

ST. JEROME SOCIAL CONCERNS MEETING MINUTES
October 24, 2011

Present: Dan Loch, Annette Maiberger, Georgia Smith, Barbara Bagnato, Rebecca Sweeney, Judi Dennehy, Carol Caragine, Sheila Rietano, Maureen Morrissey.

The meeting began at 7:04 p.m. with a prayer offered by Barbara.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Rebecca passed around a copy of the Sept. 26 meeting minutes for members to review.

ONGOING PROJECTS

Food Drive/Milk Fund Collection: Rebecca reported that our October food drive brought in 909 food items, and the Milk Fund collection totaled \$182.00. The enthusiastic Grade 4 REACH students and their parents came out in full force to help with the sorting. Annette has offered to run the Nov. 13 food drive. The December food drive will take place on Dec. 18, to avoid conflict with the Giving Tree Gift Sorting, which will take place on Dec. 10.

CONNECT Update: Dan reported on our St. Jerome representatives' ongoing work -- they've attended several meetings, some involving the larger group, and also on a parish level to discuss the results of the 1:1 interviews with parishioners on the topic "what keeps you up at night?" (e.g., economic survival, immigration). Pat Speers will return to a Pastoral Council meeting here to reiterate the goals of CONECT. On Wed., Nov. 30, at 7:30 p.m. CONECT will be have its founding meeting in Bridgeport, uniting the interdenominational group of 31 congregations between Norwalk and New Haven. Father David is wholeheartedly behind St. Jerome's joining in CONECT's goal for taking Catholic and Biblical social concerns and making them active to legislators. Father David has arranged for two buses to transport parishioners from St. Jerome's to the Nov. 30 meeting and is inviting everyone to a spaghetti dinner before boarding the buses. Our committee has agreed to reach out to fellow parishioners to invite as many people as we can to come along to see this vital work.

COMPLETED PROJECTS

Back To School Supplies Drive: Barbara shared thank you letters from the Director of The Carver Center's Afterschool Program. The Coordinator was so appreciative of the 800 items we donated.

10/1 Anti-Bullying Workshop Ziti Bake Lunch: Annette and Sheila reported that the Calvary Baptist Church workshop's presentation was excellent. The 12 trays of ziti prepared by our volunteers were appreciated. Unfortunately, the attendance at the event was low, perhaps due to a lack of adequate advertisement. Thank you to Francie for coordinating this effort, and to Barbara, Jennifer, and Francie for delivering the ziti.

10/22 Make a Difference Day Food Drive at Stop & Shop: Rebecca reported that the morning was a disappointment, as CCA was not present to set up 9 a.m., when four parishioners showed up to work. No signs or hand-outs until Christi arrived around 9:20 a.m. Also, there was a serious conflict with

another organization that was set up to ask shoppers to donate to its cause (an animal rescue agency) and certainly didn't want to compete with us. The manager came out to tell me that he had no knowledge of the food drive. Annette explained that CCA used to run it well years ago. Unfortunately, this has not happened the last several years. Compounding the problem is that there are only a handful of St. Jerome parishioners who sign up for a shift. Barbara and Rebecca will draft a letter to CCA to see how this event can improve next year, and if our Committee can increase our involvement to organize the Stop & Shop site. Judi asked if we should try a different project next year. Barbara reported that the Drive collected 3600 pounds of food for CCA's and Open Doors' food pantries.

Nov. 5 Winter Coat Drive: We are running our drive through Nov. 2. Barbara clarified that we are able to drop off collected coats to the Mayor's office at City Hall any day now, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., up until Nov. 4. (On Nov. 4 all donations have to be dropped off to the police station). Many people offered to take a few bags of the accumulated bags in the hallway at the meeting's end.

UPCOMING PROJECTS

Catalog Choice: Dan will prepare a flyer/announcement for the Bulletin, describing the free service for opting out of receiving bulk mail, telephone books, catalogs, credit card offers.

Giving Tree: Barbara will email for helpers to cut and string the tags. Nov. 21 is Tag Night. On Nov. 26, we will hang the tags on the tree. On Sat., Dec. 10 at noon, we will sort all the gifts. Dec. 12, 9-5 p.m. is Gift Drop Off Day at the South Norwalk Community Room. Julie Coyne is working on gift request ideas for her students. Julie's friend, Allison, will again handle the packing up of all Julie's kids' gifts.

NEW IDEAS FOR PROJECTS

The Shepherd Program: Father David has collected information about this program, and relayed to Barbara that he will study it and report back to us.

The New Day Center, Norwalk: Judi reported on the efforts underway to locate a place for the day laborers who gather on the Lowe St. Bridge to gather for English lessons twice a week, in the evening. The good news is that Calvin Reformed Church has offered space in their hall on a trial basis for several months. An idea for the future is for portable classrooms. Barbara asked if St. Jerome could help in anyway, perhaps with books focused on early English learning.

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

In lieu of a November meeting, our next gathering will be The Giving Tree Tag Night, Mon., Nov. 21, at 7 p.m.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Sweeney
Secretary, Social Concerns Committee