

Our Family of Programs

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- Division of Indian Work
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- Born to Learn™
- Project Persevere
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# E · X · P · R · E · S · S · I · O · N · S

25th Anniversary:

## Paint-A-Thon coats the Twin Cities

Walter Schmidt, 85, of Saint Paul, will tell you he has seen a lot in his lifetime.

“I served in Korea. I have seen man’s inhumanity to man. But what these volunteers are doing to help me — well, that is...that is something else.”

Mary Rognrud, 87, of St. Louis Park concurs. “I don’t have a lot of money but I sure have good luck. These volunteers are more like angels than people. Whoever started Paint-A-Thon was a superior human being.”

On Aug. 2-3, the 25th Anniversary Metro Paint-A-Thon took place across the Twin Cities area with 133 homes being painted. More than 2,000 volunteers formed teams from congregations, corporations, and civic groups to paint the homes of low-income seniors and people with disabilities living in 41 different municipalities.

Volunteers scrape, prime, and paint the homes at no cost to the homeowner. This Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches’ program is designed to help seniors and disabled persons continue to live independently in their own homes.

Just how important is that? Just ask Rognrud, who makes it clear that a nursing home isn’t an option. “Nope — the day I leave this house for good it will be feet first.” A team from the Minneapolis Area Association of Realtors painted her home.

Paint-A-Thon teams range in size from 10 to 40 people and are assigned a home based on the number of team members and their preferences for house size and location.

Paint-A-Thon provides all the paint, many paint supplies, and all the technical advice a team needs to have a fantastic volunteer experience. Generally, the time commitment involves two to three days of scraping and priming, as well as the paint weekend.

Homeowners must meet income guidelines and homes are inspected and ranked in terms of need.

The 2009 Paint-A-Thon will take place Aug. 1-2. For more information, visit [www.gmcc.org/paint-a-thon](http://www.gmcc.org/paint-a-thon) or contact Deidre Pope, Paint-A-Thon director, at (612) 721-8687, ext. 321, or e-mail her at [dpope@gmcc.org](mailto:dpope@gmcc.org).



Walter Schmidt, 85, proudly shows off the photo of his late wife as a team from Blue Cross Blue Shield paints his home during the 25th Anniversary Metro Paint-A-Thon.

## GMCC retreats pay it forward with African clean water well



**Above:** Volunteers from Urban Immersion Service Retreats take a water break after unloading used furniture donations for struggling families in the Twin Cities area. Their water bottles will help pay for clean water wells in Zambia. **Bottom:** A volunteer sets up donated mattresses for families to choose from.

After 11 years in business and training thousands of volunteers to combat poverty, staff members with Urban Immersion Service Retreats realized they could do more to practice what they preach. And, it all came from a bottle of water.

The retreat program combines the study of why people are poor with hands-on help to those in need. It focuses on urban poverty in the United States and participants spend a good portion of their retreat serving in Twin Cities homeless shelters, food shelves, used-furniture warehouses, and on affordable housing projects.

“In many cases, it is hard labor and we’ve always sent our volunteers out with lots of bottles of water to stay hydrated. We’d go through hundreds of bottles a month,” said Gennae Falconer, associate director with the GMCC retreat program. “We thought: ‘What a waste and what a horrible contribution we are making to landfills.’”

Now, retreat participants are offered refillable water bottles — sporting the Urban Immersion Service Retreats logo — and the proceeds help pay for a clean water well in Zambia, a country located in south central Africa. Retreat-goers are asked to donate \$2 for their water bottle and 100 percent of the proceeds go to the World Vision well project in Zambia.

World Vision, a Christian humanitarian organization, is working to drill 110 borehole wells and build 864 latrines in Twachiyanda, Zambia over a two-year period. Impoverished people in Twachiyanda suffer from high rates of diarrhea and other water and sanitation-related diseases because there are not enough sources of clean water and sanitation facilities.

One well costs about \$12,000, Falconer said, adding she hopes to collect \$1,200 by the end of the summer.

“Our retreats focus on urban poverty in the U.S. but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t take notice of poverty around the world. This is an easy and smart way for us to help struggling families a world away, as well as leave a smaller footprint on our local environment.”

## October is Criminal Justice Month

In October the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches (GMCC) will join a variety of denominational leaders, police chiefs, judges, and others to celebrate the third annual Criminal Justice Month.

The month will promote greater public awareness of criminal justice issues and support for programs that address them. Criminal Justice Month is designed to help reduce the alarming rate of repeat offenders — making the community a safer place to live and work, and helping those re-entering society after incarceration to live full, productive lives.

Specifically, GMCC would like to invite congregations and individuals to a **Call to Action** on Thursday, Oct. 2 from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church, 511 Groveland Ave. in Minneapolis.

This free event — also sponsored by Prison Fellowship — will feature former Minnesota Gov. Al Quie as guest speaker, stories of ex-offenders and mentors, and detail the role volunteers can play. The event will offer an understanding of GMCC’s Community Justice Project mentorship program and answer questions about training and time commitment.

The Community Justice Project is a collaboration between GMCC and the Minneapolis Police Department and trains volunteer mentors to help newly released Hennepin County inmates — ages 18 and older — reconnect to the community in healthy ways. Volunteers are recruited from area congregations to help ex-offenders navigate through social service and government channels. Mentors offer practical advice on job hunting, budgeting, and housing issues. To date, more than 270 mentors have been trained.

## Center for Families to host West African cultural celebration

The West African community in Minnesota will hold a Cultural Awareness and Family Day on Saturday, Sept. 13 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. All are welcome.

The celebration will showcase diverse West African cultures and include a fashion show, cultural dance and other performances, food displays, exhibits of cultural artifacts, and soccer games.

The event is sponsored in part by the West African Collaborative, the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches' Center for Families, Clearway Minnesota, Western Union, the Council on Black Minnesotans, and the Minnesota African American Tobacco Education Network.

The daylong celebration will be held at the Center for Families, 3333 North Fourth St. in Minneapolis

Admission is free but donations will be gratefully accepted.

For more information, contact Andrew Tehmeh, Center for Families director of programs at 612-276-1571, ext. 205 or e-mail: [centerforfamilies@gmcc.org](mailto:centerforfamilies@gmcc.org).

The Center for Families opened in early 2006 and welcomes all families, especially the growing number of immigrant families from Liberia, Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Togo, Sierra Leone, and other West African countries. It helps our new neighbors make their way and their home in our community. The center offers services such as job training, health screenings and referrals, mental health services, parent-child play groups to prepare preschoolers for learning, help with locating housing, and much more.

## Tutors needed for American Indian youth



The Division of Indian Work (DIW) is looking for responsible and caring adults to tutor American Indian children involved with its Youth Leadership Development Program.

The volunteer commitment is two hours a week for 10 to 12 weeks during each school term, although a school-year commitment is preferred. The tutoring times available include Mondays from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. for ages 7 to 12 and ages 13 to 17; and Tuesdays from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. for ages 7 to 12.

Tutors help children with any homework they may have. If a child has no homework, the volunteer helps the student in subject areas where improvement is needed. Supplemental materials such as computers, books, and games are available.

For more information, contact Chiffon Potter at 612-722-8722, ext. 371, or e-mail her at [cpotter@gmcc.org](mailto:cpotter@gmcc.org).

## Kids Voting Minneapolis needs volunteers

Kids Voting Minneapolis needs volunteers to help youth vote on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 4.

Volunteer options include:

- Volunteering at a Minneapolis polling place for three hours on Election Day to assist students in casting their ballots. One hour training sessions will be held in October.
- Volunteering for six hours on Election Day and supporting polling place volunteers within a ward.
- Volunteering for eight hours in October to help pack Election Day supplies.

Kids Voting combines classroom civic lessons, family discussions, and an authentic voting experience.

For more information, contact Autumn at 612-729-1963 or e-mail her at [autumnchm@hotmail.com](mailto:autumnchm@hotmail.com).

For more information about Kids Voting Minneapolis, visit [www.kidsvotingminneapolis.org](http://www.kidsvotingminneapolis.org).

## DIW to offer chemical abuse care

The Division of Indian Work (DIW) has been awarded an \$800,000 grant spanning four years to create a culturally-specific recovery program for urban American Indians living with drug and alcohol dependency.

The grant comes from the Minnesota Department of Human Services Chemical Health Division and the new DIW program will focus on American Indians who have completed chemical dependency treatment but who need help maintaining their sobriety. It will serve American Indians, ages 13 and older, living in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

"We are honored to have this opportunity. The need is clear in our community and we know American Indians increase their chances of a successful recovery when they become immersed in the Native culture. We will create a

'healing forest' to help heal the community, the family, and the individual," said Noya Woodrich, executive director of the Division of Indian Work.

The new DIW program will be modeled after the national White Bison, Inc. Wellbriety Movement which teaches that traditional Native culture is prevention and promotes a sober lifestyle balanced emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually.

The DIW program will recruit and train volunteer recovery coaches and match them with individuals and families who need help.



The Division of Indian Work's new chemical dependency recovery program will work to create a 'healing forest' to help heal the community, the family, and the individual.

Clients will take part in weekly talking circles (support groups); monthly cultural ceremonies, such as the sweat lodge; and drum, dance, and regalia making classes.

There will be support groups for both adults and teens. For instance, adults will focus on the 12 steps from the American Indian perspective of the Medicine Wheel. Two youth groups — Sons of Tradition and Daughters of Tradition — will work to prevent substance abuse. Elders from a variety of tribes will teach youth about the impact of chemical dependency not just on the individual but on the family, the community, and the nation.

The Division of Indian Work will welcome community referrals and also use its existing family of social service programs to refer individuals and their family members to the chemical dependency recovery program. Currently the Division of Indian Work offers urban American Indian families prenatal and parenting classes, after-school tutoring, family violence counseling, a food shelf, and a loving foster home for Indian children.

"DIW has a 55-year history of offering help and has built a strong relationship with urban American Indian families. We have earned the trust of the community and we are unique among American Indian organizations for blending Native culture with modern methodologies for behavior change and social service," Woodrich said.

While there are some chemical recovery programs for American Indians in the Twin Cities, they are woefully inadequate based on the need. In Hennepin County alone, 25 percent of the nearly 11,000 American Indian adults reported binge drinking in a county survey.

The DIW chemical dependency program has begun hiring staff and training recovery coaches. It hopes to match clients to coaches and begin talking circles in late fall 2008.

## EXPRESSIONS

K. Darcy Hanzlik, Editor

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### EXPRESSIONS

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