BHITC EXPANDS MINISTRY IMPACT AND PARTNERSHIPS IN SERVING REFUGEES

Thanks to a generous grant from the Cleveland Foundation, this past fall BHITC was able to expand its mission, promote cultural understanding for refugee families and give local urban congregations a meaningful role in cross-cultural ministry and service. The grant allowed BHITC to launch two exciting new programs.

After-School Youth Tutoring Reaches Far Beyond Education

How often do children tell you that one of their favorite activities is homework? Well, according to Dickson Adhikari, an enthusiastic, 10-year-old boy who attends the BHITC after-school tutoring program at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, “The best part about the program is not the snacks. I like that they help me with my homework.”

Dickson, who arrived last spring from a refugee camp in Nepal, loves learning in the United States. His former school was made of bamboo and “the teachers hit the students with sticks all of the time,” he says.

When BHITC asked refugee families what services they needed most, parents responded that they needed help with their children, who were struggling to adjust within their new schools. Working in partnership with STAIRS (Steps Toward Advancing In Resettlement Skills), BHITC was able to expand its typical youth tutoring program from one evening a week to sessions that meet twice a week after school at two new locations: St. Colman Catholic Church and Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church.

Keeping the programs vibrant includes a dedicated group of adult and high-school volunteer tutors, who not only help teach their students, but who are also crossing cultural bridges by learning from their students about their former countries. Jewel Yokie, a seventh-grade student from Liberia who receives tutoring at St. Colman, plans to become a neonatal intensive care doctor, agrees. “I love the tutors here. They are so nice, even when we get a little crazy. I used to need help with math, but then I got really good at it. Now my tutor [volunteer Molly Marshall] is working with me on English.”

“While our primary focus is academic, the one-on-one structure of the program encourages our staff and volunteers to take an active role in the social and emotional life of students,” says BHITC’s Luanne Bole-Becker. “As a result, BHITC provides these children with much more than tutoring.”

Kevin Williams, director of the after-school refugee tutoring programs, oversees the educational aspects of the program, such as conducting assessments and choosing the curriculum. He also visits the families, is a tutor, and even helps pick up the students and take them home. “Tutoring has been going well,” he says. “Students look forward to the sessions and the tutors are very committed, reliable and dedicated to their work. The program is helping these kids with mastering a second language (English) and taking them one step closer to their dreams.”

With a waiting list of more than 40 students who want to be tutored, BHITC welcomes interested volunteers. For more information, contact Amy Mitchell at 216.281.4673 or amy@buildinghopeinthecity.org.

BHITC’s after-school tutoring programs are held from 3:30 to 5:30 pm at St Colman Catholic Church, 2007 West 65th Street on Mondays and Wednesdays, and at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, 12826 Lorain Road on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
“New American Cafés” Help Close Cultural Gaps in a Lively Atmosphere

When refugees arrive in the U.S., everything is new to them. Language acquisition certainly presents many problems. But unfamiliarity with day-to-day issues—navigating the healthcare system, traffic laws, counting money, bus schedules, social etiquette—also creates roadblocks to self-sufficiency.

The Cleveland Foundation’s support also allowed BHITC to establish a series of monthly “New American Cafés,” which are informal meetings where refugees can meet new friends and gain the tools needed to successfully maneuver through their new American homeland.

A typical Café gathering is highly-interactive and informal, beginning with a potluck dinner. Later, the rooms fill with energy as the guests move from table to table, learning and sharing information among one another and BHITC volunteers. Topics at each table range from American

laws, employment, social services and other issues that refugees encounter on a daily basis. Some tables even feature games.

In November, more than 30 volunteers and 50 refugees met for a New American Café at West Park Christian Reformed Church in Cleveland. "I gazed across the room and smiled at how God had orchestrated the connections that were happening all around me," says BHITC’s Luannine Bole-Becker.

"Everyone was engaged in spirited conversation, crossing language barriers as best they could. I thought about how God reaches out and spurs the heavens and earth to personally touch, hold, and cherish each one of us. The folks in that room were modeling that same outreach."

New American Cafés will take place throughout 2011 on a monthly basis. Visitors are always welcome to come join a Café. For more information, contact Luannine Bole-Becker at 216.281.4673 or luanne@buildinghopeinthecity.org.

This article was written by volunteer Tammi Davis, a member of St. Christopher Catholic Church in Rocky River.

Heroes of Hope are individuals, groups or organizations that take it upon themselves to bless BHITC by raising support for one of its ministries or programs. Here are two recent examples:

CSA International

CSA International is a multi-national company with offices in Independence, Ohio. In December, Canadian Standards Association (CSA) named BHITC as the recipient of its annual holiday campaign efforts—a series of in-gatherings and monetary collections to benefit a single charity each year. CSA did so in honor of Randy Luecke, a BHITC donor, volunteer and their outgoing president.

"The employees at CSA are incredibly generous," says Lisa Reihold, a CSA engineer, who notes that the value of what the company donated was nearly $1,800. "We just wish it could have been more!"

CSA employees donated new children’s toys and non-perishable food items, plus they took up a collection for gently-used clothing.

Finally, the company gathered cash donations, all of which were put to use to provide youth in BHITC’s tutoring and refugee programs with shoe store gift certificates for Christmas.

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Led by faculty member Karen Wittrock and the school’s women’s basketball team, the students, faculty and staff of Lutheran High School West were a huge blessing to city ministry in December, collecting the largest single donation of non-perishable food items in BHITC’s history!

For several weeks following Thanksgiving, the school organized many collection opportunities including at basketball games, student assemblies and through ice cream sales. As a result, more than 6,000 non-perishable food items were donated to the Food Pantry at Trinity Lutheran Church.

“We wanted to assist an organization that’s honest and where we know the donations will get quickly to people in need,” says Wittrock. “God invites and expects us to help others in need. I love doing this and seeing our students involved in serving others.”

Want to become a Hero of Hope?

A “Hero of Hope” is any person or group that is interested in supporting Building Hope in the City. Heroes can be any size, brand new or an existing club, organization, church, business or other religious/civic groups. Heroes can provide or donate materials or raise money for specific BHITC ministries or programs. Heroes of Hope can range from an informal one-time get-together to more formal events.

Consider some of these successful examples, or invent one of your own:

- Host an ice cream social, wine tasting or dinner party at your home.
- Organize an informal golf, tennis, bowling or cornhole tournament to raise support.
- Church groups could organize car washes, spaghetti dinners, bake sales, craft shows or rummage sales.
- Take up a collection in your workplace, neighborhood, church or group of donated items that BHITC needs for its ministries. BHITC can provide you with specific lists of items.
- Gather pledges from friends and family for your own personal walk-a-thon or bike-a-thon. Have other friends do the same and join you.

Want to get started with your Heroes of Hope idea? Call BHITC and we’ll be happy to provide materials and more ideas!
**LETS PICK HIS BRAIN**

Rev. Jeff Johnson on the subject of church planting

Q: Why is planting new churches part of BHITC’s vision?

Johnson: Everything that BHITC does is really about just one thing. How can we share the message of God’s love with the city? We hope the relationships we create through tutoring or jobs or immigrant programs result in an expansion of the Kingdom. Starting new churches is one of the most direct and effective ways to connect people to Christ and the message of this sacrifice for sin and salvation. We want to create places in urban neighborhoods where the Gospel is heard and ministries make a difference in the lives of people.

Q: How is church planting different in the urban area than anywhere else?

Johnson: Ever since urban centers emerged in the Industrial Revolution, the church has experienced difficulty in finding good models for sharing the Gospel and planting new churches. Today, over one half of the world’s population lives in urban centers. The church in the city struggles to make the adjustment to meet the needs of people whose cultures, languages, and lifestyles all vary greatly. Add to that, urban ministry is gritty work. Urban church planters navigate crime, poverty, and the realities of “the hood.” But it’s also morphed a bit. Urban can now mean urban—ministry to the sophisticated, upper middle class, or the arts community. I’m not complaining about the expansion in meaning—I’m actually excited about it.

Q: With many congregations closing in the city, why plant new ones?

Johnson: It’s all the more reason to plant new churches! You have probably heard of the “90/10 rule”—where 10% of our effort produces 90% of our results. This is an example of leverage—finding the Fulsom Points in our lives that allow us to become dramatically more efficient. Archimedes famously said “Give me a long enough lever, and a place to rest it, and I shall move the world.” To me, church planting and the leadership development are all about leverage. Churches, like people, have natural life cycles. For most churches, as with most people, reproduction is best done when you’re young and healthy. So, if we want to reach new people most effectively, then the church’s Fulsom Point will be on new ministries perpetually creating new ministries.

Q: Are there particular Cleveland-area neighborhoods that BHITC is targeting?

Johnson: There is no such thing as a saturation point for churches of which I am aware. That means we could plant a new church next door to my own congregation and they could both still be effective. Every one of our neighborhoods has people who need to hear the Gospel. The issue of where to start is answered most often by the initial leader/catalyst and their team. While we use good models and planning resources, we also rely heavily on prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If a leader has a burden for a community or the team decides they want to plant some of the needs in a particular location, then that is where we will begin. It’s the classic game of “Follow the Leader.”

Q: What can interested Christians do to support these efforts?

Johnson: First, they can give. Financial contributions would be a good beginning because this will certainly take finances, but more important is the giving of yourself—your talents, your energy. What the city needs are God’s people who are willing to commit themselves to a community. Everyone can also pray. God was clear about where our “workers” come from—from Him! Both the gospels of Matthew and Luke tell us to, “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into this harvest field.”

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**ADVENT TEA STRENGTHENS MINISTRY AMONG AND FOR WOMEN**

Amidst the hustle and bustle of Christmas, nearly 200 women took the opportunity to prepare their hearts with an Advent Tea, sponsored by Building Hope in the City and hosted by Grace Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Middleburg Heights.

Building Hope’s Advent Tea is an annual tradition, with roots in the Arabic women’s ministry fostered by community worker Nadia Abuamsha. It is a unique opportunity to share the Christmas story across cultures with friends new and old.

The 2010 Advent tea featured standard “favorites”—Christmas hymns, table settings artfully arranged by each hostess, and the reading of the nativity story in eight languages.

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New this year was a beautiful Bhutanese cultural dance, a participatory song in Swahili (“Yesu ni Wangu Wa Uzima Wa Milele,” which translated, means “Jesus is Mine, He is Eternal Life”), and the personal, heartfelt testimony of Yasmen Abraham. Yasmen described her attempt to prove her Muslim-turned-Christian husband wrong, only to find the love and acceptance of and the personal, heartfelt testimony of Yasmen Abraham. Yasmen described her attempt to prove her Muslim-turned-Christian husband wrong, only to find the love and acceptance of

The Advent Tea is the result of collaboration and countless hours of work by volunteers from several congregations. At the forefront this year were members of Grace Church and Bay Presbyterian Church, which hosted a follow-up women’s event in January that allowed for continued relationship building and ministry conversations over tea.

Want to learn more about how women are impacting the city in ministry? Contact BHITC at 216.281.4673.
PENCIL US IN! Dates to Remember

March 4  - HymnFest 2011 Returns! See advertisement in this newsletter for event and ticket details.

March 12  - “Strike out Illiteracy” Bowl-a-thon for BHITC’s tutoring ministries at Trinity, Gethsemane, Mt. Calvary and St. Colman. Come bowl with youth and volunteers or help sponsor a student/volunteer bowling team. The event takes place from 3 to 5 pm at Freeway Lanes, 12859 Brookpark Road in Parma.

April 9  - BHITC luncheon event with special guest, Miss America Katie Stam! Location and time to be announced.

April 16  - Urban Ministry Bootcamp, Pam to 3 pm. Volunteer trainings in “Understanding Poverty,” and Refugee Mentoring. RSVP to Lesa at 216.281.4673

May 7  - CitySERVE 2011!

BHITC WISH LIST

The following are items needed in city mission and ministry. If you’re interested in making a donation toward one of these items, please contact Brian Upton at 216. 281.4673 or brian@buildinghopeinthecity.org

- Gas cards for use in fueling BHITC’s ministry bus.
- A new network-capable color laser printer for BHITC’s offices.
- Juice boxes, cereal/granola bars, travel-sized snacks for tutoring programs (kids always come hungry!)
- Lowe’s or Home Depot gift cards to purchase needed supplies and equipment for CitySERVE and Be the Church events in 2011.
- Pro beta computer networking assistance for tutoring/literacy programs.
- A new data projector.

Vibrant city neighborhoods
Dynamic congregations
Passionate followers of Jesus
It’s all possible….come and see!