

# **Around The Circle**

news from Circle Of Concern  
*our community's charity*

August 2009

## **From the President...**



This year, Circle of Concern will feed over 20,000 clients. Feeding people is the main function of our charity. But, as Circle has evolved, our services to the poor have expanded.

We provide emergency financial aid to deserving families in need. This year we will help over 600 families with emergency financial assistance that will total nearly \$100,000. During the year, we provide our client's kids with birthday gifts and furnish them with back to school supplies. We provide scholarships to deserving young candidates. We send kids to summer camp. Circle also has established annual programs at the end of the year that distributes food baskets at Thanksgiving, provides toys to needy kids and coordinates the adoption of needy families during the December Holiday period.

We don't think that's enough! One major emphasis going forward will be to efficiently establish new services to our client-base. Circle of Concern envisions becoming an organization that provides **many** services that help lower-income families manage their situations and overcome their time in need. Our New Services Committee (headed by Janice Hartman) is conducting client surveys that will guide us in developing these appropriate new services.

We need to fully utilize our new building and are working hard to do it the right way. It just makes good sense.

~Jerry Caesar

## **Gala Grand Opening**

### **Circle's New Center**

Mark your calendars: The official Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting at Circle Of Concern's new center is set for **2:00 p.m. on Sunday, September 27.**

The ribbon cutting will be followed by tours of the new building and light refreshments.

All friends of Circle are encouraged to join us for this special afternoon.

## **Record Demand Continues**

By the end of July Circle had fed more people this year than the pantry helped in all of 2003. **In 2003 Circle fed 8,917 people. By July 31, 2009 Circle had fed 9,479.** (We'll pass 2004's total fed this month.) Also this July, Circle spent more helping families with rent, utility bills and other aid than in any month in our history.

This June a record **1,071,194** Missouri residents — *one person in six* — received Food Stamps: **120,382** are in St. Louis County.

## **Purchased Food**

Each week Circle buys perishable item to share with families. In July, a family of four received....

<b>Frozen Meat</b> (chicken, ground beef & hot dogs)	<b>\$7.61</b>
<b>Dairy Items</b> (skim milk & eggs)	<b>\$3.43</b>
<b>Fresh Produce</b> (apples, bananas, carrots, onions, oranges, potatoes, etc.)	<b>\$9.40</b>



**Total = \$20.44**

**This year Circle expects to spend \$120,000 buying food to supplement donations.**

## **July 2009 Services**

**Food Pantry: 1,460 people fed and 2,387 bags of food shared**

**Financial Assistance: \$12,433.50 aid to 75 families**

**\*\* 235 volunteers worked 2,065¾ hours at Circle in July \*\***

## Glenn's Column

From time to time friends in academia ask Circle Of Concern for basic data on families needing help. Community charities like us document "trends" months before government reports discover reality.

One of these friends noted that the worst is yet to come, especially here in greater St. Louis. He expects the national unemployment rate to top 11% and, perhaps worse, he projects that more than 40% of American households will report less total income in 2010 than in 2008.

Job losses, the increase in involuntarily part-time workers, commission sales and tipped workers bringing home less, struggling stock prices and dropping real estate values will manage to sting a lot of families. St. Louis is poised to take a hard hit because of the rapid decline of the auto industry here and 'softness' in major financial services operations.

I asked for some encouraging news: He told me Albert Pujols is having a great year.

Despite the summer heat, it's time around Circle to start planning for the cold, early days of 2010. With the new center we have the facility to handle the growing number of needy families. Yet, we still face challenges in getting all the resources necessary to reach out to every one seeking aid.

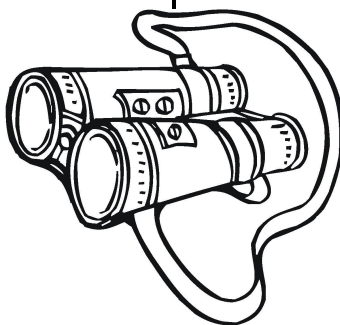
Many, many years ago my dad taught my sister and me how to swim. (Turning over and pulling the plug on a raft a hundred yards from shore was one of his teaching tricks.) He repeatedly told us that it doesn't matter how deep the water is because you're swimming on top.

The good news is that most of us are still on top of the water. Yes, the economy is rough and we all know many people pulled under the waves. More will probably take on water.

Yet, the most of us are still doing ok – maybe not great but good enough. We can still help, we can continue to share food and other things many of our neighbors need.

We can still write checks to Circle and other charities. A pile of forty \$25 checks can buy just as much ground beef and milk as one check for \$1,000. (Of course, those \$1,000 checks are welcome too.)

And, many of us have bits of extra time. Even if we can't share food or money we can give our time to run food drives or do other things to keep Circle Of



## Looking Ahead

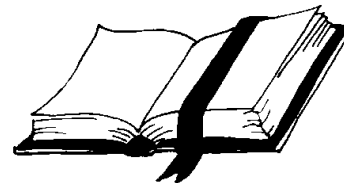
Concern operating.

Very soon kids will go back to school, Labor Day picnics will mark the end of summer and we'll start thinking about the Holidays. The New Year gets closer every day.

Please open your hearts to our neighbors. Despite these rough times, remember to help us help them.

### Faith Beyond Walls Youth Help Circle

Young people from the St. Louis and Kansas City areas participating in Faith Beyond Wall's helped out at Circle's pantry – and all across Valley Park – in late July. The boys and girls, age 12 to 18, rotated time at Circle and other locations. The group also visited different religious buildings in the area.



### Happy Holidays!

This month, Circle's elves begin the process of signing-up families for this year's Holiday Program. Eligible families will meet with an elf to get clothing sizes and find out what special items each family member needs.



Groups wanting to adopt families for the Holidays should contact Circle after Labor Day.

The elves will begin matching groups and families in October.

### Change Is In The Air

Over the next few issues we'll be trying out some possible new designs for this newsletter. We want **Around The Circle** to be easy and interesting to read. If you have any comments please feel free to e-mail us at [circleofconcern@att.net](mailto:circleofconcern@att.net) or drop us a note. Thanks.



## The People We Help

### The People We Help

A friend brought Franny to Circle late on a Friday afternoon, just as we were locking the doors. Her family of five (including an infant) has been struggling as Franny's income has melted away.

Self-employed cleaning houses, many of the middle-class families who hired her can no longer afford her services. Meanwhile, her ex-husband hasn't kept current on his child support.

Franny rents a reasonably priced (though crowded) apartment and drives a five year old car. Despite living modestly, she's behind on her rent and utilities. "I've never needed help," she said and she cried during most of her first two trips to Circle.

We provided food and signed the kids up for Back To School supplies. Circle's case workers will review her utility accounts to see where we can help. Franny is also applying for Food Stamps and will be seeing a lawyer about getting her ex-husband's payments caught up.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tim keeps falling through the cracks.

In his mid-40's, he has severe bi-polar disorder and a number of physical problems (some caused by years of potent medications). After a long battle with Social Security, Tim finally began receiving disability payments.

The government decided that Tim could not handle his own affairs. So, Tim's monthly check goes to his father. Unfortunately, Tim's dad won't pay the rent or most of Tim's bills. Dad claims he's owed money from years ago.

Adding to his woes, problems with paperwork caused Tim to lose his Food Stamps.

Tim is too young to get help with his issues from groups which protect seniors from abuse. And, the combination of topics he needs covered would cost a fortune to have a lawyer investigate.

Circle helps Tim with food and our volunteers make sure he's keeping current with his doctor visits.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sometimes you have to call the ambulance even when your family is uninsured. This spring Doris' daughter went to the hospital.

The youngster is doing better but the family owes another \$1,500 on top of old medical bills and other expenses.

When times are good Doris works every day at an area motel. Lately she's only been getting a couple of days of work each week – not enough to cover their rent and other basic bills. Doris got rid of the family car to save money. She will live without gas service until the cold weather returns.

Since she's given up her car Doris is limited in where she can look for additional work. (Her area isn't served by Metro busses.) Unfortunately, in her neighborhood a lot of people are looking for any job they can get.

Circle provides food for Doris' family – including *Kid Bags* to help replace the subsidized meals they get during the school year. This fall we will help her restore her gas service so that the family stays warm this winter.

## Good News Department



- Friends at **Macy's** collected food and funds for Circle during their "**Bag Hunger**" campaign. Macy's is matching the employee's monetary gifts.

- **Good Shepherd Lutheran Church** in Manchester designated their Easter collection for Circle's work.

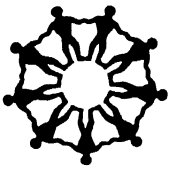


- Friends at **Ralcorp Holding's** local operations shared hundreds of cases of peanut butter, jelly, cereal and spaghetti sauce with Circle this summer.

- Again this summer, employees of the **City Of Manchester** collected food for Circle.



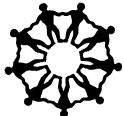
- Kids at *Vacation Bible School* at **St. Gerard Majella** in Kirkwood collected 1,200 items of food and personal care items for Circle in mid-July.



Circle Of Concern  
our community's charity  
P.O. Box 444  
Valley Park, MO 63088-0444

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**Circle Of Concern**  
our community's charity

Providing emergency food and other aid to families residing in the Parkway, Rockwood, and Valley Park school districts. All services are by appointment. Donations are tax deductible and appreciated. Call 636-861-2623 for information.

**Valley Park Center**  
**112 St. Louis Avenue**  
**Valley Park**

Open every Monday, Wednesday & Friday 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
First, second & third Wednesday 4:00 p.m. to 7:00p.m. Second, third & fourth Thursday 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Second, third & fourth Saturday 9:00a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**Donations accepted weekdays 8:30 a.m. till 3:00 p.m.**  
**and on Saturday mornings.**

Circle Of Concern  
P O Box 444  
Valley Park, MO 63088-0444  
**Phone 636/ 861-2623**  
[www.circleofconcern.org](http://www.circleofconcern.org)  
[circleofconcern@att.net](mailto:circleofconcern@att.net)

**Glenn Koenen - Executive Director**  
**Linda Johnson - Food Pantry Director**  
**Emily Fishman - Assoc. Director of Programs & Volunteers**

**Member:**

**Chesterfield Chamber of Commerce**  
**Fenton Area Chamber of Commerce**  
**Interfaith Partnership**  
**Metro St. Louis Food Pantry Association**  
**Valley Park Business Association**  
**West St. Louis County Chamber of Commerce**

**Around The Circle**

To donate to Circle using your debit or credit card, call Emily at Circle at **636/861-2623** during business hours or visit [circleofconcern.org](http://circleofconcern.org)

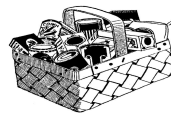
edited by Chris & Jerry Range

**Happy Labor Day!**

**Circle will be closed on Monday, September 7**



This edition of *Around The Circle* was mailed on August 12th



**Circle Needs**

**Salad Dressing**  
**Jello & Pudding**  
**Deodorant**  
**Large Diapers (4 & 5)**  
**Paper Grocery Bags**

**Engraved Bricks Still Available**

Circle is still accepting orders for inscribed bricks and pavers to line the entrance to the new center. Each brick costs \$100 and the pavers are \$250.

You can make your brick or paver order on the Today & Tomorrow section at [circleofconcern.org](http://circleofconcern.org), or, you can call 636/861-2623: **The deadline for orders is August 18.**

