



DISTRICT DISPATCH

A Newsletter of The Richmond District • Virginia Conference • The United Methodist Church

We envision churches where all God's people are welcomed at table, nurtured and transformed to be Christ to others in the world.

October 2006

Communities of Shalom

On Saturday morning, August 26, over seventy-five people from across Richmond's diverse communities gathered at Calvary UMC. Brought together by a shared concern for their communities, and their association with United Methodist Urban Ministries of Richmond (UMUMR), these church members, pastors, and leaders of other community service agencies attended an initial consultation meeting to learn more about the United Methodist Church's best practice model for community development, Communities of Shalom.

At Saturday's meeting, Will Dent, Trainer for the General Board of Global Ministries Communities of Shalom initiative, spoke to the gathering about the need for congregations to work together to bring about a state of wholeness in their communities, where people experience peace, justice, health, security, oneness with nature and neighbor, and spiritual renewal.

At the end of the meeting, seven churches had committed to work with the General Board of Global Ministries to participate in training to prepare them for creating a Community of Shalom in their neighborhoods. These churches will establish leadership teams made up of community members who, though they may not be members of that congregation, have vested interest in bringing positive and sustainable change into their community. During five separate training events to conclude in May 2007 these churches will identify the needs and assets specific to them and to the community immediately surrounding their churches. Each Community of Shalom will collaboratively establish and implement a strategic plan for enhancing community assets and addressing community needs. Through this work, God's kingdom is manifested in and among each person, family and neighborhood (Luke 17:21).

The Richmond District's involvement in the Communities of Shalom program was initiated through UMUMR, which serves to resource and coordinate transforming ministries of District churches. Rev. David Cooper, Executive Director of UMUMR and the Richmond District Coordinator of Communities of Shalom, envisions taking this proven model for community development to the next level, creating a City of Shalom by linking Communities of Shalom. In order to coordinate this first of its kind for Communities of Shalom regional effort, the Council for Creative Urban Ministry was formed. The Council will meet once a month for the next year and will lead the way toward creating an increasingly unified approach to addressing Richmond District urban ministry efforts, bringing together key persons from both urban and suburban congregations, Richmond's human services agencies, city officials, and other committed community members. Together, unified in Christ, God's kingdom of well-being in Richmond a city of shalom will emerge. Seek the shalom of the city, for in it's shalom you will find your shalom (see Jeremiah 29:7). *—Article by Beth Reddish and Dave Cooper*



Richmond Superintendent Marc Brown (center) and Dave Cooper (right) answer questions.



5th District Richmond City Councilman Martin Jewell (standing) addresses Community of Shalom attendees.

Purveyors of Hope: Hands On In Mission

A training event for four of the identified ministry focus areas of the Richmond District's Urban Ministry Initiative will be hosted by United Methodist Urban Ministries of Richmond on October 14 at Ginter Park UMC, 1010 W. Laburnum Avenue, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Participants may choose training in one of the following focus areas:

- ◆ Feeding and Food Distribution – Get acquainted with one of the many feeding ministries that serve Richmond. Learn how you can be a part of a coordinated ministry through our district's churches. This training will be led by members of Ginter Park UMC and Rev. Ed Martin.
- ◆ Education Through Mentoring – Richmond's youth are in desperate need of mentors. Receive training to become a mentor for elementary school students and make a difference in the life of a child. This training will be led by Mary Hetzel of the Micah Initiative and Jennifer Smith-Slabough and Allison Roberts of the Virginia Mentoring Project.
- ◆ Affordable and Accessible Housing – Support UMUMR in creating mixed income, mixed use, affordable housing in partnership with the Better Housing Coalition (BHC) and others. This session will include a tour of BHC facilities and will be led by Susan Smith of BHC.
- ◆ Medical Missions – Learn about health care services offered through CrossOver Ministries. Receive training and volunteer at a clinic that serves Richmond's most neglected communities. This training will be led by Mary Moore, Administrative Director of CrossOver Ministries.

To register call 231-9285 by October 5. The cost of lunch for this training, prepared by *New Visions, New Ventures*, UMUMR's partner in job skills development, is \$10. ◆

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