



We're Better Together

Westside Community Action Network

*Neighbors + Businesses + Social Services + Faith Groups +
Government Together*

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www.westsidecan.org

March 4, 2009

Dear Westside Neighbors and Friends,

Our neighborhood is blessed with many not-for-profit agencies that offer everything from humanitarian assistance to education, from legal representation to community and economic development, from mental health care to recreation and arts. All of us are expected to do more with less, just as you are. We are all facing funding challenges as we depend upon City, State or Federal money. The City of KCMO is looking at an \$80-90 million dollar budget shortfall; the State of MO is looking at a \$384 million dollar shortfall. Many of the philanthropic foundations and major corporations who provide grants are anticipating reducing the amount of their grants as well as reducing the number of agencies they are able to fund.

When you are looking for a good investment for your charitable dollars – think about investing in your own neighborhood first. I hope that you will keep these agencies and services in mind when it comes to donating – cash or in-kind items or your time.

Hunger On The Westside

The political pundits, bureaucrats and academia call it “food insecurity”, the rest of us call it what it is – hunger. We do indeed have hungry children and families on the Westside.

Almost all of the agencies serving the Westside have food needs. Guadalupe Center, Mattie Rhodes Center, the Ruiz Library and the Aguirre Center provide snacks for the children in their many programs. Julie Robinson, our Librarian, reports that the kids behave much better and are better able to focus when she can give the kids a snack after school or on Saturdays. Yet, there is no money in the Library budget for snacks. Some of our seniors are faced with buying medicine or food – not both. Guadalupe Center, Inc. provides a nourishing meal that may be the only meal they get that day.

The Westside houses two (2) food pantries both have seen a remarkable increase in neighborhood families who need food. Your cash or donations of food, paper products, and personal hygiene products would be welcomed. The Westside CAN Center and the two pantries have accounts at Harvesters, which enables us to buy food when we have money and to receive some food items free of charge. At Harvesters we can buy food for 14-18 cents per pound. You may make a donation directly to the pantries or you may make a donation directly to their accounts at Harvester's www.harvesters.org. Harvesters is seeing unprecedented demand at the same time donations, including corporate donations, are declining. They don't have everything we need but it helps immeasurably.

Sacred Heart Panty – This pantry is managed by Mrs. Frances Gonzalez. To donate call Sacred Heart/Our Lady of Guadalupe Church 816.842.6146 ask for Cathy Hernandez. This pantry is opened on alternating Monday's. They operate out of the basement of the Church located at 26th & Madison.

The Lutheran Ministries, Mission of The Good Shepherd has a pantry located at the site of the former thrift store on Avenida Cesar Chavez just east of Summit. The Pantry is managed by Ms. Maria Chavira, 816.472.1117, email: mariaojinaga70@yahoo.com. There have been some weeks where they could not open the pantry, as there was nothing to give out.

Westside Opportunities for Charitable Giving

The WCAN Center serves 30-90 day laborers per day. One of the men usually volunteers to cook lunch and the men eat communally. They may use the kitchen to cook breakfast or dinner if we have food available. When they're working they buy a lot of the food but most of them have not had any substantive work since before Thanksgiving. When we can we help buy snacks for the Ruiz Branch Library.

Note from Julie Robinson, Librarian Irene Ruiz Branch Library

2017 West Pennway

816.701.3487 email: JulieRobinson@kclibrary.org

- Ruiz Branch needs a benefactor to underwrite RuneScape accounts. The costs run about \$90.00 per year - we have about 25 kids who would benefit from having an account paid for - we can purchase one month game cards (\$7.95) or three month game cards (\$22.50) from Target and that way no credit card information is used.
- Ruiz Branch monthly lock-ins are growing in popularity - it is a safe place for teens on a Friday night. In January I had to turn away 5 teens! Food for 25 kids and 5 adults runs about \$100.00 per lock-in - we rely on nachos or hot dogs for the most part due to lower cost - for most of these teens it is the only "full" meal that they have had that day.
- After-school we have a building full of kids who have come here straight from school. They are always hungry. We have given out apples, chips, cookies and candy when we have had them. It would be great to have healthy snacks for them. Again, some of these kids do not get adequate food or healthy foods on a regular basis.
- Some ways for donating -
 - money to used for food purchase for lock-ins or for after-school
 - having pizza or other teen-friendly food delivered to the lock-in
 - snack foods such as apples, grapes, chips or packaged cookies dropped off at the branch
 - boxes of sandwich baggies so that the food can be placed in smaller portion sizes
 - programming of a variety of types
 - volunteering at the branch or at community events

For mental health and family counseling as well as creative arts consider making a gift to **Mattie Rhodes Center or the Mattie Rhodes Art Center & Art Gallery**. <http://www.mattierhodes.org>. Or call 471.2536.

If your passion is affordable housing you may want to make a donation to: **Westside Housing Organization** www.westsidehousing.org. Call them at 421.8048.

Guadalupe Center, Inc. can use items for their various programs that include a teen moms' program, HIV/AIDS education program, youth sports, senior programming, after school and summer school programs. www.guadalupecenters.org Contact them at 421.1015

Legal Aid of Western Missouri 920 Southwest Blvd. (816) 474-9868 <http://www.lawmo.org/>

This agency is threatened with a major reduction in funding from the City. Legal Aid has been at the forefront of the fight against predatory lending and foreclosures citywide. For the Westside specifically Legal Aid has been our champions. They have represented many of the neighborhood's not-for-profits; they handle our legal affairs. Many of our neighbors are dependent upon them for legal advice and actions.

Westside Opportunities for Charitable Giving

Schools:

Budget cuts have also been challenging to our schools. We have 3 schools in our neighborhood. Call them and learn what they need to facilitate our students' success.

- **Primitivo Garcia School.** The principal is Bob Wilcox give him a call at .418.8725
- **Our Lady of Guadalupe School.** 2310 Madison Ave (816) 221-2539 The principal is Connie Bowman,
- **Alta Vista School** 1720 Holly St. Ed Mendez is the principal and can be reached at 471-2582

Tony Aguirre Community Center

In the near future, the Tony Aguirre Community Center Advisory Committee will be installing a fundraising thermometer on the lawn of the Center as they look to raise \$10,000.00 to fund scholarships for youth and families that cannot afford Center fees as well as funds for programming. Contact Committee Chair person Ezekiel Amador at zekeamador@aol.com or 816.616.7619. Look for details of fundraising event Saturday, June 13, 2009.

The Westside CAN Center

In addition to the Day Laborer Program, we serve as a neighborhood resource center. We create, collate and distribute the neighborhood flyers. We maintain 2 community gardens; advocate at City Hall on behalf of the neighborhood, coordinate neighborhood projects (i.e. the chess tables on the lawn of the library) we coordinate and sponsor programs through the WAY (Westside Action for Youth) Coalition made up of representatives of Westside and youth serving agencies as well as interested businesses and individuals. This is the group that conceives and organizes the events, raises the cash, rounds up the in-kind donations, sets up, tears down, stuffs the backpacks, picks up the trash, hauls the hay, stuffs the eggs, cooks the hot dogs, picks the pumpkins and wields the hot glue guns etc for these neighborhood family events:

<u>Event/Activity</u>	<u>Event Date</u>	
• Spring Frolic & Easter Egg Hunt	Saturday, April 11, 2009	
• Westside Summer Movies #1	Friday, June 19, 2009	
• 1 st Ever 4 th of July Kids Parade	Saturday, July 4, 2009	This is new this year
• Westside Summer Movies #2	Friday, July 17, 2009	
• Back To School Pep Rally	Thursday, August 13, 2009	
• Westside Summer Movies #3	Friday, August 21, 2009	
• A Surprise	Friday, September 18, 2009	
• Westside Family Campout	Saturday, September 26, 2009	
• Old Fashioned Family Fall Festival	Saturday, October, 24, 2009	
• Family Halloween Party	Saturday, October 31, 2009	
• Neighborhood Christmas Party	Saturday, December 5, 2009	

We are soliciting donations for all of the above activities, cash and in-kind.

The Westside is a fabulous urban neighborhood, a neighborhood of choice. When you choose to make a donation, please give serious consideration to making a donation here at home to one or more of our neighborhood assets. As WCAN Center Board President and neighbor Ezekiel Amador stated in the Kansas City Star, "We know that you just don't throw money at problems. But we're not asking people to do that. We're asking them to throw money at solutions, proven solutions."

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please feel free to share with family and friends. Thank you in advance for your contributions to making the Westside The Bestside.

Sincerely,

Lynda Callon
Director, Westside CAN Center