

FERN CREEK/HIGHVIEW UNITED MINISTRIES -A HISTORY

In the early 1980's several individuals and churches saw a need for some degree of cooperative effort for providing emergency assistance to people in the community. The Neighborhood Assistance Program, operating out of an individual's home (Ruth Brugh) attempted to facilitate the collection and distribution of food and clothing. This program was ineffective in helping people meet the needs and was discontinued.

Fern Creek/Highview United Ministries (FC/HUM)—*congregations united in serving the Fern Creek and Highview communities*- officially began June 13, 1988. Area pastors who were members of the Fern Creek/Highview Ministerial Association noticing an increasing number of coming to their churches for help looked for a way to assist such individuals in a responsible systematic way, while being good stewards of limited resources, chose a community ministry model that was already well developed in many other communities throughout Louisville and Jefferson County. A group of representatives from 10 different churches met in the basement of Fern Creek United Methodist Church and committed to move beyond their denominational ties to work together to meet the needs of their community.

FC/HUM's first Executive Director was hired. In the beginning, FC/HUM's primary service was emergency assistance; this included food, clothing, financial assistance, and health aide equipment loan. Before long monthly blood pressure checks and help with voter registration were also available. Fund raisers such as Bowl-a-thons and Softball tournaments enabled the hiring of a part-time Emergency Assistance Coordinator.

In 1989, an Adult Day Care pilot project was launched, by a student from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, to assess the need for services for the frail elderly and their families. In 1990, through a grant from the Area Agency on Aging the Adult Day Center was opened as a social model center on the property of St. Bernard's Catholic Church that undertook extensive remodeling to make their convent suitable for this service. The first ADC Director was hired along with other needed staff. FC/HUM also began participating in the Homeless Families Prevention Project and a Thanksgiving Club was initiated to allow individuals to contribute to FC/HUM during 1990.

In 1991 a Life Skills Program was implemented through a special grant from Louisville United Against Hunger (LUAH). In 1992 G.E.D. classes started in conjunction with the Fern Creek Rotary Club. FC/HUM held a Golf Scramble as a fund-raiser. In 1993, FC/HUM began a relationship with the Jeffersontown community to assist them in starting their own community ministry that continued through 1995 when the Jeffersontown Area Ministries separated and began functioning on its own. In 1995 FC/HUM held its first Cake Auction and began selling FC/HUM shirts as fund-raisers. In 1996, the Adult Day Center was licensed to operate as a Health model Adult Day Center providing nursing services as well as its social program, FC/HUM started selling grocery certificates, and the first Progressive Dinner fund-raiser was held. St. Stephen Charismatic Episcopal Church and Good Shepherd Church both joined FC/HUM in 1996.

1997 was a very significant year in the life of the Emergency Assistance Program. The name of the program was changed to the Individual & Family Assistance Center (IFAC) and moved from a three-day operation to five days a week. A full-time Masters level social worker was hired as the Director of this expanded program. Also, in 1997, FC/HUM began Friends in Action, a mentoring program to assist chronically struggling

families. In 1997, FC/HUM published its own cookbook, began quarterly youth events, and participated in several church and community festivals, as well as the National Interfaith Community Ministries Conference held in Louisville that year.

In 1998 two more churches, Bethany Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Highview Baptist, joined FC/HUM. FC/HUM also celebrated its Tenth Anniversary, capped with the creation of a ministry quilt featuring seventeen member churches. In 1999, the health aide program was re-energized and formally started as the Health Equipment Loan Program (HELP) under the administration of the Adult Day Director and through the generosity of Fern Creek Mini Storage (now Fern Creek Space Center) that provides storage space for the equipment. This year also marked the first annual FCHUM James O. Leach Hunger Awareness Dinner as a joint fund-raising and awareness event for the IFAC and the Community Hunger Walk. 1999 also saw the renewal of LIGHT UP FERN CREEK Christmas festivities in cooperation with area civic/community groups. FC/HUM offered the first LOVELIGHT TREE as an opportunity for memorial and in honor gifts.

In 2000, the Progressive Dinner was changed to an Annual Dinner and Auction all in one location. Solid Rock Church of God joined becoming FC/HUM's eighteenth church, now including thirteen denominations. The IFAC office moved to the Fern Creek Community Center and FC/HUM took over management of the Community Center in exchange for space. In 2001, Louisville Trinity Church joined FC/HUM. In 2002, Seaton Park Baptist joined FC/HUM bringing the total member churches to nineteen.

2003 proved to be a pivotal year in the life of FC/HUM. Two smaller churches dissolved lessening the list of member churches to seventeen. In May, upon the resignation of the Executive Director, Rev. Ron Loughry, the Adult Day Center's Director since 1996 was selected to serve as FCHUM's new Executive Director. Rev. Loughry, in consideration of budget concerns proposed that he continue to serve as the Adult Day Director as well (for one salary), but with the help of hiring a full-time Administrative Assistant. This proposal was accepted and implemented in June 2003. FCHUM also produced its second cookbook. FCHUM began holding Summer and Christmas benefit concerts featuring groups from member churches. Due to changes at the Community center, the IFAC ceased to manage the Center and began paying rent.

In 2004, the Administrative Assistant and the part-time Bookkeeper positions were combined once again into one full-time position. The ADC Nurse position was also expanded into the ADC Health Services & Activities Coordinator position as the nurse qualified to perform case-management and activities duties.

The summer of 2005 brought both challenge and promise to FCHUM. During the Spring of 2005, new churches, New Vision Ministry Center and the Louisville Chinese Christian Church, joined FCHUM, bringing our membership to nineteen representing 12 denominations, in addition to the Fern Creek/Highview Ministerial Association. Also in 2005, due to changes at the Fern Creek Community Center regarding the conditions of our IFAC lease, FCHUM was faced with the reality of needing to relocate. Faced with the challenge to find new and adequate space for the IFAC, Beulah Presbyterian Church offered to lease property to FCHUM for \$1.00 a year and challenged the community to support a building campaign. Two task forces were formed (Construction & Financial), construction professionals from various churches stepped forward volunteering their services as did several people with financial background and the FCHUM "Building To

Serve” campaign took off. It was decided that while building FCHUM should plan on consolidating all of its services under one roof, so plans to relocate the ADC as a second phase were also implemented.

The winter of 2006 brought an opportunity for all the community ministries to partner with Metro government and LG &E through matching grants to provide greater assistance to families in need. FCHUM raised \$7,000 that was matched by Metro government and that \$14,000 was matched by LG&E to provide us with \$28,000 available to provide assistance with utilities. In the spring of 2006 a ceremonial ground-breaking took place at the site of FCHUM’s future home. Pastors, Board members, FCHUM Staff and Volunteers, Metro Council people, and other civic & community leaders put shovels to ground to celebrate the beginning of the “Building To Serve” campaign. In May the Executive Director paid Beulah Presbyterian \$1.00 and signed the first lease for the new property. With the beginning of the new fiscal year in July 2006, the part-time IFAC assistant position was expanded into a full-time IFAC Assistant & Development Coordinator position. The Fall brought about some new beginnings in the Highview community with FCHUM providing leadership in the establishment of the Highview Business Association, the Highview Fall Festival and the Highview Holiday Fest. Santa Claus made an appearance on a bulldozer at the new property promising that work would soon begin.

2007 would be a year of great accomplishments in building the new facility located on Beulah Presbyterian’s property. ST. Gabriel’s Men’s Club held the first annual Basketball challenge versus Metro government employees to raise funds for the Building To Serve Campaign, an Applebee’s Pancake Breakfast was also held. Cedar Creek Baptist organized a fund-raising event at Outback Restaurant as well. By mid-spring the foundation had been dug, and the driveway and parking lots had also been laid out. By summer framing had begun. FCHUM was blessed with an additional church joining when Fairmount Baptist joined during the late summer of 2007. With the resignation of the IFAC worker/Development Coordinator it was decided to revert that position back to a part-time IFAC worker only. That position was filled in the fall. In September FCHUM held a putt-putt tournament.

2008, the year celebrating the ministries’ 20th anniversary saw the addition of yet another church LifeBridge Christian and the completion of the new facility. It was also decided to create a 20th anniversary quilt. On April 1st, 2008 the IFAC started operations at the new site. The Central Office relocated in mid-April and the ADC opened on April 29th in its new home. By the end of April all of FCHUM operations had consolidated under one roof at 9300 Beulah Church Road. FCHUM had crossed over Jordan and entered the Promised Land. On Wednesday May 28th a ribbon-cutting was held and on Saturday June 14th FCHUM held a special service celebrating 20 years of uniting congregations and the community in service! During the summer it was decided to once again separate the Administrative Assistant and Bookkeeper positions due to increased work load in those areas. In late summer FCHUM began serving as a Meals On Wheels site under Metro Nutrition management.

2009 began with great news. The near miraculous endeavors of the Building To Serve task force continued. At the beginning of January the debt for our new facility was approximately \$170,000, but through another grant initiated by Metro Councilman and St. Gabriel member Robin Engel totaling \$54,500 and other donations received the debt

was reduced to approximately \$100,000 by the end of the month. Bob Beard (a member of Cedar Creek Baptist), who served as volunteer contractor organized another Outback Restaurant fund-raiser in March which raised about \$10,000. Then St. Gabriel announced that as part of its Capital Campaign they would take responsibility for \$80,000 of the debt this year leaving just \$20,000 to retire the debt. As of October 16, 2009 the amount was paid off in full. The Building to Serve Task Force then decided to initiate a new Phase II initiative called Investing To Serve: Legacy of Caring with the intent of creating a designated account to help underwrite future facility expenses and operating costs. By the end of 2009 that fund had raised \$34,000.

In the late summer of 2009, FCHUM took over coordinating and supervising the volunteers for the Meals on Wheels program. Also, over 2008-2009 IFAC once again served record numbers of families and individuals, seeing tremendous increase in need. The ADC continued to serve frail older adults and their families, many of whom were also feeling the effects of the harder economy. In the late summer of 2009 Peace Lutheran Church joined FCHUM; however New Vision Ministry Center left the area in September. Forrest Park Community Church joined FCHUM in the spring of 2010 bringing the total member churches to 21, representing 12 denominations. That summer the ADC recreated it's Activity Coordinator position. In a joint decision with various community groups, FCHUM decided to call a hiatus to the annual Light up Fern Creek in order to re-evaluate community support and involvement of other groups. The Highview Holiday Fest continued with great support.

Executive Director (combining ADC Director) Rev. Ron Loughry, observed his 15th anniversary with FCHUM in May 2011. A new church, Lighthouse Worship & Ministry Center joined FCHUM during the summer bringing membership to 23 churches representing 12 denominations. Central Office staff includes the Executive Director (combined with ADC Director), and a full-time Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper (this position was recombined during the summer of 2009). The ADC staff includes the Director (combining Executive Director), the Health Services Coordinator (Nurse), the Activities Coordinator, three Activity Assistants, and numerous volunteers. Renee Bryant, MSW, has served as the Individual & Family Assistance Center Director since December 1997. The IFAC staff additionally includes 2 Case Workers job sharing a part-time position and numerous volunteers. FC/HUM is blessed with the assistance of over 100 volunteers. The total in the Legacy Fund totals over \$50,000.

In addition to its own vital ministry programs, FC/HUM works with the community-at-large through such cooperative efforts as: Winterhelp, LIHEAP, Leveraging, FEMA, Families In Transition, Neighborhood Place, Meals On Wheels, TRIAD, Alzheimer's Association, Passport KChip & Advantage programs, Schools of Nursing, Social Work, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, the Ky Assoc. of Adult Day Centers, the Association of Community Ministries, various Advisory Committees, U. S. Congressional Senior Adult Advisory Council, Highview Fall Festival, Highview Holiday Fest, Fern Creek Women's Club, Lion's Club, Goodwill Industries, St. Vincent de Paul Societies, Fern Creek Community Association & Chamber, the Highview Business Association and various other foundations, agencies and organizations.