



AHC Inc. - The Challenge of Providing Affordable Housing

By Kathy Desmond

Too many low-income renters are a job loss and missed rental payment away from homelessness. The problem is real and poor people have few choices.

Rising rental prices in Arlington are making housing unaffordable for many families. County officials estimated in 2009 that over 10,000 affordable rental units were lost in Arlington during the previous seven years – a 50% drop. In 2008, the portion of the median income spent to rent an average apartment in Arlington was 64%, up from 52% in 2000. One pressure on the rental market that is reducing vacancies and increasing rents is the number of rental units converted to condos. Another is gentrification.

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Editor's Note:

The spring edition of *The Advocate* focuses on the issue of affordable housing. Although the demand for moderately priced rental units and homes far exceeds the supply, there are still a few rays of hope in the Northern Virginia area. This issue includes articles about AHC Inc., BRAVO and VOICE, organizations that are trying to make a difference in the lives of people who are only one paycheck away from losing their apartment or home. Please be sure to read about our new Social Justice and Outreach Minister, Greg Staff; updates on Haiti, RCIA, Religious Education and our featured ministry - GLFF (Gay, Lesbian, Friends and Family).

-- Paula Cruickshank, Editor, *The Advocate*

The Arlington Housing Corporation (AHC) - since its establishment in 1975 - is committed to providing affordable housing and its mission has grown over the years as the need for rental units continues to exceed the supply. AHC expanded its work to provide homes for low- and moderate-income families in surrounding areas in Virginia and Baltimore.

For example, the City of Alexandria has seen dramatic declines in market affordable rental units since 2000. As a result of increasing real estate costs and development pressures over the past ten years, the city faces a severe shortage of affordable housing. The ability of moderate income people to buy homes also has diminished, even though Alexandria provides limited loan assistance for people with 60-to-80 percent of median income.

OLQP Members of AHC

Several OLQP members played leadership roles in AHC: Jenny Davis, a founder and long time Board member, was recognized in 2009 when AHC named the new condo complex on South 17th Street Davis Place in her honor; C.C. Jenkins currently serves on AHC's Board. In the past, Andres Tobar, Patricia McGrady and Kathy Desmond served on the Board and Cecilia Cassidy on staff.

CC Jenkins, member of OLQP since 1978, is currently Treasurer of AHC Inc. and has served on the Board for five years. He credits his parents with instilling in him a desire to give back.

What AHC Does.

A nonprofit developer of affordable housing, AHC now has 35 properties with more than 4,300 rental apartments (23 of these properties are inside the beltway: 20 in Arlington and 3 in Falls Church). It provides quality homes for 2,600 families in Arlington. AHC also offers a variety of programs, including homeownership opportunities and home improvement services for homeowners, and services for residents, including after-school programs, tutoring and adult workshops. (See www.ahcinc.org for more information).



CC Jenkins at the Davis Place with members of Mrs. Davis' family

AHC purchases and renovates or builds from the ground up apartment buildings to increase the number of affordable units. There are several multifamily developments near OLQP that provide decent, affordable housing. They include:

The Shelton, a new 94-apartment building on Shirlington Road, opened in January 2009. It replaced and nearly quadrupled the 22 units of the aging Fairview Manor, which AHC purchased in 1982.

Davis Place, a building with ten new condos, was made possible by the gift of an old single family home on S. 17th St. *The Macedonian*, on Shirlington Road, has just been completed and is currently taking applications for the new apartments. Built in partnership with Macedonia Baptist Church on property sold by Thaddenia West, a founder of OLQP, to Macedonia Baptist Church for affordable housing, it has 36 new units, a green roof and underground parking. (If you have real estate to donate, or are interested in partnering to build affordable housing in Arlington, please call John Welsh at 703-486-0626 x113.)

The Jordan, located in North Arlington, has 90 new apartments nearing completion on Wilson Blvd. near Ballston. It replaces a 24-unit apartment building purchased by AHC in 1990 to stem the tide of condo conversions. The new building was made possible by a land swap with a commercial developer, JBG Corp. Residents can walk to the Ballston metro stop.

The Gates of Ballston consists of 464 renovated apartments in 43 buildings and a new community center. It received a 2009 Historic Preservation award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

John Welsh, Director of Multifamily Housing, says that AHC is looking at



The Shelton



Davis Place

Arlington County initiatives on Columbia Pike Revitalization, energy efficiency, and transit-oriented design for planning future developments.

Application Process

Persons in need of affordable rental housing can apply for openings in AHC properties. See www.ahcinc.org for properties with available units and addresses and contact information for each. Some properties maintain a short waiting list of eligible persons and families. People should contact the property manager at a specific property for more information. AHC provides or accepts rent subsidies at most properties to fill the affordability gap between income and rent.

Home Improvements

AHC offers services for low- and moderate-income homeowners, such as low-interest loans and grants for home renovations, grants for emergency repairs, and funds to improve accessibility for physically challenged homeowners. Last year, AHC completed 18 home improvement projects to improve living conditions and accessibility for handicapped customers. It also helped 14 moderate-income families finance mortgages. Contact Jimmie Jones 703-486-0626 x 124 for more information.

Volunteer Opportunities.

AHC's Resident Services program helps residents of its properties meet many challenges – among them economic, social, transportation, language difficulties and the struggle to make ends meet. The Resident Services program serves more than 2,000 children and adults annually in seven service centers in Arlington. Resident Services provide many opportunities, from teen tutoring to after-school activities to senior activities, to help residents improve their lives.

The After-School program provides a nurturing and educational environment for more than 125 elementary school children. It focuses on building literacy and math skills along with fun and snacks. Volunteers are needed to help with homework and with learning to read.

The Teen Tutoring program is assisting 130 teens to improve their academic and life skills. Tutors are paired with one student through the school year in a one-



Teen Tutoring program: 80% of the participants go on to college

on-one mentoring relationship that helps keep students in school and aim for college. A sign of success: more than 80% of the teen program students go to college.

Adult programs included English language classes and workshops on parenting, finances and nutrition. Craft classes and family field trips are also offered. Senior programs include field trips to cultural sites and luncheons on health topics.

The Resident Services program relies on



Resident children at Fort Henry sharing AHC Community Thanksgiving Dinner

partnerships with many community groups and volunteers. You can help by: donating funds; providing specific materials such as books, games and supplies for after school activities; and volunteering your time. If interested, contact Jennifer Cavaliere at 703-486-0626 x 154. AHC can take monetary donations online through its website.

Advocacy

AHC urges county residents to contact members of Congress to preserve HOME and CBDG funding and to let Arlington County officials know of their support for affordable housing policies and specific projects. †

Jack Sullivan contributed to this article. Kathy & Jack are Advocate feature writers.

BRAVO: Who We Are and Why Our Work is Important

By Susan Korfanty

Buyers and Renters' Arlington Voice (BRAVO) is a private non-profit corporation that assists tenants with housing issues and advocates for them for the preservation of affordable housing. It is the only organization that works directly with tenants. By preserving affordable housing, BRAVO and Arlington County are maintaining the economic and ethnic diversity that is so much of Arlington's character.

BRAVO was formed in 1999 by community leaders who worked to prevent the displacement of tenants in a moderate income property called ARNA Valley. The activists were unsuccessful, in part, because there was no structure in place to advocate for tenants before a redevelopment is underway. BRAVO was formed to be the structure to empower tenants to resist displacement from their homes and to assist Arlington tenants in addressing their housing conditions and other quality-of-life issues that affect them, particularly as redevelopment and gentrification pressures grow in the Arlington market place.

In the ten years since it was organized, BRAVO has assisted tenants in the Patrick Henry Apts., in the Quebec Apts., in the Columbia Heights Apts., in the Buckingham Apts., in the Taylor Place Apts., in the Fort Meyer Heights area, in the Ballston Place II Apts., and in several other places in the County. In some projects, BRAVO has helped save affordable housing units; in other projects, BRAVO has helped the residents receive relocation assistance when they were being displaced. In addition, the organization has helped tenants to redress their grievances with respect to their apartment conditions and dwelling units.

BRAVO's work continues to be of vital importance to Arlington. Unlike many jurisdictions, the majority of occupied

housing units are occupied by renters (57%). Although we are a prosperous county with a median household income of \$96,806, one in five households have an income of less \$50,000. Of these, 73% are tenants. In addition to this economic diversity, Arlington has significant ethnic diversity. Twenty percent of the population is minority. The availability of affordable housing is critical to both the minority and low income population, and impacts the entire community.

Current Focus

Most recently, BRAVO has been advocat-



ing for and encouraging tenants to advocate for the preservation of affordable housing on Columbia Pike. This unique neighborhood contains 21% of the County's population and is the center of Arlington's ethnic and economic diversity. According to a study by the Brookings Institute, it is one of the most diverse areas in the country with immigrants from 128 countries. Most significantly, the Pike contains 6,200 market rate affordable units that could be permanently lost to development.

For several years, Arlington County has been studying how to guide the redevelopment of Columbia Pike in the Columbia Pike Land Use and Housing Initiative, with particular emphasis on preserving affordable housing in this area. BRAVO has been informing tenants about this study and engaging them in this process. The County will be presenting the results of its study in late June. BRAVO is continuing to inform tenants and encourage their participation in the charette, which typically involve municipal officials, developers and residents.

Day-to-Day Activities

BRAVO does direct outreach to tenants. In the past 2 years, staff has worked in 21 complexes, which are at risk for development. The organization meets with tenant groups and has been in contact with hundreds of tenants either by door-to-door canvassing or by tenants contacting BRAVO for assistance. When contacted by a tenant, staff either intervenes directly to resolve the problem or refers the tenant to the appropriate resource.

BRAVO also provides information to tenants that they otherwise might not receive. It has distributed over 5,000 informational flyers to tenants which contain information about housing grants, affordable rental housing opportunities in Arlington, resolving maintenance problems, the application process, and steps to take when moving out of an apartment, and other matters important to Arlington tenants. Most of this material was prepared and translated into Spanish by BRAVO staff. The material not prepared by BRAVO is posted on the County's website. However, BRAVO prints and distributes the material to individual apartments so that tenants who have no computers or are unaware of the online resource have the information.

In addition, BRAVO's staff and Directors serve on the Housing Commission, the Plenary Group of the Columbia Pike Initiative, and the Implementation Task Force of the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program. The organization is also active in the Alliance for Housing Solutions, the National Low Income Housing Coalition, and the Arlington Interfaith Council. BRAVO is also a member of the Arlington County Civic Federation and the Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization. †

*Susan Korfanty,
Executive Director of BRAVO
and a member of OLQP*

Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement -- VOICE

by Veronica Dabney

By late 2008, homeowners were losing their homes at an unprecedented pace in municipalities all over the country. Prince William County, Virginia, was one of the worst in the United States for foreclosures.

Families in communities like Georgetown South in Prince William County were rearranging their household budgets, foregoing unnecessary expenditures that, in the past, would not have been considered extravagances, but now must be used to pay the mortgage. Many had tried to modify their loans, a tedious process that ended too often in failure.

On April 10, 2011, a 250-plus-member contingent of residents of the Georgetown South community took to the street to protest the failure of the government and the banks to assist, or at least work with homeowners on the brink of losing their homes. The frustrated residents were mostly members of the faith communities of Mt. Olive Baptist Church—Woodbridge, Bull Run Unitarian Universalists—Manassas, and Holy Family Catholic Church—Dale City.* The residents are now more hopeful that they can negotiate new lending practices and get assistance from their representatives in Washington. The churches were all member organizations of Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE).

VOICE, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the oldest and largest citizens' organizing network in the United States. In 2008, VOICE came together with interested faith communities for its founding public action at First Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Dumfries, VA. What emerged from that first meeting, according to VOICE leadership, was a "broad-based, multi-racial, multi-faith, multi-county, strictly non-partisan citizens' power organization dedicated to addressing social justice issues that affect the lives of low- and middle-income residents in four Northern Virginia jurisdictions:

Prince William, Fairfax, and Arlington counties and the city of Alexandria. The main social justice issues include affordable housing, healthcare, and immigration.

VOICE currently has 47 member institutions, representing more than 125,000 people. In Arlington, the churches committed to VOICE activism include not only OLQP, but Lomax AME Zion, Macedonia Baptist, St. Charles, and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington. The organization is funded by member organizations, a few grants, and dues paid by member churches, synagogues and mosques. There are three paid organizers who work out of their homes, and a leadership team composed of lay and clergy from the various faith communities, who set the agenda. They are voted in for 3-year terms.

While working with faith communities in Arlington, Fairfax, Prince William, and the city of Alexandria, VOICE found that each area had its own unique challenges. DeeDee Tostanoski, a member of OLQP and VOICE, pointed out that where Prince William County's affordable housing issues are about the foreclosures mentioned earlier, the housing problems in Alexandria are very different.

For example, St. Joseph's church in Alexandria on Columbus St., became involved with the problems surrounding the gradual demolition of the crumbling low-income housing in the neighborhood. The project is scheduled to be completed over a 5-year period, so some residents will not be moving out immediately. St. Joseph, with the assistance of VOICE, found out that with the focus mainly on demolition and construction, the management company had begun to neglect the routine maintenance needs of the residents in the old buildings, such as backed up drains, mold and bed bugs. VOICE was able to help organize the residents to approach management about the problems and begin the process of getting them solved.

Another such example given by DeeDee occurred in South Arlington when VOICE initially thought that affordable housing would be the main concern along the Columbia Pike corridor. But after VOICE members knocked on a lot of doors on the Pike, they found that for many residents a top priority at that time was securing a bus route that would take them to the newly relocated offices of the county's Department of Human Services (DHS).

Soon after, VOICE and representatives from the community met with County Board Chairman Chris Zimmerman. After listening to stories of the hardships faced by residents after the Department of Human Services (DHS) move, Zimmerman assured the group that, "We're going to fix this." Subsequently, in mid-2010, an Arlington Transit bus line (ART 45) was added that goes to the new DHS offices at Sequoia Plaza on Washington Boulevard.

Sometimes VOICE members are recruited through one-on-one contact. At other times, VOICE begins by arranging a relational meeting with members of an interested faith community. If they can eventually get a critical mass, then public actions can be organized like the ones in Prince William, Alexandria or even the one with Chris Zimmerman and the new bus line.

How ever a group is eventually engaged, VOICE is committed to organizing local communities to increase the funds dedicated to affordable housing, reducing home foreclosures, and identifying public land on which to build affordable homes. (If you'd like to get involved or for more information, visit the VOICE website at <http://www.voice-iaf.org/> or, email at: VOICEofNorthernVa@gmail.com *View more information about the Prince William VOICE action at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=troUapniEv4>) †

Veronica is an Advocate feature writer and OLQP member.

Spotlight on... Greg Staff

by Jack Sullivan



Greg Staff, the OLQP Social Justice and Outreach Minister, has an unusual pedigree on several fronts. First, he is an Arlingtonian, born and bred. Second, he lives in Arlington Village where he is close enough to church to walk to work. Third — and most important — he has experience in both the policy arena and in direct action for the poor.

While Greg's current duties include assisting people pay their rent and utility bills, overseeing the weekly distribution of food parcels, and dealing with a multitude of individual personal problems, he has a strong background in policy level activities.

For more than four years - 2004 to 2009 - Greg was a Senior Legislative Assistant to Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez, Democrat of Illinois, one of the strongest voices in Congress for immigration reform. There Greg dealt with national issues relating to foreign affairs, defense, environment, energy, and science and technology, as well as immigration reform. Subsequently, he became Policy Director for America's Voice, a non-governmental organization advocating for immigrants at the national and state level.

Although his surname is of German origin, Greg's parents came to the U.S. from Panama and he has native fluency in Spanish. As a result of other family members residing in France, he also speaks French and was among the translators for Pere Luckson during the Medor pastor's recent visit. Greg attended grade school in Arlington, is a graduate of Bishop O'Connell High School, and holds a BA degree from the University of Virginia.

Baptized in Arlington's St. Charles Borromeo Parish and a longtime parishioner there, Greg has become intimately familiar with OLQP since starting his new post. "In the months I have been here I have been impressed by the level of dedication exhibited by so many," he said. "The parish clearly attracts social justice-oriented people who are willing to give wholeheartedly of their time and talents."

One of Greg's ambitions for his work at OLQP is to enhance the work of the Hispanic Community Issues Committee. The parish boasts several notable Hispanic leaders and organizers, so Greg wants to work with them to make the committee a greater voice in the life of the parish. He hopes to mobilize the people that attend the 1 p.m. Spanish Mass as the core of expanded activities on behalf of Latinos.

Although the recent census has shown that the Hispanic population in Arlington has dropped during the past 10 years - likely the result of increasing housing costs - the needs of that community have risen steadily and shown no signs of leveling off.

Does he miss working on issues with a national scope? Greg explained his motivation in moving from national issues to grassroots action. "Catholic social teaching stresses that we should work at both: on policy and in practical activities."

At the policy level, Greg pointed out that he continues to be active in VOICE, the interfaith organization that advocates for social justice. The focus of his day-to-day efforts is epitomized by the constant phone calls and visits he receives asking for help. "The problems are unrelenting," he noted.

On the clear differences between the world of policy and the world of practical action, Greg is clearly comfortable working in both. †

Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. ... Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. ...

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. ...

Rights and Responsibilities

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. ...

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation....

Solidarity

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. ...

Care for God's Creation

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith.

Promoting a Just Economy

by Greg Staff

“The budget is a moral document.” No doubt we have all heard and read this statement in the news often, particularly in our current political and economic climate. But what does it really mean? My brief four months working at OLQP have given me a richer understanding of its meaning and why we, as followers of Christ, must bring this message to those we have elected and who ultimately decide whether or not our nation’s budget lives up to being moral.

It is an interesting coincidence that I began my work as Social Justice and Outreach Minister (SJOM) at OLQP at the same time our nation’s budget battle began to brew. What brought me to OLQP, and indeed back to taking my faith seriously some years ago, were our Church’s teachings on social justice and our parish’s commitment to them. The Church’s beliefs in matters regarding the poor are an oasis in a desert of materialism, consumerism and unbridled individualism. They fly in the face of these values and of so much injustice against the marginalized in our own nation and across the world.

In my short time working at OLQP, I have seen the intense need for the preferential option for the poor put into action right here in our own community. I think we are all aware that there are many people in our midst who are suffering. Yet, there is nothing like seeing a person in need face-to-face, hearing about the personal struggle to keep a roof over one’s head, to feed one’s family, or to keep the electricity running.

In the few months that I have carried out our emergency financial assistance program and witnessed ministries like our food pantry and Matt 25 in action, I have seen the human face of our economic crisis. Given the budget proposals for the remainder of fiscal year 2011 and for 2012, it appears that our policymakers have rarely seen the same face. So what are we as Catholics called to do?

Shortly after coming on board here at OLQP, I attended the [2011 Social Ministry Gathering](#) that brings together clergy, lay ministers, leaders, and volunteers who carry out the Church’s social teaching in their parishes and dioceses. The theme of this year’s gathering was “Protecting Human Life: Promoting a Just Economy.”

I found this theme appropriate because it seems that our nation’s policymakers often forget the impact of their decisions on the economy and how the budget has a direct link to the ability of the most vulnerable in society to actually survive.

What I found most valuable about the social ministry gathering was the visit with our elected representatives in Congress. When colleagues from the Diocese and I visited the congressional delegation from Virginia to ask that they

20% reduction in food stamps, radical cuts in Medicaid and drastic changes to Medicare, to name but a few. In my mind, the necessity of these programs has been reinforced in my time as SJOM where I have seen a single father rely on WIC to help care for his twin infants, families who supplement their food stamps through our food pantry ministry, or the working poor who are not eligible for Medicare and come to OLQP for emergency assistance to pay their medical bills. These are examples of why we must preserve social safety net programs rather than weaken or eliminate them.

The lesson I have taken from the political debates over federal, state and local budgets and my experience as SJOM is that we, as people of faith, must both seek justice for the poor and carry out works of charity. We cannot walk with

...we, as people of faith, must both seek justice
for the poor and carry out works of charity.

not balance the budget on the backs of the poor, we conveyed the important message of our faith, namely that a society must show solidarity with the poor. As Catholic social teaching states, “the poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation,” and “we are called to look at public policy decisions in terms of how they affect the poor.”

Recently a group of prominent Catholic academics and leaders released a letter addressed to the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, John Boehner, driving home this point. The letter states that the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2012, which was passed in the House, “guts long-established protections for the most vulnerable members of society.”

The letter gives a glimpse of these protections and how they are being decimated: \$500 million slashed from the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, a

just one of these “two feet of social action.” We must remove the causes of long-term social problems, but it is also critical that we help individuals meet their present needs.

While we advocate for the preservation of WIC, food stamps, Medicare and Medicaid and so many other vital programs, we must also alleviate growing food insecurity through our food pantry ministry, help struggling parents provide for their infants through the Gabriel Project, and help those who need to maintain a roof over their heads or to pay utilities or medical bills through our emergency financial assistance. If we continue to walk with these two feet of social action, we will do our part to ensure that the budgets of our nation, our states, our cities and counties are indeed moral documents and live up to our faith’s social teachings. †

Pere Luckson Visits OLQP

By Kathy Desmond and Dr. Sue Carlson



Pere Luckson, pastor of St. Joseph, our sister parish in Medor, Haiti, visited OLQP in April 2011. He greets everyone at OLQP and thanks us for our spiritual and financial support of his parish. He also thanks OLQP's Haiti committee for its diligent work. All members of our parish are in his heart and in the hearts of the people of Medor. They pray for us and for Fr. Tim at daily Mass in Haiti. While in Arlington, Pere Luckson participated in many OLQP activities and spoke at all six Masses over the April 9/10 weekend. He also participated in the children's interactive Stations of the Cross and went to many meetings to discuss the various programs supported by OLQP. Here is some of the information he shared during his visit.

Two aftershocks of the January 2010 earthquake destroyed the primary school and severely damaged the church and many homes around Medor. Small repairs have been made but these have been patchwork and much more needs to be done.

A new primary school will be built with stone, sand, rebar and cement. In order to start the construction, high-quality sand must be imported into Medor because the sand in Medor is of poor quality. The engineer thinks that the use of Medor's sand in the construction of the old primary school and the church contributed to the destruction from the earthquake. He and Pere Luckson are determined to use only high quality supplies for building the new primary school, and every possible precaution will be taken to make the building earthquake-resistant..

The high quality sand can be obtained from a site about 25 km from Medor. The parish needs a lot of sand (240 truck loads) and it is very heavy. When trying to carry some of this sand in the parish truck, the vehicle broke down. Pere Luckson and the engineer looked for a dual transmission, 4-wheel-drive rental truck to bring the sand to Medor, but there is no such rental truck in Haiti. They are trying to find one in the Dominican Republic. If anyone has any ideas on how we can transport good sand up the mountain to Medor, please contact Sue Carlson at MarySusanCarlson@gmail.com.

St. Joseph parish on June 24 will celebrate a high school graduation, the first ever for the community. Ten students will graduate: five girls and five boys. All ten hope to go to college. In order to be eligible to apply to university, a high school graduate must pass Haiti's national exam. There are more university applicants than spaces, so the universities use grades as well as test scores in determining whom to admit. Some families in Medor may be able to pay for a public university, but none can afford a private university. In Haiti, neither the government nor the universities provide scholarships. The OLQP Haiti Ministry is exploring various options to help provide a partial scholarship for a high school graduate for the College of Our Lady in Medor.

Having a secondary school in Medor is a major plus for the community. A recent study shows that only 3% of rural Haitian children are able to finish the sixth grade. This demonstrates the amazing accomplishment of having students graduate from high school. Equally impressive is Medor is the only location in the rural mountain region of Haiti that has a secondary school. Pere Luckson is thankful for the dedication to education shown by the people of Medor and OLQP.

Pere Luckson told us that cholera has eased since January, in part due to the OLQP/Remote Area Medical team's visit to Medor in December. The team taught school children, people who came to Mass and patients at the clinic the basics of how to prevent and treat cholera. The distribution of the oral rehydration packets and bleach provided by OLQP was a tremendous help, too. From October to January an estimated 60 people died from cholera in St. Joseph parish. Since January, there have been no deaths from cholera. With the start of the rainy season, cholera may become more of a problem so Pere Luckson, the clean water committee, the Sisters and teachers will continue their public education campaign concerning clean water and sanitation.

Another important aid in the campaign to prevent cholera and other water-related illness is the recent introduction of the klorfasil program in Medor. OLQP provided 2,000 klorfasil powdered bleach dispensers. One twist of the lid releases the exact amount of powdered bleach to sterilize five gallons of water. The dispensers will be distributed to families who already have a bucket with spigot and lid. These 2,000 families will give us feedback so we can determine if more klorfasil products should be purchased for the other families in the parish.

Pere Luckson told us about the visit of Dan Marks, a hydrologist who studied the clean water program in Medor. He determined that five of the six capped springs in the parish are contaminated with fecal bacteria, even though the water appears cleaner than before. Dan informed Pere Luckson and the clean water committee that everyone in the parish should use the in-home, five-gallon water chlorination system because this is the only way to assure that water is free of bacteria.

Luckson, Continues on page 7

Medor Tree Project

By Gerry Stoopman

The problem of deforestation in Haiti is one of the most serious environmental concerns of the Western Hemisphere. Years of cutting down forests throughout the country has left only 2% of the original tree cover and caused considerable damage to hillsides and water sources. Medor is a remote rural village of 40,000 people in Haiti's Mountains, 30 miles northeast of Port-au-Prince. Medor, like most of Haiti, is extremely poor. There is no local government, no electricity, no running water or sewage system, no postal or telephone service or trash removal. The community is spread out across 74 square miles, spanning several mountain ranges, and St. Joseph's parish includes 12 outlying chapels.

The predominant fuels used in Medor for cooking are firewood and charcoal. Over the years this has led to even more severe deforestation. The region's deforestation results in soil erosion and mudslides, threatening people and buildings as well as harmful indirect effects on the water table, climate and local public health. Land degradation of Medor's hillsides exposes the community to flooding, runoff, polluted water sources and reduced agricultural productivity, all of which are aggravated by hurricanes and tropical storms that strike the island annually.

By promoting forest regrowth, a proposed 3-year 3 million tree project in Medor will help rehabilitate watersheds damaged by deforestation. Aquifers will be restored as rainfall is able to percolate into the soil instead of running off. This will improve water quality at sources that the community is working to restore, improving the general health of the people. The project, for which grant requests have been sent out, will be accomplished through community-based reforestation projects in Medor and the twelve outlying chapels.

By promoting diverse tree regrowth greater income generation will result, from fast-growing wood for construction

Luckson, Continued from page 6

Collecting water from the capped springs may give a false sense of security. Dan told Pere Luckson that the water committee in St. Joseph parish is doing a fantastic job of disseminating information about clean water and sanitation to the 40,000 people spread over 74 square miles. Dan said that of all the places he has worked in Haiti, the people of Medor are the most informed about this.

Pere Luckson spoke to us at Mass about the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus. He reminded us that human existence is made up of deaths and resurrections: "being born means we are already starting to die." Pere Luckson told us that each day he makes life and death choices for himself and for others. He reminded us that living in itself is to fight death, to choose life. He thanked us for always being attentive and generous to the people of St. Joseph parish in Medor. The witness of this solidarity is the witness of the forces of life against the forces of death. It is the witness of the love of God, who needs the hearts and hands of all people to come forward. †

and cooking fuel, and fruit and other tree commodities (cacao, coffee) that will generate sustainable annual sales and income for local farmers. The project will also consist of an educational component, training Medor residents in sustainable tree harvesting methods that will promote future tree growth. As part of this training program, OLQP delegations have introduced the people of Medor to solar ovens and rocket stoves (a very fuel-efficient type of wood stove).

The idea for a reforestation project came directly from the people of Medor after a participatory process of determining their development priorities. They have made attempts at reforestation with their own limited resources, including a tree nursery, but progress has been slow primarily because of a lack of funding for seedlings and training.

As a prelude to the larger grant-funded tree project, a pilot program is in its second year, funded by generous OLQP parishioners, the OLQP Haiti Committee, and Trees for the Future, OLQP's technical partner for the Medor tree project. A Trees for the Future Haiti-based agronomist trained two Medor residents to be tree technicians to tend to the tree nursery, and 25 people received training in agro-forestry techniques.

In 2010, 60,000 trees were planted by 100 volunteers from Medor and the surrounding area in two tree-planting working parties (during the two rainy seasons) which are called kombits. In 2011, 100,000 trees will be planted, 50,000 in

Medor and 50,000 in Potmo, one of the outlying chapels. In Potmo, a tree technician was trained for the Potmo tree nursery and an additional 25 people will be trained in agro-forestry techniques. You can see the progress being made by going to the Trees for the Future website (www.plant-trees.org), clicking on Projects, and checking GPS Monitoring – Google Earth for Haiti.

In order to ensure the future sustainability of tree planting operations, the tree technician will provide advice to any Medor school group that is interested in tree planting. Once Remote Area Medical (RAM) has established a RAM Ranger program for Medor teenagers, Trees for the Future will provide advice for the agro-forestry component of that program. Pere Luckson will also have the tree technician make periodic announcements after Sunday Mass.

If grant funding is received for the larger tree project, this will result in sufficient vegetation to eventually provide a tree canopy amounting to 50% of the entire area around Medor. This would stabilize hillsides, reducing the risk of erosion, landslides, land degradation, damage to buildings, and danger to people. Water tables in the area would begin to regenerate, and the water quality flowing from both rehabilitated and natural springs will be dramatically improved. In addition, the Medor community would begin to sustainably produce marketable forest products including wood for construction and charcoal, biodiesel, fruit, coffee, and cacao. †

GLFF Ministry Welcomes All

By Paula Cruickshank

Ministries abound at OLQP. If you leaf through the handbook, there are many ministries related to Liturgy and Worship, Religious Education and Spiritual Development, or Social Justice and Christian Service. Among these ministries, however, is one that is unlikely to be found in most other parishes in the country: Gay, Lesbian, Friends & Family (GLFF).

"We try to be a witness to the parish ... just by being present and part of the community so that we put a face to who we are," noted Mark Cole, an active GLFF member.

The ministry does this in several ways. GLFF is one of the Sunday breakfast crews

Sanctuary. These same squares became part of the giant AIDS quilt laid out on the mall in Washington, DC. Claire noted that ministry members also distributed red ribbons at church to commemorate World AIDS Day on December 1. "It was truly a 'teaching ministry,'" Claire said. She recounted one memorable evening when the ministry was honored at what is now the Mellon Auditorium in Washington, D.C. They had been chosen by the Northern Virginia AIDS Ministry (NOVAM) to receive an award for activism. Claire believes OLQP was the first church in the metropolitan area to have such a ministry.

"Well, there we were, and in our midst [was] dear Father Ed Kelly, ** in Roman

power to its overall philosophy, which he called the "community of everybody."

This inclusive atmosphere can be reassuring to parents, noted Tony Cocove, recalling one mother and father attending Mass a few weeks earlier. "I think they left here saying ... 'my son's in good hands. My son is getting the Catholic faith that he needs in a good environment.'"

Tony also stressed the "Friends and Family" part of the ministry because the group welcomes everyone and is not limited to the GLBT community. "Having the parents [and] friends really gives you the dimension of feeling 'you are where you need to be,'" Tony noted.

We work to build an affirming parish community where all people experience God's promise and love. We host educational and awareness-raising activities, provide support ... and provide advocacy on social justice issues.

and packs Brown Bag lunches for the Shirlington Employment and Education Center (SEEC) after its monthly meetings. It hosts educational and awareness-raising activities, one year doing a presentation on diversity as part of the Lenten Stone Soup series. As its mission statement reads, the ministry generally provides support to the Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgender (GLBT) community, their friends and families.

GLFF's roots trace back to 1994, when about a dozen parishioners asked Father Jim Healy* if they could form an HIV/AIDS committee and he gave permission. "The sole purpose was to tell folks what AIDS was and was not. There was so much misinformation!" noted Claire Randall, one of the original members.

Claire recounted how for several years the committee was able to display squares of the AIDS quilt in the

collar. The place went wild with applause – to see this elderly Irish priest and his parishioners taking an active role."

The AIDS ministry over time diminished in membership and changed course. "We wanted to be like a support group so if there were people in the parish – whether they were parents or an individual struggling with identity or how the church dealt with it - we could be there for each other," Mark explained.

GLFF now has monthly gatherings, alternating business meetings with social get-togethers. At its May 2 business meeting, some GLFF members remained afterwards to offer their thoughts about the ministry and what it means to them.

"A lot of GLFF members will tell you that Queen of Peace was their last stop on their way out of the church," Rich Strimel noted. Rich attributed OLQP's staying

While to some members, the "Friends and Family" in the ministry represent the family that they wish they had, others – like Mark – stressed "I don't need them to replace my parents. It makes me feel like there is this humanity and it's Christ and that Christ is among us."

Pete Janske and his wife, Bonnie, joined GLFF with friendships already well established. "I think to follow on from the straight perspective, it gives me the opportunity to get back with people who just happen to be gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or transgender. There is not a whole lot of difference."

Nor should there be. Father Tom Tunney attended the May 2 meeting and made this observation: "I think we come down to some basic theological facts - the teachings of our church. We are all children of God. We are all brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. These are the things that are foundational." †

The GLFF ministry welcomes new members. For more information, contact: Vicki Strimel: 571-257-7376. vickistrimel@gmail.com

**Fr. James Healy tenure as pastor (1984-1995)*

*** Fr. Edward Kelly, Administrator (1995)*

RCIA Reveals True Meaning of Conversion

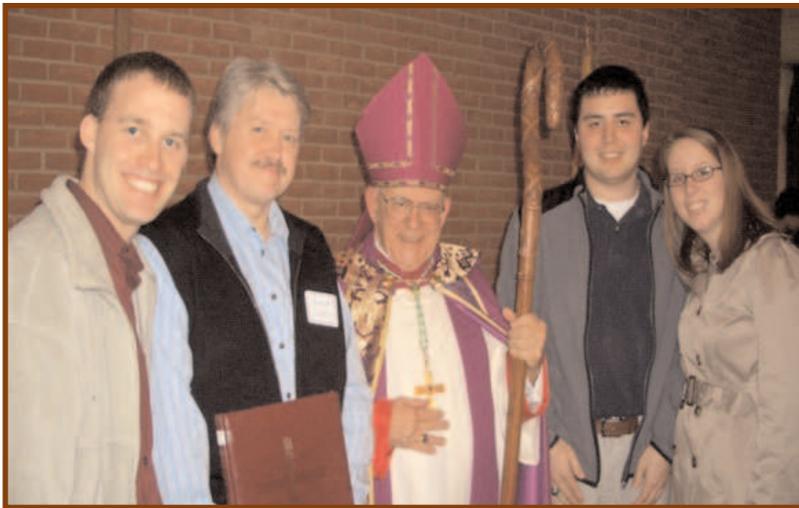
By Betty Mills

I am writing this on Easter Sunday morning still aglow from the Vigil celebration. As Bobby, then Erica, then Neil stepped from the pool looking so radiant, I couldn't help shedding a tear or two of pure joy.

It wasn't until I got involved with the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults program (RCIA) that I began to realize the true meaning of Lent and Easter. It's all about conversion – not just for the catechumens and candidates, but for us all.

The sacraments now mean so much more to me, too, and I'm sure every sponsor and every team member would say the same thing. I urge everyone in the parish to give him or herself the joy of sponsoring a candidate or serving on an RCIA team at some time. You'll know then that you're part of the story – not just an onlooker.

For RCIA, Lent starts with the Rite of Sending. You saw it if you were at the 5:30 Mass on the first Saturday of Lent. The young men and women who had been preparing since September were sent by the parish to the Cathedral for election by the Bishop. They signed the Book of the Elect and presented it to Bishop Loverde as a sign of their commitment.



Tim Murphy and Bridget Wagner, sponsors, flank Neal Scott and Bobby Dongu, Catechumens, at the Rite of Election with Bishop Loverde

Most parishioners witnessed one of the Scrutinies. They took place on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent and were celebrated at different Masses so that much of the parish community could be a part of the RCIA process.

On Palm Sunday, the group and their sponsors and team enjoyed a gorgeous Spring day of Recollection and Reconciliation at Missionhurst.



Retreat Day at Missionhurst Retreat Center Arlington, VA



The Easter Vigil was the culmination of the RCIA process, but only the first step on the journey.

Please pray for our nine new adult Catholics:

Concepcion Arenas, Bobby Dongu, Che Lopez, Erica Olsen, Susan Alvarado, Kiersten Stadler, Shannon Duffy, Neal Scott and their sponsors

JUNE 2011

Sun, 12th... Masses: 8 am, 9:30 am, 12 pm bilingual & 6 pm Spiritans' Pentecost Appeal
Food Pantry: Food Drive (All Masses)
Teen Drop- In Night – Stage, 7 pm
Thu, 16th... Carpenter's Shelter Supper
Sat, 18th... UJAMAA Prayer Breakfast – Hall, 9:30 am
Fist Communion 2011: Sacrament (Spanish), 10
Sun, 19th... Trinity Sunday
Mon, 20th... Confirmation 2012 Prep: Teen Talk, 7 pm
Tue, 21st... Interfaith Meditation - Founders Rm, 7 pm
Sat, 25th... 1st Communion 2011: Sacrament, 3 pm
Sun, 26th... Corpus Christi

July 2011

Mon, 4th... Office Closed (Independence Day)
Sun, 10th... 2nd: OLQP Capital Improvement Fund
Food Pantry: Food Drive (All Masses)
Sun, 17th... 2nd: Special Church in Africa,
Pastoral Solidarity Fund
Thu, 21st... Carpenter's Shelter Supper

August 2011

Sun, 14th... Food Pantry: Food Drive (All Masses)
Mon, 15th... Assumption of Mary (obligation abrogated)
Thu, 18th... Carpenter's Shelter Supper

September 2011

Sun, 4th... Blessing: Students
Olivewood Carvings – Hall
Mon, 5th... Office Closed (Labor Day)
Sun, 11th... Picnic Sunday at Bluemont Park, 1 pm
Masses: 8 am, 9:30 am, 12 noon bilingual, 6 pm
Food Pantry: Food Drive (All Masses)
Thu, 15th... Carpenter's Shelter Supper
Sun, 18th... 2nd: OLQP Religious Education Programs
Fri, 23rd... Water Into Wine - Founders Rm, 6:30 pm
Sat, 24th... Water Into Wine - Founders Rm, 9 am
Sun, 25th... 2nd: Catholic University of America
Blessing for Engaged Couples - 9:30 am Mass

MASS SCHEDULE

Daily Mass:
Monday - Friday at 12 Noon

Weekend Masses:
Saturdays 5:30 PM Vigil
Sundays 8 AM, 9:30 AM, 11:15 AM
1 PM in Spanish
6 PM Young Adult Mass

Pastoral Staff:

Rev. Timothy J. Hickey, C.S.Sp., Pastor
Rev. Thomas Tunney, C.S.Sp., Associate Pastor
Rev. Joseph Nangle, OFM, Ministerio Latino
Christina Kozyn, Parish Office Administrator
Katie Remedios, Religious Education Director
Greg Staff, Social Justice & Outreach Minister
Mike Sheehan, Youth & Young Adult Minister

Email Addresses:

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Assoc. Pastor/Fr. Tom: ttuney@olqpva.org
Fr. Joe Nangle: jnangleofm@yahoo.com
Parish Office/Christina: ckozyn@olqpva.org
Religious Education/Katie: kremedios@olqpva.org
Social Justice & Outreach/Greg: gstaff@olqpva.org
Youth & Young Adult Minister/Mike: mshiehan@olqpva.org

Marriage Preparation:

Please contact Fr. Tim at least six months prior to your wedding date.

Reconciliation:

Saturdays - 5 PM and by appointment

Baptism:

Please contact the office at office@olqpva.org or call 703-979-5580 for preparation arrangements and the upcoming schedule.

Mass Schedule:

Weekdays Monday through Friday - 12 Noon
Saturdays - 5:30 PM Vigil
Sundays - 8:00 AM, 9:30 AM, 11:15 AM & 1:00 PM (Spanish)
6 PM Young Adult Mass

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Parish Website:

www.olqpva.org

