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Newsletter and 2010-11 Annual Report

A ministry associated with Classis Lake Superior of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

Summer 2011

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A Note from the President

Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.

Most of us are familiar with these words of Jesus from the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25. And I would venture that all of us are compelled by them. We want to do what Jesus calls us to do, to give food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty. “But how,” we ask, “when there are so many in need, where can we begin? And,” we may wonder, “how do we know if we are really helping? That we are providing what people truly need?” How do we do all we can to provide clothes to those who need it? To look after the sick? To visit those in prison?

Your support of Starfish Ministries is one way. For over fifteen years, Starfish Ministries has empowered churches to answer Christ’s call to care for the poor. Our work is only possible because of your support, through volunteering, financial gifts, and prayer.

At Starfish, we partner with churches, other organizations, and the poor themselves in programs that focus on meeting needs by building relationships. Through those relationships, Christ enables our brothers and sisters to build their skills and break free from the grip of poverty.

This year has been an exciting one, as we have been blessed to see significant expansion and change, enabling us to foster relationships and growth for more people than we ever have. For example,

The New Life Community Center, our community development site serving

the KaRen refugee population in St. Paul and surrounding communities, saw dramatic growth. This year we provided regular English classes for 12 people; provided tutoring, math, and other school help for 30-35 young people; assisted 13 families in finding community garden plots to grow food to eat and sell; and supported 6 people in finding full-time work.

Circles of Hope, which builds relationships among the poor and members of several churches in the Milaca area, has grown in the last six months from hosting seven guests per monthly meeting to now averaging over 20.

We are excited at God’s blessings in the past year and pray for his continued presence in the year to come. In the coming year, Lord willing, we will continue to expand our community development efforts at the New Life Community Center and the number of people we serve at Circles of Support.

We also are introducing the Circles of Support model in the Twin Cities. Circles of Support allows churches in a community to be involved in building relationships with the clients through serving and attending the monthly dinners and support meetings as well as in one-on-one relationships. Several churches have already



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Twin Cities' Starfish Adopt-A-Family (SAF)

Over the last ten years or so, Starfish Ministries has recruited churches to adopt individual struggling families who are motivated to make positive changes. The churches provided volunteer allies and Starfish Ministries trained and supported them as they provided encouragement to families working toward financial, employment, education, emotional and/or spiritual goals. The source of these families were other non-profits, county agencies, or the churches themselves.

During FY 2010-11:

- 2 families were connected—one with Faith CRC and one with Grace CRC.
- 4 relationships continue which were begun between 18 months and 5 years ago
- 3 relationships ended this year
 - 1 before the initial 6 month commitment
 - 2 after between 8 and 21 months

Laura's relationship with her allies, Sylvia, Bonnie and Ron, from Cross Lutheran Church ended in July 2010 after 21 months together. On paper, Laura's progress would not be impressive since she was laid off from work due to the economic times we live in. However, if you talk to Laura and her allies, she's in a much better place now than she was in November 2008. Some of the goals she accomplished were to become a better parent, to decide on the future of her relationship with her incarcerated husband, to increase her support systems, and to complete her college degree. Laura credits her allies with helping her achieve these goals by listening but not trying to fix and by sharing their insights with her.

Our newest family, Dorothea, and her allies, Laura and Irma, are connecting well. When I first met Dorothea, she was planning to quit her job because she found it frustrating. Since beginning to work with her allies, she is finding the work less frustrating and is going to "stick with it" until she has a better option.



Twin Cities Circles of Support (COS)

Recently, the Board of Directors approved moving the SAF more toward the COS format. Although the name changes, this format is actually an expansion of SAF rather than a replacement.

In COS, several churches in the same area together provide a large group gathering, called a Big Circle, where both participant families and allies get involved initially. It includes a meal and a program for children. Once the participant families and potential allies have been involved in the large group meeting, they can apply to become part of a Small Circle. The Small Circle is essentially the same as SAF—one participant family matched with 2-3 allies who work with them on their goals.

Discussions are currently underway with churches in two communities—Inver Grove Heights and New Brighton/Roseville. Once these two groups get started (or not), plans are to connect with churches in Edina/St. Louis Park and Maplewood/St. Paul. Look for more information.

Circles of Hope, Milaca



Circles of Hope in Milaca is a Circles of Support model of ministry. We began this model in January 2010. During the first six months of the model, attendance averaged 7 guests. The last six months (January to June), attendance has averaged 21 guests — potential allies and the adults of participant families.

In March 2010, we matched our first Small Circle — Denise and her allies, John, Sheryll and Bill. Denise has made marvelous progress especially in the area of self-respect and confidence. She and one of her allies, Sheryll, are planning to become allies to another family soon.

In May 2011, we matched our second Small Circle — Lisa with Marlyn and Marlys. Since that time, Lisa has found two part-time jobs and a third will begin in August. They are very pleased with how things are going.

More allies are needed for waiting families.

KaRen Community Development



The real growth in this ministry began when we were able to hire Rutha Kyi under the AmeriCorps program. Rutha, a KaRen refugee herself, has been our key connection with the

KaRen families in St. Paul. Since she began in October, we have met with over 90 families to learn about their experiences, their dreams, and their needs. Meeting with these families have resulted in many programs:

English as a Second Language (ESL) classes began in September 2010 on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. The 12 students who finished out the year progressed as follows:

Test	Range	Ave. Beg.	Ave. End.	Diff.	Inc.
Speaking	0-4	1.8	2.1	+35	19%
Writing	0-9	1.1	2.1	+1.0	90%
Reading Aloud	0-100	57	82	+25	44%

During the year, a total of 27 students attended ESL classes. Those who dropped out did so for a variety of reasons including illness, employment and the requirement by the county for 20 hours a week of ESL.

We also began a variety of programs aimed at youth education:

Vocabulary-we purchased vocabulary software and made it available one night a week at the New Life Community Center (NLCC) for high school students needing to improve their skills in that area in order to pass the graduation standards.

Math Club-over the summer, we began a Math Club for students in 3rd through 8th grade who needed help with math basics. Around 20 students have been attending each Tuesday evening at the NLCC.

Homework help and tutoring-Faith CRC continues its homework help on Tuesday evenings and another group wants to begin an after school program for high school students both at the NLCC.

There are a few other ways we've been able to help as well:

Gardens-we were able to connect 13 families to Harvest Gardens, a community garden in Maplewood offered free by First Evangelical Free Church.

Employment-Rutha and I have gone with several people to employers to help them fill out applications, interpret for interviews and even for orientations. As a result, six people have found permanent full time jobs in meat processing companies and several have found part-time jobs with FedEx Ground in Mahtomedi.

We also spend much time helping families with issues with landlords, the county, utility companies and even the police.

Church Education

In February, 17 members of Pease CRC, Bethel CRC and other churches met at Bethel CRC in Princeton for a morning of workshops. The keynote speaker was Randy Kroll, a member of Faith CRC and former Board President of CRWRC, speaking on the book "When Helping Hurts."

Workshop offered were:
Stewardship Development & Education, by Rick Droog, Communities First Association and the Siouxland Deacons Conference in Iowa,
What Do People Want--and Need--from the Church? also by Rick Droog,
Church Leadership by Pastor Henry Gunnink, Grace CRC, Inver Grove Heights, and
Circles of Support by Bonnie Smith, Starfish Ministries

Finances

Treasurer's Report Fiscal Year 2010-11

<u>Income</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Diff.</u>
Foundations	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$10,000
Corporations	2,500	5,000	2,500
Cl. Lk. Superior	16,625	24,309	7,684
CR Churches	11,800	7,553	-4,247
Other Churches	1,000	650	-350
Individuals	47,300	25,064	-22,236
Miscellaneous	0	10	10
Total	\$99,225	\$92,586	\$-6,639
<u>Expenses</u>	<u>98,795</u>	<u>93,414</u>	<u>-5,381</u>
Net Income	\$ 430	\$ -828	\$ -1,258



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A Note...

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expressed an interest, and we thank God for these initial signs of promise, and we pray for his continued blessings.

Thank you for all you have done to make this possible. Our friends and supporters have always been an answer to our prayers. And while we are thrilled and thankful for the blessings of the past year, the needs remain great. So we ask that you continue to partner with us in answering God's call, through your gifts, volunteer efforts, and prayer.

There is one more way you can join us this year - we would love to have you as our guests at the New Life Community Center Open House on October 1. Please invite your friends and come together and see what God is doing for the KaRen refugees.

Nathaniel Zylstra
 President of the Board

Thank you to our Wonderful Donors

\$5,000+

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 Lorraine Veurink, Milaca, MN

Starfish Ministries also wants to acknowledge and thank so many whose names are not reflected here who gave of their time, donated gifts-in-kind items or gave through their church offerings this year.