

North Rampart Community Center

Greetings!

“For we walk by faith and not by sight:”—2 Corinthians 5:7

2008 was one of the most challenging and trying times for the ministry at the North Rampart Community Center (NRCC). Through it all, however, there were many rewarding moments in the lives of the staff, board of directors, children, youth and their families here at the Center. There were times when we did not know how we were going to pay the bills or even the staff. But God made a way and we will continue to make a way for us here at the Center. We are blessed to have had volunteers from around the world come and mentor to the children as well as encourage the staff.

The question, how we responded to God presence in the world was asked of me by the Mission Personnel Office of the General Board of Global Ministries and I thought that it was appropriate to share with the conference about how NRCC my response. We responded to the God’s presence in the world in 2008 by focusing on the children and their needs and many issues that their parents/guardians and they are facing daily in their lives. Even though we were short staffed (including teachers, tutors, mentors, instructors and other administered staff members) and underfunded, we continued to press on to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14). We trusted that everything would work out according to God’s purpose and plan for the Center and it did. The children come to the Center to have fun and seek help in their studies as well as their personal lives. As I looked closely I could see God presence. As I watched them running, laughing, studying and engaging in the many activities of the Center there was a sense of God’s grace all around them. Even on “Fun Friday” when we invited different professionals and Christian educators to the Center to mentor, the children responded to them with such gratitude. Without prompting they thanked them for coming and spending time with them. They expressed appreciation for their sharing a part of their lives with them. To watch each child be on their best behavior brought joy to my heart. I thank God when volunteers and visitors come and say how well mannered the children are. I am so grateful that we did not have any major incidents concerning these children.

I am happy to announce that we finished our afterschool program with over 250 children enrolled. We provided them with the very best assistance that we could in spite of the shortage of funding and staff. We served over 31 different schools in the Greater New Orleans area. For one of the schools we served, 50% of the children belong to a KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) school. The children that go to this school are classified as the children from underserved communities. These schools (KIPP) are designed to prepare them for success in college and life. I am grateful that the Center plays a part in

preparing the children for success in life because this is where my heart is, and that is also the mission of this Center - to bring the family to wholeness. Our Summer Camp was just as rewarding as the after-school program. We had 75 youth enrolled who learned how to swim, make jewelry, type, create Power Point presentations. They also learned about famous authors, business owners, sports and inventors.

Our goals for the upcoming year are: to continue establishing relationships with local community leaders, establishing partnerships with business and other nonprofit organizations and mentoring the children and developing leaders.

The concerns and challenges facing the board or agency are funding and staff. I would like to say even though we saw God move mighty and he will continue to move as long as we are faithful to him; we still closed out 2008 in the red. We had to use some of the reserve money to make payroll.

We are looking for two instructors in each of the areas to take the strain off the other instructors when one of them is absent. I am happy that we are classified as an AARP Workers site. We have three workers in the morning that clean and answer the phone, and two in the evening who work with the nutritionist and open the computer lab so that the children can have access to the computers. I would prefer to have an instructor to teach them for at least 30 minutes of computer skills.

As I close, I would like to say we are so grateful to be a part of such a loving Conference who cares about what we are doing at North Rampart Community Center. I cannot express how we feel about how you showered us during 2008, with all of the phone calls, visits, cards, emails, letters with your concerns of how we are doing and yes, funding. Thank you!

Blessings and Peace,
Deaconess Joanne Finley, Church and Community Worker