

## Special Program Helps Kids Do Better In School



*Jason Moe volunteers his lunch breaks to make sure the MLM BackSnack program succeeds.*

One of the most unusual programs ever operated by MLM has quickly become one of the most successful.

The new “BackSnack” program involves packing 60 children’s backpacks with food and delivering them to needy children at Woodland Elementary School. Although a few hitches have occurred—like youngsters who forget to return the pack for a refill—the results overall have been outstanding.

“It’s worked really well,” noted Faye Cowee, *(please see “Kids Take Home” on next page)*

## Sharing the Blessing: Those Who Receive, Give

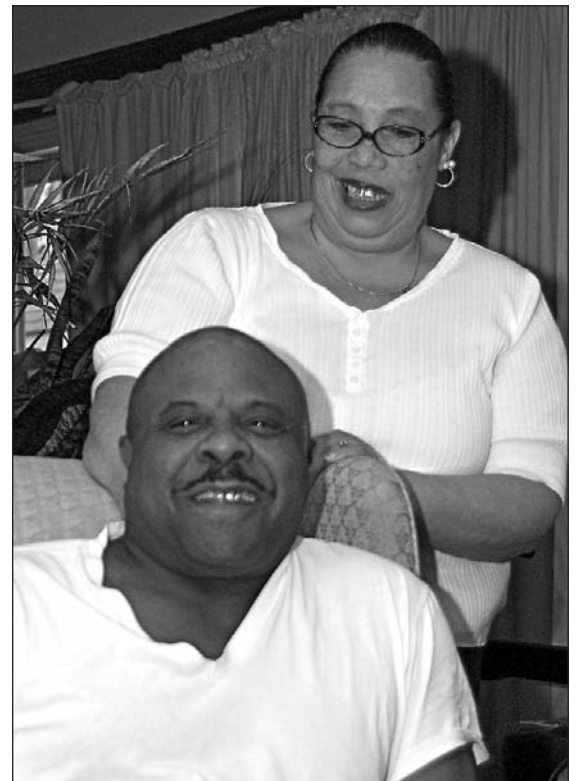
MLM’s efforts to help the homeless and needy of Kansas City often has unexpected ramifications. Carolyn and Mike Meade are good examples.

The Kansas City couple are hard working, proud people who despite a lifetime of steady jobs have experienced tough times. The biggest factor is that after 34 years of employment, Mike’s back finally gave out. Since surgery for a ruptured disc, he is barely able to walk, let alone work. A diabetic, Carolyn is limited in her movement.

The couple also provides a home for one of their three granddaughters. After the girls’ father was fatally wounded as an innocent bystander during a drive-by shooting, the children’s mother has continued to work. Her salary and Mike’s Social Security are hard pressed to sustain the eight of them, however.

A big help comes in the form of Metro Lutheran Ministry, its food pantry and monthly food distribution. Knowing that in today’s economy the lines can be long, Mike and Carolyn often arrive for the 10 a.m. program at 5 a.m.!

But here’s where the story takes a special turn. Mike and Carolyn are coming to MLM for more than food for themselves. Despite their own hardships, the couple makes a special effort to share the blessings by making sure that an elderly shut-in who lives near their home or



*Carolyn and Mike Meade: sharing the blessings of MLM’s Food Pantry.*

other families don’t go without either.

“We make sure that others who can’t get to MLM get some food,” Mike explained. “It’s like *(please see “Volunteering” on next page)*

MLM works hard to minimize expenses.  
Ninety percent of designated gifts go directly to programs.

# Volunteering To “Share The Wealth” Means A Lot

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President Obama said: share the wealth!”

The couple does more. Naturally outgoing, Mike helps at the food distributions and the couple is- also active volunteering at other locations, including their church and with Harvesters. Because of this involvement, they are especially aware of recent increases in demand.

“When we started three years ago,

there weren’t that many people,” Carolyn said. “Now there’s more than 400 at MLM on one day. The line goes from the garage door to the end of the block and around the corner.”

Mike admits that accepting gifts was something that took some getting used to, but both he and Carolyn agree that making ends meet would be impossible without the food. It makes them glad to

volunteer their time, something they’ve been doing for nearly five years.

“It’s our way of paying back,” Mike said. “I know that food really helps us, so if we can help others then that’s our way of saying thanks.”

## Feinstein Program Set For March, April

Metro Lutheran Ministry will hold its eighth annual Feinstein Challenge in March and April. This food-focused fund raising is especially important this year because of the increase in requests for food assistance. Requests for food at our Northland, Kansas City, Kansas and Midtown Community Care Centers are up 50 percent compared to a year ago.

Last year, MLM supporters gave more than \$50,000 to provide food for area homeless and other needy families and individuals. Funds raised during the period can also help generate additional con-

tributions from the Feinstein Foundation.

Alan Shawn Feinstein founded the program and each year contributes \$1 million among hunger fighting agencies nationwide, using the program to help organizations such as MLM to raise funds.

With the Feinstein funds, a total of more than \$100,000 was raised during 2008 in metropolitan Kansas City. Feinstein’s past \$1 million challenges to fight hunger have raised a record \$480 million for agencies nationwide.

## Kids Take Home Food, Bring Back Better Grades

*(continued from Page 1)*

Family Care Center Coordinator. “I anticipate this will grow over the next few months.”

Although the idea of food for hungry kids is appealing, the program has a deeper purpose. Begun in January with Harvesters, the work specifically looks to motivate kids to do better in school by helping to ensure that they have good food over the weekend, when they aren’t at school for lunches.

“The idea is the children who take this food home for the weekend have a better attendance level and their grades increase,” Cowee explained.

All of this is labor intensive, and that’s where MLM’s incredible volunteers enter the picture. Each Friday, volunteers go to Harvesters and pick up the food, which

they bring back to MLM. They load the food into 60 backpacks then other volunteers deliver those to the school. Every Tuesday, volunteers return to the school to collect the empty packs, return them to MLM and clean them for reuse. Most impressive is Jason Moe, a volunteer who has taken it upon himself to provide special care and guidance to make sure nothing falls through the cracks.

Moe, who works as a mechanical engineer not far from MLM, uses his lunch hours to provide the service. A member of Atonement Lutheran Church, he doesn’t find the service a chore at all.

“It’s working well,” he said. “I’m just doing the easy part. It’s organized enough and MLM and Harvesters both run a good shop, so it’s not that hard.”

## Servant Event Set For May 2

Lord of Life Lutheran Church has once again selected MLM for its special Congregational Inner City Servant (CICSE) Event.

This special day will be on Saturday May 2 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.. This event is a service day to the elderly and disabled that cannot perform some simple home-ownership tasks like interior or exterior painting. This is an event for the entire congregation including families.

Last year, ten Lutheran congregations participated and serviced twelve properties. The congregation members did a variety of tasks including painting interior rooms for a grandmother who was a victim of a fire and building a ramp for a severely disabled man that could not leave his house without being carried down the steps by his mother and his sister. These Lutheran congregation members truly were able to show Jesus’ love to people in need.

Individuals, families and friends and small groups are all welcome. Training will be provided. Please contact Suzanne Bartling, MLM at 816-931-0027 or email at [suzannebartling@mlmkc.org](mailto:suzannebartling@mlmkc.org) for more information.

### MLMKC.Org for More!

Don’t forget to visit MLM’s Web site for more information on these and other topics.

One of the newest additions is our frequently updated calendar of events. Find out about fun fund raisers and other special activities at [www.mlmkc.org](http://www.mlmkc.org).

## “Midnight Madness” A Sign of Our Times

On Saturday, Jan. 10, the line started during a cold night at 1:00 a.m. for food that was distributed by volunteers at 10:00 a.m. The financial crisis has caused people to enter our doors who had no idea they would ever have to ask for emergency assistance. As I walk through our waiting area I see the fear and embarrassment in their eyes. We try very hard to put them at ease as we listen to their stories. Our nation's economy is new territory for all of us.

The Bible contains more than 300 verses about the poor, social justice and God's deep concern for both. It is our privilege to assist the poor and help them feel respected. Earlier in the fall we didn't know if our resources (food, dollars, volunteers) would match the sharply increased demand we were experiencing.

We have been extremely grateful to witness an outpouring of support to help us say “yes” to people who are seeking relief



*Lines for food have increased dramatically at MLM in recent months. On a cold night this winter, one line began shortly after midnight for a distribution that started at 10 a.m.*

from their suffering.

We say “Thank you!” to everyone who participates in our mission. Recently I helped two sweet ladies, one of them a frail grandmother, unload a carload of homemade quilts and used clothing for our homeless program. The quilts were made from recycled denim clothing. They were heavy, warm and each of them must have taken many hours to complete. They left feeling the joy that comes from ministering to others, and the people who received their gifts knew that the Lord provides.

The need is great, MLM's tent is large, and we invite you to come join us and share the joy we experience.

Blessings to you,

Jim Glynn, Executive Director

## Extra Clothes? Cheri Wright Knows Just Where They Belong

Cheri Wright decided to go through her closet for a “huge purging” of clothes she no longer wore. A self-professed pack rat, she ended up with enough to almost fill her sport utility vehicle.

Fortunately, her contact with MLM made her aware of Blessings Abound Thrift Store, the fund-raising shop in Overland Park that benefits MLM and

Lutheran urban Ministry Agency.

“It's a really good program for helping our programs,” she said. “And they have a lot of nice things. I saw a lot of people shopping there.”

Cheri admitted that she had years of clothes, enough that it took several trips between her vehicle and the shop. Otherwise, the effort was gratifying.

“It was painless,” she laughed. “You just go through your closet. It feels so good; it's like getting a haircut. I absolutely recommend it.”

For more information on Blessings Abound, visit the store at 9620 Nall Ave. or call 913-648-0700.

## Spring Fling Scheduled for March 28

The annual MLM Spring Fling will be especially fun for children with clowns and games and magicians. This event is scheduled on Saturday, March 28 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Bethany Lutheran Church 9101 Lamar, Overland Park. The annual silent auction, bake and craft sales, pancake breakfast, nachos and lunch will be additional fun activities.

Tickets are \$4 in advance and \$5 at the door. Children 4-12 are only \$2. This is the major fundraising event for the MLM Christmas Store which helps 1,000 families have a merrier Christmas.

Help is needed to set up the event on Friday, March 27 from 4-7 p.m. and to work the booths on March 28. Also, many items are needed for all the areas, especially the silent auction. Please visit the MLM website to sign up to volunteer and indicate what you are donating at [www.mlmkc.org](http://www.mlmkc.org). All donations should be dropped off at Bethany Lutheran on Friday, March 27 from 5-7 p.m..

For more information please contact Suzanne Bartling at 816-931-0027 or email at [suzannebartling@mlmkc.org](mailto:suzannebartling@mlmkc.org)

## MLM Seeks VISTA Position

MLM is seeking a full-time AmeriCorps VISTA worker for one year.

The position will be involved in volunteer recruitment and coordination, participation in fundraising activities and maintenance of MLM's donor database.

AmeriCorps VISTA is the national service program designed specifically to fight poverty. VISTA members commit to serve full-time for a year at a nonprofit organization or local government agency, working to fight illiteracy, improve health services, create businesses, strengthen community groups, and much more.

For more information on Metro Lutheran Ministry's VISTA position, call MLM at (816) 285-3117.

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*"with God all things are possible." —Matthew 19:26*

## Ten Years of Service Illustrate MLM's Community Care

If you've been around MLM long, chances are you've met Faye Cowee. And chances are, you've been impressed.

Among other things, Faye is an excellent example that good things come in small packages. Just over five feet tall, she brings a command that can snap a group of young volunteers to attention with a word. Her insight into poverty and need

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***"Just providing those services and helping people gives us a tremendous lift."***

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was earned through a lifetime of community service.

Officially MLM's Community Care Center Coordinator, Faye is one of the key people who know how to find answers that can help clients who need a job, an apartment or just some food to get through a rough patch.

A veteran of MLM for nearly 11 years, she also served with the Mid-America Assistance Coalition and had worked with the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program. She began her career in social services in St.

Louis before moving to Kansas City and working in Section 8 housing and as a Head Start family services worker.

"I had a lot under my belt," she laughed.

While difficult at times, the work is also rewarding. "It's a great joy and pleasure to work for Metro Lutheran Ministry," she said. "I think what we do for the clients and working so hard for the poor is what keeps you coming in each day and what keeps you in your chair. Just providing those services and helping people gives us a tremendous lift."

One example involved a woman with Parkinson's disease. A few days after helping her, Faye received a note in the mail. It was difficult to read because of the crooked writing but it was clear that the woman had wanted to say, "thank you."

"This is what keeps me at my desk," she said. "That and the wonderful hugs and thank yous."

Although she will be missed, Faye is quick to insist that no one is irreplaceable. "New blood, new thoughts, new ideas are good," she said.



*MLM's "go-to gal," Faye Cowee is retiring in February.*

Faye and her husband Keith will be retiring to near Linn Valley, Ks., a small community south of Louisburg. They will travel, including on their motorcycle, and spend time with their four daughters, 16 grandchildren and one great grandchild.

A retirement reception will be held for Faye from 2 to 4 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 27 at the MLM main offices, 3031 Holmes.