



# Common Place...*where love works!*

# GOODNEWS

December 2010

Connie Voss  
Managing Editor

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Editor

*Our Mission is to strive to eliminate the root causes of poverty, racism, and other social injustices by recognizing the dignity and self-worth inherent in each person.*

**Common Place Board Chair**  
Roberta Koscielski

**Board Officers**  
Jim Bremner  
Karen Scott  
Johanne Grewell

*There is such a special spirit in the air . . . . .*

this time of year. If you put the shopping hype and hustle out of your mind and listen and soak it in, you can feel a warmth. It permeates the music that seems to be everywhere. It's on the faces of children, and in the sparkle of lights and candles. It's in the friendly exchanges between family, coworkers, or even strangers; and in the sharing and giving of special holiday projects. With the message of caring and sharing, come peace, joy, and hope—and a promise of better things.

At Common Place, we strive to share this same spirit every day, often with children and adults who find little peace, joy--and most often not hope--in their daily lives. Through home repairs, food for the body, "food" for the mind and for the spirit, given with the loving spirit of staff and volunteers, our program participants discover that they are worthy, and also that they have the capacity to help shape their own futures.

Yes, as others are experiencing as well, the needs keep growing, even if the funding does not—but we are managing as we always do, through the help of dedicated staff and volunteers, and sound fiscal management. Our youth services are nearly at full capacity with waiting lists for most of the groups; food pantry needs have soared over the last year and we have given out nearly 5,000 meals just this fall alone. Our Adult Literacy Program has grown 40% this fall, and more than 60% this past year. We are grateful that even though our budget is challenging, we are able to meet the demands with the help of our generous community, not only financially, but also through the generosity of caring volunteers and contributions of school supplies, food for the pantry, donated office supplies, and other needed items.

It is through working together that 197 adult learners made progress in their reading with the help of 63 trained tutors; 138 children and youth improved their grades in school; 95 young people strengthened academics and learned job skills last summer; families of most of these children developed a value of learning together through family reading nights and Operation: Education parent workshops—and at least for a while, the children, adults, and families found peace, joy, and hope.

Our wish for you is that the blessings of this special time be with you and yours throughout the coming year, and that the lives of every individual in our community be filled with peace, joy, and hope.

*Gratefully yours,  
Connie*

## **Common Place Holiday Schedule**

Common Place will be closed on the following dates:

- Friday, December 24
- Monday, Jan. 3, 2011
- Monday, December 27
- Monday, January 17
- Friday, December 31



**Heart of Illinois  
United Way**

## **Food Pantry Serves Many in Need**

The year that Common Place was founded, 1967, an informal Food Pantry was started. Food was given to families who had had a fire in their home or who had been displaced. As word spread about Common Place and our Emergency Food Pantry, it became clear that we needed a designated time and day each week to distribute food. Common Place joined the Peoria Area Anti-Hunger Coalition and soon afterwards, we designated Friday afternoons from 1:00 to 3:00 as our weekly Food Pantry Hours. In addition to the many churches, businesses and individuals who donate food or funds for our Pantry, we are thankful to receive food from Peoria Area Food Bank and Midwest Food Bank.

A national study was published in March 2010 by a coalition of food banks. They found that 1.4 million people in Illinois alone sought help in putting food on the table in 2009. *That equals one out of every 10 people in Illinois.* These families had to choose between paying for rent, medication or food. *Forty-two percent of the people served were children.*

These statistics are in line with increases we've seen in the number of adults and children that our Food Pantry serves. In 2007, we served 607 families. In 2008, we experienced a 50% increase and over the next 12 months we had a 220% increase in the number of families in need who came to our Food Pantry. The number of people in need continues to increase each month.

Right now we are in dire need of shelf-stable foods such as canned fruits and vegetables, tuna, chicken, rice, beans and pasta. During the winter, the number of families who come to our Food Pantry increases dramatically. Please consider donating to our Food Pantry. Your financial support or food donations are not only appreciated, they are what sustains our Pantry each month. There are many ways that you can help: encourage your child's school to hold a food drive, or start a One Can More collection where you work. If you would like more information about our Emergency Food Pantry, please call Kathryn Lambert at 309-674-3315.

## **Suggestions for Donations**

Below are ideas for nutritious, easy to prepare meals that we can include in our Pantry Bags:

- Canned Tuna & Tuna Skillet Dinner
- Rice, Canned Kidney Beans, Canned Tomatoes
- Canned Cream Soup, Pasta, Canned Chicken
- Pasta & Spaghetti Sauce
- Canned Chili Beans, Canned Tomatoes, Canned Tomato Juice
- Peanut Butter & Jelly and Loaf of Bread

**Other foods that we try to keep on hand are:**

- Canned Vegetables & Fruits
- Corned Beef Hash & Canned Meats
- Canned Chili & Canned Beans
- Canned Soups, Canned Stews & Broth
- Dry Soup Mixes
- Crackers
- Ravioli & Spaghetti-O's
- Dry Pastas
- Bags of Rice & Dried Beans
- Hot & Cold Cereals
- Pancake Mixes & Syrups
- Muffin Mixes
- Cookie & Brownie Mixes
- Cake Mixes & Frostings
- Gelatin & Pudding Mixes

*On behalf of the many families we serve — Thank You for your ongoing support!*

## Common Place Youth "Fall into Reading"

Common Place youth program participants and their families took part in the National Family Reading Night on November 18. The children and their siblings and parents engaged in reading aloud together time, as well as reading *The Giving Tree* and learning what giving meant to them, how even one canned food item can make a difference in several lives, and how to be gracious receivers.

Families were asked to "Bring a Can, If You Can" to help support Common Place's Food Pantry, which has been running



*Youth Director, Helen Jenkins, reads The Giving Tree to children and families attending the Family Reading Night.*

dangerously low on non-perishable food items. Mrs. Helen Jenkins, Director of Youth Programs stated, "The program participants really responded to the can drive". The Turning Point/Teen REACH youth, grades 5 - 8, were taken to a local Aldi grocery store and each given a dollar to spend on a canned food item. To much of the program coordinator's surprise the children decided to purchase canned spinach, which cost more than other canned vegetables but provided more nutrients. Program coordinator, Libby Taylor said, "The children put a lot of thought into their purchase and were very proud of themselves for spending their dollar wisely to help someone in need". While at the local grocery store one child felt the need to do more. He approached Mrs. Taylor, pulled out a dollar from his pocket and asked, "Ms. Libby, I have another dollar, can I give more?"

The day after the Family Reading Night the Teen REACH children went door-to-door in a West Peoria neighborhood and continued to collect canned goods to support Common Place's Food Pantry.

At Common Place children learn more than academics. They also learn life skills and how to be a caring and concerned citizen. These young children indeed learned a valuable lesson, a lesson in giving.

*Canned food items collected for Common Place Food Pantry.*



## Read the Book and Get Involved!

Peoria Reads! is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> year with a book for the whole community! This year the Peoria Reads! committee has chosen a book that is particularly relevant at this time for its 2011 "One City, One Book" annual project. The featured book, *The Other Wes Moore* by Wes Moore, is a true story about two young men, both named Wes Moore, who grew up blocks apart, without fathers and in poverty. One ended up in prison for life and the other is a Rhodes Scholar who has lead a successful life as a combat veteran and investment banker. **The book raises the question--Why did their lives take such different paths?—and how is that relevant to our community?**

A companion book *We Beat the Street*, by Dr. Sampson Davis and others, is recommended for younger readers.

Funds are limited this year, with a Big Read grant no longer available, and we would like the community to join us in being creative in ways to provide books for low-income schools and readers, as well as to provide relevant activities. We are pleased to have received a grant for \$500 from the Community Foundation of Illinois; other funding is pending at present.

Put the book on your Christmas list, tell your book club and others, think about your own involvement or how your group or organization could be involved, and be ready to join activities in the month of March. For questions or further information, call Connie Voss at Common Place, 674-3315.

## Common Place Youth Help Set a New World Record

The National Guinness Book of World Record Day was held on November 18. Many people from around the world attempt to set new records from the previous year. This wasn't anything new to Common Place. This year marked the third year Common Place hosted and participated in sport stacking with the World Sport Stacking Association (WSSA). Common Place set a goal of having 125 individuals stacking for a minimum of 30 minutes during a two hour time frame. Program participants, board members, staff, and community members met Common Place's goal, having 127 stackers. Worldwide, these individuals were part of the 316,757, who participated, and one of the 1,627 schools or organizations from 25 countries.

There are many educational benefits from sport stacking, such as hand-eye coordination, sequencing, and thought processing. Sport stacking



*Common Place youth participants challenging each other in a game of Battle Stack.*

also requires a person to use both sides of the brain at the same time. Research has shown that children who accomplish using both sides of their brain at the same time perform better in subjects such as math and reading. Other benefits include peripheral vision; logical thinking; and, social skills, which include how to work together on a team, and good sportsmanship. Helen Jenkins, Director of Youth Programs, first learned about the educational benefits of sport stacking three years ago and decided her program participants could benefit from this fun sport.

Thank you to the many individuals who participated to help Common Place and the WSSA set a new world record. Thank you also to the Rivermen Hockey for donating 100 tickets to their November 21<sup>st</sup> game as a give-away to families who stacked for the required time.

*Common Place Board Members Marty Watkins and Cheryl Dawson help Common Place and the WSSA set a new world record.*



## Adult Literacy Program

We have two special classes called New Challenges. Each class meets two hours a week. The adult learners who attend these small group classes have a special bond: they all have special needs due to disabilities. The two volunteers who teach these classes are patient, caring and resourceful.

Both of these classes have excellent attendance and retention. What makes these classes unique is that it allows these special needs adults to maintain basic skills such as reading, writing and basic math while also teaching them essential life skills such as how to read medicine labels, how to tell time or how to identify and count money. There really is nowhere else in Peoria for these adult learners to attend class for free. We are so proud of our New Challenges Classes and their dedicated tutors!

We are always in need of new volunteer tutors. If you would like a registration form for our Winter Tutor Training Workshop, or more information about Common Place Family Learning Center, please call Kathryn Lambert at 309-674-3315.

### ***Tutor Training Workshop Series***

Session 1: Wednesday, February 2, 2011  
5:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Session 2: Saturday, February 5, 2011  
9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Session 3: Saturday, February 12, 2011  
9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

## Walk for Reading

Thank you to everyone who supported the Common Place 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk for Reading September 11<sup>th</sup>! A total of over \$27,000 was raised to support our adult and youth programs.



*Jerri Ruck & Alice Nash registering to support Common Place's literacy programs*



*These ladies are all smiles in support of Common Place*



*Friendship and fellowship*



*Several local churches formed a team. The more, the merrier!*



*Common Place youth and staff show their support*



*This young child enjoyed the face painting provided by Mary Keltner*

## Winter Items Needed

Warm winter items are needed for infants, children, young adults, and adults.

- Hats
- Gloves/Mittens
- Scarves
- New or gently used winter coats
- New or gently used blankets

*We are grateful for the following grants to help us follow our mission:*

Youth programs---City of Peoria (Community Development Block Grant)\*\*\*Dept. of Human Services (through the Childrens Home)\*\*\*Illinois State Board of Education.

Adult programs—FEMA for the emergency food pantry.

A grant for 2011 Peoria Reads! from the Ross E. and Susan M. Canterbury Fund of the Community Foundation of Central IL.

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Please call or  
email us if you  
want to be  
removed from  
our mailing list.

## **Yes! I want to help with the Annual Campaign.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Please accept my tax deductible gift to help support the educational programs at Common Place.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please accept my tax deductible gift in honor/memory of a loved one.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please call me at \_\_\_\_\_.

*Support the Annual Campaign!*

*Help us reach our goal of  
\$125,000 to support the adult  
and youth literacy programs.*