



# Fresno Metro Ministry April 2005

## News and Views

### 26,000 Uninsured Children Have Hope!!

**By Laurie Primavera, Director of Healthcare Policy for Fresno Metro Ministry**

On February 2, 2005, the First 5 Fresno County Children and Families Commission approved \$6.4 million to support 26,000 children who have no health coverage and no medical home.

Fresno Metro Ministry initiated a community-wide planning process in 2004, and with its many community partners completed a business plan to implement an Initiative in Fresno. In 2005, Metro received a California Health Care Foundation grant to help launch the Children's Health Initiative in Fresno County. Implementation activities include the following:

- Outreach and enrollment strategies to enroll eligible children into public programs such as Healthy Families and Medi-Cal.

- Streamlined enrollment application system, known as One e App, that reduces paperwork and bureaucratic systems and places the decision making on the delivery system instead of the family.

- Public/private fundraising strategies to provide health coverage to children ineligible for public programs because their parents make too much for public funds, but not enough to pay for health insurance premiums.

An aggressive timeline is in place so that the full program can be launched by August 2005. Local organizers are optimistic that Fresno's efforts will be successful. More important, better health insurance means there will be a family doctor to treat children instead of a costly emergency room team.

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### YOUTH COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT

#### National Day of Community Service



Leadership at Work: Community Feeding Chair Stuart Jones and YCSP Chairman Kamal Abu-Shamsieh

On April 16, 2005, Youth Community Service Project (YCSP) will bring together youth of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds to work side-by-side in community service projects. These

projects will be done in an atmosphere of deep respect for the religious traditions of all participants.

In preparation for the community service work, young persons from several faith traditions in the community have been meeting to go through a curriculum designed to encourage inter-faith encounters, promote understanding, challenge stereotypes and affirm identity. The first phase of the project drew participation of youth and mentors from Muslim, Jewish, United Methodist, Roman Catholic and Unitarian

### Metro Celebrates 35 years in 2005!

#### Save these Dates:

**Annual Meeting — Thursday Evening, Jun 23**

**Thanksgiving Concert — Sunday, Nov. 20**

**35th Anniversary Dinner — Thursday, Dec. 1**

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## What is a Community Gardener?

One definition is someone who is called to grow food but because of housing circumstances needs to organize in order to gain access to land. About ten community gardens exist in Fresno and Clovis, accommodating about 200 gardeners and feeding an estimated 2,800 extended family members.

In the first quarter of 2005, Metro brought together gardeners at a community garden in southeast Fresno with the Small Farm Resource and Training Center and the City of Fresno Parks and Recrea-

tion Department, who owns the 5 acre lot where the garden is located. Plans are to combine the existing garden with a new adjacent city park. Metro has played an important role as facilitator and is providing technical assistance to the project.

Green space is a huge necessity in Fresno which ranks last out of 50 of the largest US cities in park and preserve land in relation to total city area (2%) as well as in parks per capita (3 parks and reserves per 1000 residents). The reason for this is a bit unclear. *We have the land:* a trip through south

Fresno will reveal hundreds of vacant lots collecting weeds and debris. *We also have the gardeners* - including but not limited to the 5000 new Hmong refugees who will be calling Fresno home and the next generation of inner-city farmers who are in our classrooms and playgrounds. *What it seems we lack is the will;* organizing these efforts can be complex and takes resources. However through efforts such as the one in southeast Fresno, it is our hope that these urban park/farms will become widely recognized for the important resources they bring to a community by providing recreation and nutritious food to their surrounding neighborhoods.

— Jeremy Hofer



Fresno Metro Ministry  
Fresno Community Garden Coalition  
&  
American Community Gardening Association  
&  
UC Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners  
*present*

the  
Fresno  
Community  
**Garden  
Summit**

friday & saturday  
April 15 & 16, 2005  
Garden of the Sun  
1944 N Winery Ave, Fresno

featuring  
Growing Communities Workshop  
\* Leadership training on community building, leadership and organizational development through community gardening

Registration \$20  
(partial and full scholarships available)  
Free with \$35 ACGA Membership

[www.fresnometroministry.org](http://www.fresnometroministry.org)  
559 485-1416

### **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 Healthcare 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](mailto: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!

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# Valley Not Funded for Obesity Prevention by TCE

By Edie Jessup, Hunger and Nutrition Coordinator for Fresno Metro Ministry



No TCE *Healthy Eating Active Community* projects have been funded yet in the San Joaquin Valley. Fresno

Metro Ministry was one of 14 lead community based organizations in the State invited to apply for 6 projects to be funded by The California Endowment (TCE) in November 2004. Great thanks to the Fresno County Department of Public Health and Fresno Unified School District, Kaiser Permanente, and California Food Policy Advocates for partnering with Metro in the application for funding to change the environment in a distinct southeast Fresno neighborhood. This holistic approach at prevention of obesity, diabetes, and the chronic diseases resulting from poor nutrition and health access remains an important community goal. Fresno Metro Ministry continues to explore improving the health of low-income families in Fresno through partnerships to address lack of access to healthy food and physical activity. The over sixty organizations that responded to support and offer to collaborate on this project will be brought together again in opportunities to create the community environmental change so needed in Fresno and the Valley.

Fresno Metro Ministry Hunger and Nutrition Project is

concerned that this exciting endorsement of community environmental change as an essential facet of the ability to address rampant and racist chronic disease, was not funded at all in the San Joaquin Valley. The statistics and studies show the Valley is impacted more severely by food insecurity, unemployment and poverty, chronic disease, lack of health care access and lacks the infrastructure to deal with these issues with its diverse population. These impediments to improved access to healthy food and active environment require coherent and coordinated changes in schools, afterschool programs, neighborhoods, health care environment, and marketing and advertising of unhealthy food. The concern is that the Valley is starting far behind other areas (LA and the Bay Area) in resources. Fresno and the Valley remain more impacted and thus it is more difficult to effect changes because of these few resources and many challenges. The major stated reason for not funding the project in Fresno was that it seemed that the partners had not previously worked *together in the specific neighborhood* identified, and that the FUSD was enmeshed in difficulties. The funders feared that it would take too long a time to jumpstart the project.

This is a challenge to be addressed by the Fresno Community, and the very partners engaged in envisioning a Healthy Eating Active Community. Metro hopes to continue to bring the

community together to create *Fresno solutions* to an issue that must be addressed. Our community cannot afford to lose the health and well being of a generation to chronic disease by diet. Our community cannot afford to fail in the recognized response needed: a change in the environment of poor access to healthy food and lack of access to safe, active built space by our whole community.

**Join Metro in developing a Valley solution to reclaiming a healthy food system and re-creating active built environments for all of us.**

- Come to the Metro Forums and Roundtables.
- Engage your workplace in a discussion on health outcomes you see at work, and in your families.
- Actively join a task group that is addressing getting our local, healthy food into neighborhoods and schools so that we can all live long and well.
- Serve fruit and vegetables instead of celebration donuts.
- Go for a walk during your break.
- Visit your neighborhood school or afterschool program and support a Healthy School Environment Policy that changes kids' access to soda and fast food, and

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# Air Quality Update

The Central Valley Air Quality Coalition (CVAQ), which Metro helped form in 2003, is gaining ground in the effort to clean up the Valley's dirty air. Member organizations are becoming more astute at advocating for clean air policies at the local air district, have engaged in a variety of outreach activities designed to teach people about our Valley's air pollution problem, and are involved in crafting legislation specific to the San Joaquin Valley's air quality problem. There are three CVAQ members on the air district's Dairy Permitting Advisory Group, a group set up to figure out how to regulate new dairies entering the Valley, three CVAQ members on the air districts Citizen's Advisory Committee, and a newly formed Environmental Justice Committee that is working with the air district to set up guidelines for how the district can improve its work with environmental justice communities. Our work

has even been featured in two recent publications, *Clearing the Air in the San Joaquin Valley*, published by the Union of Concerned Scientists and the Kirsch Foundation, and *Gasp-ing for Air: Why we must cultivate a healthier Central Valley*, published by the Women's Foundation of California (these are available upon request, or through a link on the website: [www.calcleanair.org](http://www.calcleanair.org)).

**Things to watch for:** SB 999 – A state bill to restructure the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Governing Board. It will add permanent seats for City Council Members from Fresno, Bakersfield and Stockton, and will add seats for public members with expertise in health, environmental justice, transportation planning, and air pollution science.

**Coming soon in May 2005:  
SJV Air Quality Action  
Day 2005**

## Fresno Metro Ministry Staff:

**Rev. Walt Parry**

Executive Director

**Laurie Primavera, RN, MSN**

Director, Healthcare Policy

**Carmen Arambula**

Assistant Director, Healthcare Policy

**Edie Jessup**

Hunger and Nutrition Coordinator

**Jeremy Hofer**

Hunger and Nutrition Assistant

**Phoua Moua**

Hunger and Nutrition & Outreach

**Carolina Simunovic**

Environmental Health Coordinator

**Socorro Gaeta**

Environmental Health & Outreach

**Rev. Kenn Smiley**

Cross-Cultural Clusters

**Ellie Stokle**

Bookkeeper

**Carmen Pauls Wiens**

Office Manager

## Save the Date: Common Good Award



On Sunday, June 5, 2005, the public is cordially invited to the first award dinner and ceremony for the Outstanding Advocate for the Common Good. This program is named in honor of Carl and Esther Robinson, long-time supporters of Metro Ministry. Esther helped found Metro and Carl is Board Member Emeritus. The initial honoree is Ellie Bluestein, well-known progressive activist in Fresno for more than 40 years. Serving the Common Good, in contrast to narrow self-interest, requires much courage and perseverance and is an inspiration to all of us. Dr. David Roy, President of Fresno Ministerial Association is coordinating the event, in collaboration with Fresno Metro Ministry and the Fresno Inter-Faith Alliance. Help us celebrate! Mark your calendars and be on the look out for your invitation.

## Valley Not Funded

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- increases physical activity at our District schools.
- Ask your health care provider to invest in helping your neighborhood organize and advocate for prevention changes.
  - Ask your religious leader to talk about the wasting of a generation to poor diet in the midst of plenty of food.

THEN, lets get busy together for a healthy city and county. We could lead the Valley in a model of healthy changes.

– Edie Jessup



We believe everyone in our community should live in a supportive environment and have access to nutritious food, culturally appropriate health care, and clean air.

For **35 years**, Fresno Metro Ministry has, with your help, worked to create that better community. Through planned giving, you can leave a legacy which will continue to support Metro **now and in the future.** You can leave a legacy which will impact our community through education and advocacy in the areas of hunger and nutrition, health care, cross-cultural diversity, and clean air. **Join us for the long haul.** We invite you to consider leaving a legacy to support Metro's continuing efforts to provide a healthy social and physical environment for all people. For more information on planned giving and charitable bequests see [www.leavealegacy.org](http://www.leavealegacy.org), e-mail [Carmen@fresnometmin.org](mailto:Carmen@fresnometmin.org), or phone the Metro office at 485-1416.

## **Rev. Steve Ratzlaff** (continued from back cover)

cannot pay for them either." Steve is currently the chairperson of the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund board of directors.

The National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund (NCPTF) works for legislation enabling conscientious objectors to war to have their federal income taxes directed to a special fund which could be used only for non-military purposes. NCPTF lobbies Congress on behalf of The Religious Freedom Peace Fund Tax bill (HR2037) which would allow people of conscience not to have to pay for war. Passage of the bill would make it possible for conscientious objectors to pay all of their taxes in good conscience.

For more information contact:

National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund  
2121 Decatur PI NW; Washington, DC 20008  
Ph. 202-483-3751 [www.peacetaxfund.org](http://www.peacetaxfund.org)

Steve finds spiritual strength in spending time near the ocean and listening to music. Lynette, Steve's spouse, has been a partner in social justice initiatives. "We've been able to do this together, balancing beliefs, family life and church."

Now in Fresno, Steve is concerned about issues in our community. "The problems with air quality are blatant. From day to day, we wonder if the long-term effects of bad air will cause illness in our families. We have some of the worst air quality in the country. What

are we going to do about this? How can we guarantee that our children will not suffer adverse health effects? One thing is clear -- this cannot continue as it is."

A second concern of Steve's is poverty. "One quarter of the people in this city are hungry every day." Mennonite Community Church is located on the southeast side of Fresno. "Every day people come to the church for food."

Affordable housing is another major concern. "The cost of housing has greatly increased in our community. People are being priced out of the market. Refugees and people who live near the poverty level are discovering that there not many options for them. There is a lack of affordable housing and some present affordable housing is in danger of being upgraded to condos as well. It is an important issue that is being addressed by a coalition of groups in the Fresno Housing Alliance." Food security, living wage, availability of services including access to healthcare are all concerns for Steve as a pastor in the Fresno community.

Steve came to Mennonite Community Church in 2003, and is pleased to join the congregation's efforts to identify and respond to needs in the community. Members of the congregation are active in the community in the areas of victim-offender reconciliation, mediation and conflict resolution, affordable housing through the Fresno Housing Alliance, hunger issues, mental health and direct services for youth. Last June, Fresno Metro Ministry welcomed Steve to a three year term with the Metro board of directors.

### New Trauma and Burn Unit Back To The Future?

Nine years ago Valley Medical Center (VMC), the county hospital, reported a loss of three to ten million dollars. The County Hospital building was described by critics as "obsolete". The care was described by critics as a "two-tier system of care", with the poor at the County Hospital and the insured at Fresno Community and other hospitals. For many, the future of VMC was bleak.

Are we in a way "back to the future" in the land of hospital budgets, buildings, burn and trauma care? In some ways, yes. In some ways, no. It was nine years ago that Fresno County turned over the keys of the county hospital building to Community Medical Centers (CMC). In addition to those keys, Community Medical Centers accepted \$14 to \$18 million a year from the County, \$35 to \$70 million a year in federal government funds for serving more low-income persons, and special State of California funding (\$25 to \$50 million) for building a new Level 1 Trauma and Burn Center. Nine years ago there was also a dispute as to whether the County unionized nurses would be recognized by Community Medical Centers.

Community Medical Centers took on the task of providing medical care for those who qualify for a medically indigent program, and continued rural health care at the same level that the County had provided. Providing Jail and Juvenile Hall medical services was also a part of the contract. Community Medical Centers was not only to continue Level 1 Trauma and Burn services, but was to build a new Trauma and Burn Center on the Regional Medical Center (RMC) campus. Community Medical Centers also promised to construct a new ambulatory care building (clinics) on the new

campus, even though that wasn't obligated by the contract.

#### Nine Years Later

So are we back to the future? Nine years later the Trauma and Burn Center is still operating out of the old County hospital building. It's now nine years "more obsolete". A new, impressive, modern building has been constructed on the Regional Medical Center campus. However, Community Medical Center officials abruptly announced last November that the Level 1 Trauma and Burn unit would not be housed in the newly constructed building until they have 100 new patient beds at the Regional Medical Center site. It has also been disclosed that Community Medical Centers may not have the money to equip and staff the needed 100 new patient beds. It also appears they do not have the money to buy the promised "state-of-the-art" equipment for the Trauma-Burn services. They also do not have the money to build the promised Ambulatory Care clinics. In fact, it appears that Community Medical Centers lost 3.2 million dollars overall this last fiscal year. The amount of the loss is about ten million if revenues unrelated to medical services are not included. Following a court decision about a year ago, CMC and the California Nurses Association are in slow-moving contract talks.

#### Investment Up North; Trauma Project Incomplete Downtown

Members of our health care coalition question whether Community Medical Centers' decision to become 51% owners of a "for-profit" heart hospital in north Fresno is a primary reason that Community Medical Centers has not yet opened a "state of the art" Level 1 Trauma Center and Burn unit on the new RMC campus downtown. We think it's also a primary reason for CMC's losses this past fiscal year. The non-profit covers 100% of the for-profit's losses, and the losses have been great. CMC also included the for-profit hospital in its investment portfolio. Another factor in CMC's status is the cutback of federal and state funds for serving low-income persons. There is also some concern that Commu-

**Continued on page 7.**

nity's effort to stabilize the for-profit heart hospital has detracted from its cardiac surgery services offered at the downtown site. The two-tier or three-tier perception of medical care appears to be escalating.

### Senator Florez Hearing

In February I spoke at Senator Dean Florez's hearing on the Contract between Fresno County and Community Medical Centers. I expressed the above concerns, but also noted the achievements of Community Medical Centers in implementing the contract. Senator Florez indicated that he felt an audit was needed related to the contract, as he had not heard of a contract for this much and for this many years that did not have audits built into them.

### Recommendations

I made several recommendations at the hearing. One is that Fresno County report to the public each year about the contract, in addition to having Community Medical Centers report to the County Board of Supervisors. Those CMC Board members recommended by the County need to have some formal way to engage with the Supervisors and with the public without violating any CMC Board policies. Laurie Primavera of the Metro staff has just been appointed a County-recommended CMC Board member. A task group or commission should be appointed to ask and answer questions about the services and the contract on a quarterly or every-six month basis.

### The Future

It is essential that the contract is fulfilled in a timely manner, and that Community Medical Centers have the capability and will to provide long-term access to good quality medical care in all its preventive, primary care, and acute care dimensions for all those in need in our community. There's a sparkling, new building waiting to house the critical care services. The sooner this happens, the better for all.

## Thank you.

We appreciate your financial support for the work of Fresno Metro Ministry. For a secure and convenient way to contribute to Metro's work in our community, go to [www.fresnometroministry.org](http://www.fresnometroministry.org) and click on "Donate Now."

[www.fresnometroministry.org](http://www.fresnometroministry.org)



Knowledge Drills: Jeanna Francis answers curious youth. February 24, 2005.

Universalist congregations. Youth from additional congregations and local high schools will be participating in the community service project in April.

### April 16: Youth Community Service

On April 16, the youth will be engaging in four community service projects: landscaping and planting trees at Valley Crescent School in Clovis; maintenance and painting of the children's playground at Fresno Jewish Day School; feeding the homeless at Hotel California in downtown; and participating in building the Habitat for Humanity home in south Fresno. **PLEASE JOIN US. We hope your youth group will join our projects and your faith institution will sponsor us as well.** Youth Community Service Project is a non-profit 501c 3 organization that aims to enrich the lives of the youth in Central California through community based volunteer initiatives, enhance dialogue and understanding, promote shared-values and create leadership opportunities. The Youth Community Service Project has gained the endorsement of local and national organizations such as Unitarian Universalist General Association, The Interfaith Alliance Foundation (Washington DC), Fresno Metro Ministry, The Interfaith Alliance of Central California, Interfaith Youth Core (Chicago) and National Council of Community and Justice-NCCJ (Los Angeles). In addition the Annie E. Casey Foundation has awarded the Youth Community Service Project a mini-grant to develop the group's website.

Sponsors of the April 16<sup>th</sup> project include Fresno-based The Waterford Foundation, Fresno Metro Ministry, A & M Flooring America, and Baz Asthma and Allergy Institute. For more information, please contact: Kamal Abu-Shamsieh, Chairman; Youth Community Service Project; 1868 East Everglade Ave Fresno, CA 93720; Ph: (559) 244-9360

[shamsieh2@aol.com](mailto:shamsieh2@aol.com) [www.ycsp.org](http://www.ycsp.org)

## Steve Ratzlaff, Mennonite Community Church: Activist and Pastor

Originally from Henderson, Nebraska, Steve and Lynette Ratzlaff have called many places “home” during their thirty-one year marriage. After one year of marriage, they served as teachers in Bolivia with the Mennonite Central Committee, the international relief and development agency of the Mennonite Church. Lynette grew up with an awareness of international perspectives; as a child, her family spent three years in Puerto Rico where her father practiced dentistry. Prior to becoming a pastor, Steve worked with youth in Nebraska, Indiana, and Kansas City. Steve has provided pastoral leadership at Mennonite churches in Seattle, Washington, 1982-1992; Lincoln, Nebraska, 1992-2003; and now in Fresno.

Steve is a pastor and activist. Before moving to Fresno, Steve served as pastor at First Mennonite Church in Lincoln, Nebraska. There he was active with Nebraskans for Peace, and Nebraskans Against the Death Penalty. He has also been involved with the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), a non-violent direct action initiative of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches. In January of 2001, Steve traveled with CPT to Vieques to accompany local persons opposed to the U.S. bombing ranges there. The U.S. bombing practice on the fifteen-by-five-mile island of Vieques began in 1942. Sixty years later, over 5,000 people had been effected by the land, air, and sea maneuvers of the U.S. navy, including exposure to toxic waste. It took the efforts of local and in-

ternational activists like Steve, along with U.S. politicians like Bobby Kennedy, Jr., and Hilary Clinton to raise public awareness of the atrocities. The U.S. naval base on Vieques was closed during George W. Bush’s first term, as a result of a commitment made by former President Bill Clinton.

In an earlier pastorate in Seattle, Washington, Steve provided leadership in a socially active congregation. Seattle Mennonite Church was involved in Central American issues in the 1980’s, providing support for persons from Central America through participation in the Pledge of Resistance. The congregation responded to local issues related to the hunger, nutrition, and shelter needs of persons living in Seattle. Ultimately, the congregation grew because of involvement in the community. “People came because they bumped into our members who were actively living out the love of Christ,” Steve recalls. “The church tripled in size, and eventually spun off another congregation.”

Steve knows the cost of taking a firm stand on matters of conscience. “It’s a journey,” Steve says. “I have participated in acts of civil disobedience along the way. I don’t desire to have people angry with me. But sometimes there are issues of peace and justice that I believe in which call me to action. Sometimes you wish the witness alone would be effective, but the point is to be faithful, even if it requires acts of civil disobedi-



**Lynette and Steve**

ence. It happens when I have written all of the letters and exhausted all other possibilities.”

For all of his married life, Steve has been a war tax resistor. “As a conscientious objector to war, and with the inordinate amount of the U.S. budget going to military programs, I cannot in good conscience condone paying for war,” he says. “Plus, the large amounts of money used for the military also keeps us from having sufficient monies to use for healthcare, Social Security, Medicare and a living wage for most people. Because my conscience doesn’t allow me to fight in wars, I also am finding that I

**Continued inside on page 5.**



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Working together to build a  
better community.