



News and Views

Fresno Metro Ministry's 34th Annual Anniversary

Dinner and Awards

We invite you, your family, friends and colleagues to join us in celebrating Fresno Metro Ministry's 34 years and honoring:

Zoua Vang, for telling the story of the Hmong people through the media and for supporting worthwhile community activities.

Honorable Carla Jo Dakin and Ed Perez, for their tireless commitment to social justice and helping the voice of the poor to be heard in legal and community sectors.

Ralph and Polly Victor, for the role they play in development for refugee communities, for beauty through art, and for their commitment to the common good.

Assemblywoman Sarah Reyes, for her government service for the people of the Valley, always keeping in touch with the needs and resources of those often left behind.

Hope Lutheran Church, for its ministry not only to its members, but also its leadership in meeting the needs of others and for its interfaith understanding and cooperation.

A special presentation by the Local Health Care Coalition to

Sr. Ruth Marie Nickerson, for her years of service in the Community at Saint Agnes Medical Center and for her support of health services at Holy Cross and Poverello House. (Sr. Ruth will not be present at the event.)

Location: Hope Lutheran Church • 364 E Barstow • Fresno

Date: Thursday, December 2, 2004

Time: 5.30 pm Social Hour • Dinner and Program 6.30—8.30 pm

\$35.00 per person • \$280 for a table of eight

For information on reservations, advertisement or sponsorship, please call (559) 485-1416, fax (559) 485 9109, or e-mail Carmen@fresnometmin.org

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You are invited!
Metro's Annual Thanksgiving Concert will be held at Hope Lutheran Church on Sunday, November 21 at 3 pm.

See enclosed flyer for details.



Michael Caldwell directs University Presbyterian Church Choir at the Annual Thanksgiving Concert in 2003. This year, Michael will be directing the mass community choir, along with Elizabeth Layout of Wesley United Methodist Church. Choirs participating in the Thanksgiving Concert 2004 include College Community Congregational Church Choir, Hope Lutheran Bell Choir, Dancers from the Korean Presbyterian Church and a Filipino choir known as Isang-Himig Samahang Bayanihan Chorale.

“My Life’s Passion” by Carla Jo Dakin

Carla Jo will be honored at Metro’s Anniversary Dinner on December 2, along with her husband Ed Perez.

As an administrative law judge in the area of unemployment law for over 15 years, I talked to ex-employees and employers all day long in benefit hearings. Their stories about work, life, and health concerns stay with me. The impact of the sluggish valley economy and high school dropout rates came home to me in many ways. I

witnessed the effects of our double-digit jobless rates while the national economy boomed, the ongoing cyclical insecurity of seasonal employment, and training programs that didn’t lead to jobs. Many cases included problems caused by no health coverage, and I saw the relentless pressure on public medical institutions trying – often in vain – to meet patient needs.

When I became a board member at Fresno Metro Ministry (1999 to 2003), I was able to see Metro’s vital work in the community up close. Metro makes a major difference in the way Fresno runs. Metro’s efforts have been those of a persistent accountability coach, urging civic leaders to act responsibly and

consider ALL of our community’s constituents. Metro is a unifier, bringing people with opposing viewpoints together at its Roundtables and Forums.

Ed and I met 25 years earlier working for the new Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB), helping farmworkers and growers deal



Carla Jo Dakin and Ed Perez

with working conditions through elections for union representation. Through the ALRB experience we confronted daily hardships lived by our neighbors and families in the central valley. Ed later worked in a variety of ways as a community organizer. He came to Metro well equipped through professional and personal experience to help Metro gather diverse segments of the community and bring their voices up front to be heard.

We found Metro Ministry is not deterred by this complex scenario of life in the valley. The folks at Metro are energized to help in a variety of ways. That is why I was pleased to participate in many Metro projects. That’s why Ed took a turn on the County Mental Health Board to bring both his experience and Metro’s broad perspec-

Continued on page 4 .

FIRST 5 FRESNO COUNTY SUPPORT FOR A CHILDREN’S HEALTH INITIATIVE IN FRESNO COUNTY

On September 1, 2004, after hearing an informational session provided by members of the Steering Committee, the First 5 Fresno County Commission voted unanimously to approve implementation activities for its 10 priority outcomes, including an outcome to reduce financial barriers to health care access. Among the approved activities was the development of a Healthy Kids health insurance expansion program to provide Healthy Families-equivalent benefits to approximately 8,000 uninsured children 0-5 years who are ineligible for public programs. Development of complementary outreach, enrollment and utilization/retention activities was additionally approved that will reach 18,000 children who are eligible for MediCal and Healthy Families, but currently not enrolled. While this action by the Commission did not allocate a specific amount of funds for these activities, the approval paves the way for future allocations by the Commission for the identified activities.

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRIC SERVICE UPDATE

The Wellness Foundation has made the decision to provide funding through the Central California Children's Mental Health Foundation to support the San Joaquin counties' desire to address the inpatient and outpatient mental health needs for children and adolescents. Formation of public joint power governance structure, as well as consideration to support Kaweah Delta District Hospital's desire to provide inpa-

tient services for children and adolescents in the Valley, will be topics addressed through the planning process. Supervisor Susan Anderson continues to champion the need to provide inpatient services that are accessible to patients and their families in the Valley and to improve outpatient services that can prevent and/or reduce hospital stays, that are integrated, and that reflect best practice, evidence-based treatment modalities.



Volunteers needed to support Metro's monthly activities.

Give the gift of your time!

Metro needs volunteers to assist with tasks related to our Hunger and Nutrition program, and our Health-care program. If you have interest in supporting Metro's work by volunteering your time on a one-time or regular basis, please contact Carmen at phone 485-1416 or e-mail

carmen@fresnometmin.org.

You are welcome to join the committed team of Metro volunteers! Enjoy the fellowship and the feeling of contributing your time to valuable community projects!

Kaiser Permanente Child Health Plan

By Carmen Arambula

Fresno Metro Ministry is moving along with its commitment to enroll children with affordable and comprehensive health insurance. Within the last two and a half months, we have been able to start the application process in the Kaiser Permanente Child Health Plan for more than 30 families

resulting in more than 60 children with possibility of comprehensive health coverage. We have reached out to not only to the city of Fresno, but more than 5 of the smaller surrounding cities and communities. We hope to continue the momentum, and maintain our efforts and dedication for having healthy children and communities.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES EXPANSION FUNDING WILL HELP TO EXPAND MENTAL HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS

A Mental Health Initiative is included on the Nov. 2 voting ballot. The Initiative or Proposition 63 will add \$1 billion each year to fund mental health care in California. Imposing an additional 1% tax on personal income above \$1 million will fund the Initiative.

This funding will:

1. Provide funds to counties to expand services and develop innovative programs and integrated service plans for mentally ill children, adults and seniors;
2. Require the state to develop mental health service programs including prevention, early intervention, and education and training programs;
3. Prohibit the state from decreasing funding levels for mental health services below current levels.



Fresno Community Garden Coalition: *Metro Plants the Seed*

By Jeremy Hofer

Community Gardens bring people together in the act of growing our own food. In Fresno County, where 32% of children live in poverty and 36% of adults have trouble putting food on the table, the ability to grow one's own food can be the difference between a happy and a hungry home.

Several years ago there were over 15 community gardens in Fresno and Clovis. Some of these gardens still flourish in once-empty lots next to churches, agencies and apartment complexes.

Vegetables grow in vegetable gardens, flowers grow in flower gardens, and people grow in community gardens.

The gardeners come from all over the world bringing their own unique crops and growing techniques. Currently only about seven of these gardens remain and many of these are in jeopardy.

These gardeners need our support! Fresno Metro Ministry has recognized the need to not only save these remaining gardens, but to support the creation of new gardens. The Community Hunger and Nutrition Forum of July '04, entitled

Planting a Seed, was a look at how we can start and sustain community gardens in Fresno. A month later, Metro convened the Fresno Community Garden Coalition to provide a network of support for communities who have or wish to start gardens in their neighborhoods. Since that time, two new neighborhood garden groups have formed: one in the Tower District, and one on the West Side.

Help us grow!

Contact *Jeremy Hofer*

Jeremy@fresnometmin.org

559 485-1416

Carla Jo Dakin, continued from page 2.

tive to that entity.

At present, I am retired and focusing on health issues, specifically cancer. Living with cancer myself, I actively support organizations doing a good job of promoting investigations of the causes of cancer. It's astounding to me that 1 in 3 Americans today will experience cancer in their lifetimes. The Breast Cancer Fund is remarkable in its willingness to look unflinchingly at preventable and environmental causes for cancer. These folks, most of whom have cancer, are willing to ask the hard questions about what's in our air, water, food, cars, etc. which may be contributing to cancer.

For the second year I am fundraising for the Breast Cancer Fund (BCF) with "LUNAFEST." LUNAFEST is a night of short films that plays at Fresno State Satellite Student Union, Friday, October 29, at 7 pm. Francine Oputa, of the Women's' Resource Center, and I brought LUNAFEST here for one night on its way to 70 cities around the nation. The films are delightful, diverse. LUNAFEST proceeds here are shared by the Breast Cancer Fund and the Women's Resource Center. I recommend it wholeheartedly to women and those who love them—in short, everyone. Tickets are available at the Student Union on campus and at The Movies in the Tower district.

Most of us eventually find our way to community activism, even in the course of active lives. Beyond my workplace, schools, and church participation, I first found Metro. Metro's invaluable presence provided a catalyst to increased activism for me. For Metro's enduring role in Fresno, I remain very grateful.



Governor signs pesticide drift bill into law!

By Carolina Simunovic

Imagine the fear you would feel after realizing that your entire community has been poisoned. Looking down your street you see your neighbors, children and adults alike, vomiting and gasping for air. You try to understand what has happened, you even call 9-1-1 for help, and find no answers, and no help. It sounds like a "Terrorism Red Alert" nightmare doesn't it?—except it isn't. This was the scenario 3 times in the last 5 years in the San Joaquin Valley, when the residents of Earlimart (1999), Arvin (2002), and Lamont (2003) found themselves to be the victims of major pesticide drift.

In all three of these cases residents called 9-1-1 for help, which in most cases made their horror stories worse. In Earlimart the emergency response team ordered people to publicly undress and then be hosed down by a fire hose to be decontaminated (ironically, people

then brought their "contaminated" clothing with them in the ambulance ride to the hospital). In Lamont residents that were trying to evacuate were blocked by an ambulance and police barricade that wanted to quarantine the area. Meanwhile, in all three incidents there were people that felt ill but stayed in their homes, had no idea what was going on outside, and were never notified by authorities that there was a problem.

The Pesticide Drift Emergency Response Act, a bill authored by Senator Dean Florez (Shafter) and recently signed into law by Governor Schwarzenegger, will hopefully eliminate future disasters of this kind. The bill calls for emergency response teams to coordinate with local Agricultural Commissioners (which had not previously occurred) to create protocols for handling pesticide drift incidents. In the Earlimart, Arvin, and Lamont cases it took hours to locate the Ag Commissioner to find

out what pesticide had been applied on the neighboring field, and this was hours after it had occurred to anyone that the source of the poison could have been a pesticide. The bill also creates a medical fund from fees imposed on pesticide applicators to pay for the immediate and short-term medical costs for the victims of pesticide drift. The medical fund will only be for victims of non-occupational pesticide drift, as workmen's compensation is set up to pay for medical costs of those injured at work.

This law would not have been possible without the hard work of people, victims of pesticide drift, and organizations from the Valley advocating for its passage. The true spokeswoman for this cause, Teresa DeAnda, is a resident of Earlimart, a victim of pesticide drift, a mother of seven children, a founding member of El Comite para el Bienestar de Earlimart, the current Central Valley Representative of Californians for Pesticide Reform, and a dear friend to yours truly (me). Another unsung heroine in this fight is Martha Guzman who works with California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation and was the brains behind the bill. Fresno Metro Ministry was also a strong supporter of this bill, and dedicated time and energy to this issue.



Teresa DeAnda,
pesticide drift advocate

Definitions:

Pesticide Drift – When pesticides applied in a designated area (e.g. agricultural field, school grounds, etc.) drift onto areas where they are not intended to go. This is illegal and should be reported to the local County Agriculture Commissioner. Have you ever been a victim of pesticide drift?

Pesticide Drift Emergency Response Act – A new law signed by Governor Schwarzenegger that will create a medical fund for victims of pesticide drift and will require emergency response teams to coordinate with local County Agriculture Commissioners to create protocols for handling pesticide drift incidents. It is important to note that the bill previously contained provisions for the training of medical professionals to better recognize pesticide poisoning and for a pilot program that would allow online posting of pesticide application that emergency response teams would have access to. These were eliminated in the legislative process.



Metro Invited to Submit Proposal For Changing Environment for Healthier Eating and Exercise

Fresno Metro Ministry has been invited by The California Endowment to submit a proposal for improving the “environment” in schools, after-school programs, neighborhoods, and in the media in selected population areas. Metro will partner with Fresno County Health Department and Fresno Unified School District in submitting the proposal. The Endowment will fund only four to five of the fifteen proposals they have invited state-wide. The project is to prevent obesity and diabetes, and to promote environments that encourage and support healthier life styles.

Contributions and Payments On Website

Persons can contribute to Fresno Metro Ministry by using your credit card over Metro’s website at www.fresnometroministry.org Payments for Anniversary Dinner tickets can also be made in that manner. Soon we will be able to offer a website form where you can have monthly contributions automatically credited to your credit card. Contributions in support of our programs by mail are also appreciated.

FUSD School Board Candidates Share their Vision for Healthy Fresno Schools

Twelve of Seventeen Field Questions at October Hunger Forum

By Edie Jessup,

FMM Hunger and Nutrition Project Coordinator

Forty per cent of Fresno Unified School District children are overweight and physically unfit. The low income levels of children’s families are reflected in the reality that 85% of them are eligible for free lunch. We know that low incomes often contribute to poor nutrition and chronic disease as high fat food is often less expensive. Within that context FUSD School Board candidates were asked October 6 how they could affect policies that would result in healthier children who can learn more successfully. The setting was Metro’s monthly Hunger and Nutrition Forum held at Trinity Lutheran Church.

Three questions had been provided to the candidates in advance. The first asked how they would support the proceedings and implement the nutrition and exercise policy recommendations that will be forthcoming from the new FUSD Healthy Schools Environment Policy Committee. The second question asked how they would support eliminating unhealthy foods such as soda, candy, junk food, and fast food contracts. The third question asked how they would promote cultural competence, aid in diversity understanding and appreciation, and protect the rights of all students. The candidates’ responses are available on Metro’s website at www.fresnometroministry.org.

While the audience appreciated the answers, many of the candidates appeared to have “not done their homework” on the impact of student ill health on learning. The tendency of some candidates was to look to “individual-behavior” solutions to an epidemic of overweight and chronic disease clustered in this city and county, rather than look at the environment schools and the community provides to children.

Metro’s Hunger and Nutrition Project will continue to encourage Fresno to ask questions of candidates and school board members about how they will address obesity and the chronic diseases we are seeing in our children. The Healthy School Environment Policy Committee is meeting and working in subcommittees to recommend policy to the

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The Community Health Care Roundtables are held the third Thursday of each month at Trinity Lutheran Church, 3973 N. Cedar Avenue, Fresno. The continental breakfast gathering begins at 7:30 a.m. and adjourns at 9:30 a.m. All interested persons are invited. There is no charge. Reservations are not necessary. The next two dates are November 18 and December 23.

The Hunger and Nutrition Forum is held the second Wednesday of each month at Trinity Lutheran Church, 3973 N. Cedar Avenue, Fresno. All interested persons are invited to participate in this lunch meeting. Reservations are not necessary. The next two dates are November 10 and December 8.

The transcripts of the Community Health Care Roundtables and of the Hunger and Nutrition Forums are available on the Metro website at www.fresnometroministry.org



School Board Candidates continued from page 6.

FUSD School Board that will change the food and physical activity environment we have now in most schools because of under-funding of education.

Visit your neighborhood school at Breakfast or Lunch. Ask how many students participate in free meals. See what kind of vended food is available for kids and school staff to purchase. Learn how school board candidates respond to the questions.

Written questions from participants for the FUSD candidates included: Would you ban vending machines to stop school support of selling harmful foods to students? How would you replace the funding provided by soda and snack food sales, given the schools financial crisis? If elected, are you willing to press our superintendent and principals to adopt Vista USD's approach that has raised funds and eliminated soda and junk food? What are the top five health problems you think affect Fresno students besides obesity? Are you willing to close campuses in order to assure what food choices are available to students during the school day? What role would the School Board have in educating parents about nutrition and physical activity? Why not incorporate nutrition and physical activity into curriculum in science classes, math classes, etc.? Which of the Board Candidates have been to a cross-section of school sites in FUSD and eaten lunch or breakfast with students to see what is served and what kids choose to eat?

Fresno Metro Ministry Staff:

- Rev. Walt Parry**
Executive Director
- Laurie Primavera, RN, MSN**
Healthcare Coordinator
- Carmen Arambula**
Special Projects Coordinator
- Rev. Kenn Smiley**
Cross-Cultural Clusters
- Edie Jessup**
Hunger and Nutrition Coordinator
- Phoua Moua**
Hunger and Nutrition Assistant
- Jeremy Hofer**
Hunger and Nutrition Assistant
- Carolina Simunovic**
Environmental Health Coordinator
- Socorro Gaeta**
Environmental Health Assistant
- Carmen Pauls Wiens**
Office Manager
- Ellie Stokle**
Bookkeeper

" Working together
to build a
better community "

Fresno Metro Ministry Welcomes Imam Seyed Ali Ghazvini to Fresno and to the Islamic Cultural

Imam Seyed Ali Ghazvini was born in Iraq (1958) in a prominent religious family. He earned his BA in political science from Tehran University, Iran (1990), Certificate (equivalent to Master) of Islamic Theology from the Islamic Seminary in Qum, Iran (1994), and MBA from University of La Verne, California (2003). In 1996, he migrated to the USA and directed the Assadiq Foundation (a Muslim community center) in Southern California. Imam Ghazvini moved with his family to Fresno last August to join the Muslim community at the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno. He leads Friday Prayer at the center and directs community youth



Imam Seyed Ali Ghazvini and wife Mona Ghazvini

gathering every Saturday. He is a strong advocate of interfaith dialogue and co-operation for the protection of the family and the environment and peace awareness. Imam Ghazvini speaks three languages: English, Farsi and Arabic.

* Imam is the title for a Muslim cleric.

"The month of Ramadan is time to drown out past vices and to seek the Lord's assistance and forgiveness. It is a time for redemption and hope. It is time to heal severed ties and to forgive while one is being forgiven by the Lord. It is a month of discipline and training to better one's actions, to develop sympathy for the less fortunate and to help others."

--- Islamic Cultural Center's website.

From mid-October to mid-November, religious Muslims in Fresno join 1.3 billion Muslims around the world observing the holy month of Ramadan. For more detailed information on the holy month of Ramadan, see the Islamic Cultural Center's website at www.icfresno.org.



Ramadan's Activities at the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno

Every Night: Recitation of the holy Quran and traditional Ramadan's supplication.

Every Friday Night: Prayers, breaking the fast (Iftar) after sunset, Quranic commentary, followed by recitation of the holy Quran and supplication.

Every Saturday night: Prayers, breaking the fast (Iftar) after sunset, Quranic commentary in Farsi, followed by recitation of the holy Quran and supplication.

For other night's Ramadan programs, language of the programs and more information please contact the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno.

Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno
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