts us:**

**MEND Central Office**

**37 Evergreen Place**

**East Orange, NJ 07018**

**(973) 266 7941**

**Fax #: (973) 675-6935**

**Email: info@mendnj.org**

**Website: www.mendnj.org**

**HUNGER DOESN'T TAKE A VACATION**  
**Food Drive**

For many families the summer months are filled with fun, vacations and relaxing activities. Unfortunately, for many of those we serve through the 16 MEND pantries, summertime means increased hardship. Many of the families we assist depend on the school lunch and breakfast programs to help fill their children's nutritional needs. Having to provide three meals a day for hungry children places an even bigger demand on very limited resources. Pantries are hard pressed to feed the increased number of families coming for help.

At the same time, donations to the MEND network drop off or stop completely during the summer months. This year has been especially difficult with a 30% drop in donations.

The 16 pantries in the MEND network serve those struck by fire, theft, unemployment, illness and other crises. In 2010 alone MEND was able to serve over 75,000 individuals in Essex County. Of this number, 26,922 (40%) were under the age of 18.

**YOU** can make an important difference by sponsoring a food drive at your house of worship anytime during July and August, or by making a cash contribution. Consider collecting food at your block party, children's summer camp or recreational program. MEND can provide promotional materials for your drive and has a van and driver available to pick up donations.

**Right now our shelves are empty. Any assistance you can provide will be most appreciated. For further information, please call the MEND Central Office at (973) 266-7941.**

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, We will sponsor a **HUNGER DOESN'T TAKE A VACATION** food drive for MEND on \_\_\_\_\_ We will call for a pick up two weeks before the drive.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, We will make a tax-deductible monetary donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to MEND for the purchase of food supplies.

**Please send or fax this document to: MEND, 37 Evergreen Place, East Orange, N. J. 07018  
Fax # (973) 675-6935, or email us at [info@mendnj.org](mailto:info@mendnj.org)**

**On behalf of the vulnerable families we serve, THANK YOU!**

Meeting Emergency Needs With Dignity, Inc.  
37 Evergreen Place  
East Orange, New Jersey 07018



*An interfaith anti-hunger  
coalition serving the needy for  
nearly 30 years*

TO:

Contact us at:  
info@mendnj.org  
(973) 266-7941

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