

## **From the Executive Director**

**March 2008**

### What do we do - and how do we do what we do at the St. Andrews Center?

I am often in group meetings where we are asked to introduce ourselves and say "what organization we're with" and "tell a little about what we do". Folks who know me well will often say to me "Mike, keep it under a few minutes". I certainly try! It's hard to be brief when talking about all the great things that are happening at the St. Andrews Center. But after some recent good conversations (and a little bit of introspection), I've come to realize that a big part of **WHAT** we do is constantly looking at our community (and city) and seeing where the "gaps" are. Where are those places where needs exist? Those needs can be in education, or youth services, or medical, or in a variety of other places...

**How** do we do what we do at the SAC? We look at those gaps and we start looking for other agencies and friends to work together to address that issue. Much of our work is spent in building coalitions and meeting with interested groups around a common challenge (now you know why I drink so much coffee). One of the bedrock principles of the SAC is that we aren't in the business of "reinventing the wheel". Instead, we want to find those other partners with the knowledge and expertise to come together and help meet a community need.

A good example of this might be our new work in trying to deal with the "gap" in bringing fresh food to the Highland Park community (a lot of the folks who live here do not have ready access to fresh produce and healthy food). So we are partnering with some local farms and interested individuals and non-profits and governmental agencies to begin a community garden and also the development of a weekend community market. We also have used the same idea in our educational outreach and with our afterschool program.

See the need - find the partners - build the coalition - and enjoy working together.

It is a blessing, and it is a marvelous mission!

Mike

### **Upcoming projects...**

Senior Group - We are working on the development of a local bi-lingual senior (50 years+) group for the Highland Park area.

Educational Initiatives - We are working hard toward the development of a program for this summer that would reach youth between the ages of 15-17 who have dropped out of school.

Summer program - We are developing a summer program that will teach our children and youth about culture and history.

We are also developing several other educational initiatives to begin Fall 2009.

### **Spotlight on Staff: Drew Jennings - Director of Hispanic Summer Program**

Drew Jennings may be our youngest staff member, but he comes to the St. Andrews Center with many years of invaluable experience! Drew has been officially on staff with the St. Andrews Center since last fall, but he has been working with our programs since 2002. When we began in 2000, our programs were based around the needs and interests of the children who attended East Side Elementary School. We met those needs with a variety of partnerships and programs involving volunteers from Brainerd United Methodist Church and gradually involving volunteers and churches from around the area. Drew was one of those early volunteers. As a student at Chattanooga Christian School (and an excellent soccer player) he helped us begin our middle and high school outreach program called the "Opportunity Club". The "O.C." met twice a week afterschool at the Hamilton Family YMCA and was designed to give the students (who were learning English) an hour of homework help and tutoring, followed by an hour of swimming and soccer. At the height of the program, we had nearly 40 students who spoke 10 different languages.

Drew graduated from CCS, and then went to Wheaton College, where he graduated in 2007. He came back and wanted to be involved again, and soon was volunteering in a variety of positions at the St. Andrews Center. Drew speaks Spanish fluently, was recently married (in the St. Andrews sanctuary!) to Ann Grisham (a Spanish teacher at Normal Park Elementary), and they live only a few blocks away from the SAC. He coordinates the afterschool program at the SAC, and is a huge favorite with the children and youth at the Center. Drew also has an interest in agriculture, and does volunteer work at Crabtree Farms in Clifton Hills. He will be the point person in the agricultural programs that we are beginning at the SAC, including our community garden and market.

We are blessed to have him at the St. Andrews Center.

**From the Desk of Lisa  
Nichols, Program Director**

It is a great joy to see the progress our students are making in the afterschool program. Kindergarten students are learning to use letters to make words, and fourth graders are learning to read and comprehend paragraphs. Math skills are also increasing as our students gain confidence and skill.

A special thank you goes to Christ United Methodist Church for a refrigerator for our upstairs area and a chest freezer for the kitchen downstairs. The fridges will help us keep drinks and snacks cool, and enable us to have ice cream and other frozen goodies for the summer program.

We are planning a summer program in which 40 third through fifth grade students will celebrate the holidays celebrated in their lands of origin. We will use reading and math skills to study history and geography and prepare traditional foods. Thursday and Friday will be spent exploring historical and cultural sites in Chattanooga.

Volunteers continue to be important as 80 students gather each week at SAC. Thanks to all from TTU, UTC, Southern Adventist Univ., Notre Dame HS, and the McCallie School. Below, volunteer Janet Geitner, pastor of McDonald UMC in the Cleveland District, shares with kindergarten students during enrichment time.

To get in touch with Lisa, you may call the SAC office or contact her directly at 298-2161 or [lisaanichols@cs.com](mailto:lisaanichols@cs.com).

**ST. ANDREWS CENTER STAFF**

Rev. Michael Feely, Executive Director  
Lisa Nichols, Program Director  
Katie Walters, Administrative Asst.  
Leanne Chesney, Afterschool Director  
Drew Jennings, Director Of Hispanic Summer Program

**VISION STATEMENT**

*The Mission of the St. Andrews Center is to provide educational, social, cultural, economic and spiritual growth opportunities to the community and to provide a home for other non-profit organizations whose mission statements are in harmony with our own.*

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