

Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

Making Art with the Homeless

by Katie Cook

AUSTIN, TEXAS—It was a scene I'd seen many times before—a church's fellowship hall, set up with banquet tables, affable volunteers in the kitchen preparing a simple meal for fifty-or-so homeless people drifting in by twos and threes and casually making their way to the serving line. One of the guests was in the corner of the long room, playing a pleasant jazz improvisation on the piano.

But there was some peculiarity in this experience. The guests carried with them a stronger sense of community, a greater sense of dignity, that I had rarely seen in even the most caring of meal-serving projects.

I surmised, from what I had already heard about this ministry at University Methodist Church in Austin, that the difference had grown from the weekly activity that followed the meal. Art tables had been set up on one side of the room. Before many had finished eating, some of the regular folks moved over and began to concentrate—some solemnly, some playfully—on creating pictures with assorted charcoals and oils. I was about to see the Homeless Artists Guild in action.

"There's a different kind of relating in that setting," David Davis, formerly of Austin Metropolitan Ministries, had told me. "The art activity changes the dynamic between the homeless people and the people who volunteer. It creates a third medium that gives them a dignifying balance."

Ginger Henry Geyer, who founded the Homeless Artists Guild, believed that the need to create is a basic human drive—

indeed, it is a spiritual need. An artist herself, she looked beyond the rough exterior of the unkempt, homeless people who were being fed in her church's kitchen in downtown Austin. She saw a dramatic possibility.

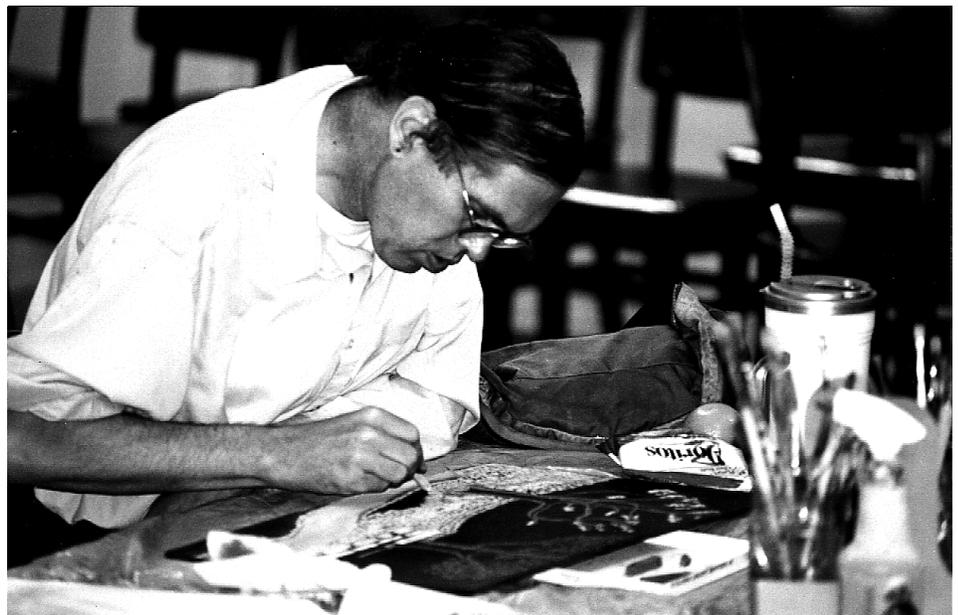
She partially understood the objections—some of them were coming out of her own head: "Shouldn't they be doing something useful instead of playing around? Isn't it difficult enough to cover the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, and health care? Why make art with poor people?"

But she followed through on her vision, despite these questions. "This isn't frivolous," she insisted. "It's about human dignity."

On that first cold Saturday of Lent, Geyer said, there were a few moments in which it looked as though no one would respond. "In the back of the large room, two of us spread bright plastic cloths on extra tables, pulled out donated clay, paint, and paper, and made timid announcements that the Homeless Artists Guild invited anyone

continued on page 2

Below: Gene, a regular participant in the Homeless Artists Guild at University Methodist Church in Austin, tries a black canvas for the first time. Photo by Kendall Klym.



Making Art

(continued from page 1)



Left: Michael improvises a jazz tune while others paint. Below: "Big Bear" enjoys creating a Seuss-like drawing. He says he'd love to illustrate a children's book someday. Opposite page: Leroy expresses his anxiety on canvas.

Photos by Kendall Klym



who wanted to make art to join us. In response, blank expressions stared back, conversations continued, and sandwich munching increased."

Finally, however, a group of teens "in full punk regalia" broke the awkwardness by sauntering over to the art table. As two of them began forming clay figures, a third held out her hands to Geyer for a lump of red clay.

"In a movement that felt oddly familiar," Geyer said, "I gently placed a small ball of clay in her hands. She nodded a solemn thank you. I later realized this interaction had, in some way, been communion."

Remembering these stories, I asked the guys at the table if I could watch them work.

A pleasant young man named Michael moved to the piano and played more jazz improvisation. "These guys could play for Windham Hill," I thought.

Miles, a young man who described himself as Michael's biggest fan, began working in acrylics in what appeared to be a symbiotic connection to the music. When Michael stopped playing, Miles stopped painting. Naming the abstract picture "Happy Endings," Miles presented it to Michael, who then handled it as if it were the Holy Grail.

Another man with an intelligent and bright countenance, calling himself "Old

Bear," joyfully worked the entire time on a professional-looking, whimsical, Seuss-like cartoon. He also showed me a pipe and a leather hat that he had made, and discussed the possibility of patents and buyers for his inventions.

While the artists worked, they related their stories to each other and to me. I found out that Miles (whom I had originally labeled in my head as a volunteer) had woken up one day and decided to go for his dream of becoming a songwriter. He quit his job in the Midwest and moved to Austin. He lives in his car, but he gets by pretty well, he said.

John, appearing to be in his thirties and clearly the guru of the group, showed me a scrapbook with photos of his many paintings, along with a clipping from the University of Texas student newspaper, a feature article about him and his art, titled "Will Paint for Respect." While we chatted, Gene, another artist, worked diligently on an intricate nature scene and chimed in from time to time.

John and others—with the help of the Homeless Artists Guild and a program of the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH) called "Arts from the Street"—have been involved in several shows of art by homeless people, John said. He called his first show "Nomadic Transitions."

Shortly before the art time was up, another man came in, clearly agitated. "Leroy! Where were you?" they all asked. Explaining that he had missed the meal because his girlfriend had been arrested, he said, "John, give me a canvas. I need to paint." Everyone rallied around him, giving him the colors that he needed, bringing him coffee, and commiserating with him.

Leroy proceeded to transfer his feelings to the canvas, with the full emotional support of the group. "See? This is ocean waves,

"In a movement that felt oddly familiar, I gently placed a small ball of clay in her hands. She nodded a solemn thank you. I later realized this interaction had, in some way, been communion."

coming right at you," he showed me. I thought of what Ginger Henry Geyer had said, "Mak-

ing art together breaks down barriers.”

Then Michael showed me some poetry he had written, which he prefers to call “psalms.” As he happily related the story behind

“Shouldn’t they be doing something useful instead of playing around? Isn’t it difficult enough to cover the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, and health care? Why make art with poor people?”

his collection of writings, entitled *Holy Doors*, I thought to myself, “What if nobody ever encouraged these people to be creative?”

These artists are not making something to carry off with them. Most of them leave their creations behind or give them away. “It’s the process, not the project,” Geyer had said. “To have something on your wall is not the object of this activity. Most of these people don’t have walls.”

That realization gave birth to the idea of displaying the art in various galleries around town—and eventually having a “Homeless Artists” show. The participants were able to share their creations with others, and perhaps make some badly needed money in the process. “One guy sold enough of his work at a gallery to get transitional housing for himself,” Geyer said.

The Austin Resource Center for the Homeless now holds art sessions twice a week and continues to host large shows for participants. The Homeless Artists Guild has grown from one church to several and has been adopted by Austin Metropolitan Ministries. A seemingly frivolous idea has caught on.

As Michael wrote in one of his psalms,

But I my dust, dust must so rest...

*God water field are grace
rainbow passes.*

Hope.

—Katie Cook is the editor for *Seeds of Hope Publishers*. Photos of the Homeless Artists Guild are by Kendall Klym, a freelance writer and dancer in Austin.



The Refuse of Society

by Helen Lepp Friesen

There are the streets in every town
whose sidewalks are garnished
with shredded plastic bags,
clinging tenaciously to fences
that won’t let them escape.

Soiled wrappers carelessly discarded,
once shiny and crisp,
now wrinkled, discolored and ugly
are held captive by the mud.

Bottles and glass shards
lace the remnants of grass and wilted flowers.

The stench of rancid food
sways here and there with the wind.

Buildings that sag like a sad smile with missing teeth
hover over the lost fragments of pavement.

Along those streets he walks,
head bent with shredded honor,
clinging desperately
to the walls that surround and exclude him.

Once polished and lustrous, perhaps wealthy and respectable,
now with crumpled esteem and rumpled attire,
tatters of feelings, broken and scattered
teetering here and there.

Depending on the excess of others,
at the homeless shelter
where food is prepared from
scavenged expired vegetables and fruits,
or the stretched out hand begging,
“Twenty five cents please, just twenty five cents.”

One day a clean up crew hits the streets
gathering the plastic bags from the fences,
the muddy wrappers from the ground,
the bottles, glass, and cans from the median.

All the refuse is tied in a black bag,
neatly discarded forever.

Will someone get there before the black bags?
Who will take his rigid hands
and unsnarl them from the fences
that hold him captive?

Who will pick up the discarded wrappings
and fill him with honor and dignity?

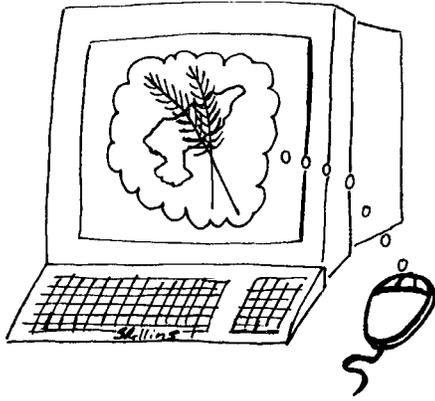
Who will gather the shreds piece by piece,
put them back together to make him whole?

Who will take his tattered clothing
give him a crown
and a royal garb to make him shine again?

—Helen Lepp Friesen lives in Gallup, New Mexico with her husband and three young children and teaches writing at the University of New Mexico-Gallup. This poem was previously published in *Cell Life Forum* and is used with permission.

Learning about Hunger from the Internet: Confessions of a Novice

by Anne Guidry



I have two confessions to make. The first is that I'm an internet junkie. The second is that, until fairly recently, I had little knowledge about world hunger, and knew nothing about hunger in North Korea. And what, I hear you saying, does cruising the internet have to do with hunger in North Korea?

A few weeks ago, I was looking at the morning news update on my web browser, and a small quote in the corner of a box caught my eye. It wouldn't quite go away. It had lain there harmlessly, briefly, on a news page that I can't remember. But the words stuck in my mind. I decided to track the item down. I found a United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) press release that explained the crisis in detail. That I could find it is amazing. More amazing to me is that through the internet I became aware of a terrible situation in a remote place, found out how people are trying to help, and can now tell you about it.

The item that caught my eye had a headline that read something like, "N. Korea Makes Alternative Food." *Huh?* What is the alternative to food? Not-eating? Something like not-breathing is an alternative to breathing?

According to the press item, "alternative food" is produced by a government plant in Chongjin, North Korea. The "alternative food" manufactured in this plant consists of wheat, corn cobs, tree leaves, and grass. The WFP says that this is simply a stomach filler that can cause severe digestive problems, particularly for children and the elderly.

"Alternative food," says the WFP, can also be edible roots, grasses, and seaweed gathered and cooked—or it can consist of produce such as cabbage stalks, corn stalks, and grasses ground up finely in community factories, cooked with some cereal and an enzyme, and then extruded as noodles or cakes.

Those are the words that won't let me go. They bring famine in a faraway place to my own door, and put faces and bodies on mind-numbing statistics. *Imagine families eating grass and tree leaves.*

Because of that image, I had to know more. What events had led to this extreme and tragic absurdity? Why were the people of North Korea having to find alternatives to their food sources? I looked it up on the internet, and here's what I found:

- North Korea occupies an area slightly smaller than Pennsylvania and lies north of the 38th parallel; population is about 24,000,000.

- A once-united Korea was divided into two zones following World War II, with Soviet troops occupying the north and American troops the south. Political differences between the Communist north and western-aligned south fueled the Korean war (1950-1953). The two countries are still officially at war, as the Korean conflict ended in a truce.

- The current head of state is Kim Jong Il, who succeeded his father in 1994 and who pledged to suspend nuclear development in North Korea in exchange for renewal of diplomatic and commercial ties. Today's headlines report tensions over North Korea's testing of long-range ballistic missiles. The country is one of the world's few remaining hard-line communist regimes.

- The country's isolationist policies exacerbate the problems. North Korea is closed to foreign journalists.

- The country's religions are Buddhism and Confucianism, with religious activity almost nonexistent.

- North Korea has been plagued by famine since 1995, when two years of floods were followed by two years of drought and crop failures. Current reports indicate continued heat, drought, and anticipated crop failure. Fuel and machinery shortages plus government inefficiency contribute to the crisis. Some estimate that famine has killed over two million people; the country relies on international aid to feed its population.

- International relief agencies report that sixty-two percent of children under seven are stunted and that the public health system is close to total breakdown.

What a terrible litany of human disaster. North Korea has enormous political and economic difficulties, not to mention human rights abuses on every level. What does all this information mean to

The item that caught my eye had a headline that read something like, "N. Korea Makes Alternative Food." Huh? What is the alternative to food?

me? Will we react with "oh yeah, that place, so what?" or can it, does it, become a doorway for me, and you, to compassion, community, and care?

People are as hostile and cruel to one another today as they have ever been. But now, through global communications, people are more aware of each other's existence and circumstances than has

continued on page 9

The Child Sponsorship Debate

by Kerry Burkley and Angie Tello

EDITOR'S NOTE: When I first became editor of Seeds Magazine eight years ago, the very first letter I received was from a denominational leader asking for advice on the child sponsorship issue. She said

she often received inquiries regarding child sponsorship, and she really didn't know what to tell the questioners.

I didn't know what to tell them, either. I had enjoyed a meaningful experience with child sponsorship back in college, and I had good evidence that the child

I sponsored in Nairobi had been helped by the experience. I

thought of Bread for the World founder Art Simon, who had just that year gone from BFW to work for the Christian Children's

Fund. Art admitted that he had once questioned child sponsorship, but now he believed that it was a valid means of feeding and clothing the world's poor. I heard from others in the anti-hunger movement that child sponsorship was never an acceptable way to respond to the hungry. I heard their arguments, and I heard Art's arguments, and I still had no idea what to think.

In recent years, there has been an increase in concern over child sponsorship. A recent Chicago Tribune exposé fueled the controversy to an even higher pitch. Meanwhile, television ads that show inhumane conditions of children living in some distant village are still regularly aired to appeal to the hearts of potential contributors. It is no secret that most of our world is hungry for food, but will sponsoring a child make a difference or create more concerns?

The reporters who worked on this story found the same spectrum of responses. Some people support the sponsorship method wholeheartedly, pointing out the positive results of relationships across national and continental boundaries. Others condemn it just as wholeheartedly, citing incidents of fraud and abuse. Still others, prominent leaders in the anti-hunger movement, told us that they had no official position on the issue.

The following paragraphs are an attempt to sort out the questions and debates that surround the practice of child sponsorship.—lkc



It is late in the evening. You are sitting on a couch, sofa, or chair, and you are casually flipping the channels on the television with your remote control. After channel-surfing for few moments, an image flashing on the screen causes you to stop. A child—a little girl—stands in a puddle of muddy water. There is no sound for a few moments, so you have time to examine the girl. She is wearing a long, tattered t-shirt and no shoes. Her hair is shoulder-length and unkempt. Streaks of dirt stretch across each cheek, and she is not smiling. You think to yourself, “What kind of show is this?”

All of a sudden, a man's voice booms from your television speakers as a voice-over: “This is Maria. She lives in a small, one room shack with her father, mother and four brothers. And this is the place she lives and walks around in.” The

camera cuts away from Maria's face and to a shot of the surrounding area. Small wooden structures and lean-tos are crowded into a small piece of land. People of all ages, sizes and genders walk barefoot along the narrow muddy streets. The camera then shows several children sitting on the ground, eating out of dirty bowls.

The next shot makes you cringe. Three mothers carry toddlers in their arms as they wade through a filthy stream, occasionally dousing their little ones with handfuls of the brown water. In the background, several older children splash around in the river, periodically diving into the sludge.

The camera cuts back to the houses, and the voice-over speaker now stands there, holding Maria in his arms. He takes a deep breath, then says, “Maria endures this everyday. But with your help, she doesn't have to anymore. With just \$25, you can change

continued on page 6

Maria's life, and other children like her. You can become a sponsor and transform a child's life from this"—he gestures to the scene around him—"to this." The camera cuts to a classroom of children, sitting in rows of desks and all wearing uniforms. They are smiling, laughing, and talking.

The camera cuts back to the man, who is now walking hand-in-hand with Maria. "Your gift can help Maria and others like her to get the medical attention they need, the food they need, and the education they deserve," the man says.

maintain that one child in a village should not be "chosen" out and given special treatment. They further maintain that contributions would be better used in development projects for the whole village or area.

Indeed, in recent years organizations have begun to pool all sponsorship funds together to support a project that would provide medical attention, food, and education to children in a particular community. Arthur Simon of the Christian Children's Fund (CCF) pointed out in a 1993 *Seeds Magazine* article that when funds are given

nated amount of funds for advertising and administration. Most businesses, of course, would operate in this manner. But when we are talking about a charity spending tens of millions of dollars on advertising, then questions are raised. The concern of would-be sponsors and anti-hunger leaders is "How much of those funds being used for administration and advertising could feasibly go toward feeding hungry children?"

As the debate continues, most people are still wondering what's going on. And in the meantime, we are still bombarded with images of poor children from many different places. Most of them lack immunization that US children take for granted, immunization that could save them from a number of diseases within their first two years. We continue to see them living in poorly sanitized houses and bathing in dirty water—the same water they drink. We continue to see them malnourished and underfed—children who would be ecstatic to have a third of what most of us put on our plates at dinnertime.

These images of children and their frail bodies without adequate clothing haunt us, whose closets are bursting with wardrobes for every occasion and season. And we wonder how anyone could take advantage of such precious little ones. But we know that some do.

In the spring of 1998, the Chicago Tribune printed an exposé resulting from its own sponsorship of twelve children. For two years reporters and editors sent money to their sponsored children and corresponded with them. Then the reporters went off to find their children as a part of an investigative project. Some of their findings were appalling.

The reporters found that several of the children they thought they were sponsoring were actually dead. The reporters had been told that these children were in good health and receiving funds. A few of the children on their list were receiving poor service; others were not receiving service at all.

That same spring, *The New York Times* also highlighted fraudulent sponsorships. The Times reported that one sponsor was led to believe that specially designated gifts and funds were used for a child's birthday. The child never received the funds but was handed a sweat suit, a cup of juice, and a box of cookies. Another sponsor had donated \$500 to a particular charity to go toward medical expenses for a child. The child made five



For two years reporters and editors sent money to their sponsored children and corresponded with them. Then the reporters went off to find their children as a part of an investigative project. Some of their findings were appalling.

Who would not feel compassion for Maria and sponsor her? Well, if everyone were moved by this ad, then you might not be reading this article. A person's decision whether to sponsor a child or not may be influenced by widely differing beliefs concerning child sponsorship.

One reason why people are distrustful of child sponsorship is because they are uncertain as to how the funds will be used. Charity watchdog organizations have found that a common misinterpretation—whether deliberate or not—surfaces in the area of allocated funds.

Some contributors believe that their entire contribution goes directly to the child they sponsor. Some organizations offer special cash grants to a sponsored child's family. For some, this is a positive thing. For others, this is a source of discomfort; they

to the CCF, they are not just for the child being sponsored.

The funds, he said, are used in a community project to benefit all of the children in need. This "corporate use of funds," Simon says, helps to dispel the myth that sponsorship causes division in a village over who is getting the money, because all of the children will benefit.

Another reason why people choose not to sponsor a child is because they are afraid that their money is used more in the smorgasbord of advertising than for the welfare of the children. Even with so many well-organized overseas charities operating, there is still a great temptation to compete with one another. And to compete means you have to have money.

For example, most of the larger relief and development organizations use a desig-

visits to a doctor; the charity paid for only one. The physician, the *Times* discovered, paid for the other four visits. So what happened to the rest of the money?

Despite these reports of abuse, there are many people who strongly support what overseas charities are doing through sponsorships. One proponent, a sponsor named “Angie” defended her favorite charity, a well-known one, vehemently against the claims of the *Chicago Tribune*. “Angie” opened up a web site for the purpose of defending her charity and child sponsorship in general. She pointed out how her charity was, indeed, supplying children with medical attention, food, and educational equipment. She argued that the report of the *Tribune* was an assault against the whole concept of child sponsorship, instead of the exposure of a few isolated, culpable organizations.

As a result of the *Tribune* feature, InterAction—a coalition of more than 160 humanitarian organizations working on disaster relief, refugee assistance, and sustainable development programs worldwide—has launched a campaign to make sure that funds raised by overseas charities are used as promised. InterAction has pledged to monitor child sponsorship programs, particularly the largest ones, closely in the future.

The American Institute of Philanthropy (AIP), a nationally prominent charity watchdog, helps donors make informed decisions about giving by providing a web site of information. The site includes information about the organizations it investigates, along with a method for grading them.

Two other organizations that look out for donors are the National Charities Information Bureau (NCIB) and the Philanthropic Advisory Service of the Better Business Bureau (BBB). The NCIB’s mission is to promote informed giving and charitable integrity. The BBB gets its support from the local and national level by memberships of businesses committed to building and promoting an ethical marketplace. The three entities, along with InterAction, examine financial accounts and make visits to international fields of operation. With these checks in place, hopefully the exploitation of children and donors will be significantly reduced—if not eradicated.

Since the concern for preventing injustices by charities has been so widely expressed, much reform has taken place within

the charities themselves. Following the *Chicago Tribune*’s exposé, some of the charities investigated launched their own internal investigations and instigated significant reforms. One of them forced the resignations of employees who had brought about the appalling conditions discovered by the *Tribune* reporters.

There has also been a shift in the view of the general public. People are generally more cynical about appeals for money. There is a sense of outrage that organizations would use the images of malnourished children to raise money—even for a good cause. We see Sally Struthers, the former star of the early 1970s television hit “All in the Family,” in

somewhat callously but truthfully, that using the images of children is the best way to get donations. Nobody is going to get emotional about a new septic tank for a village in the mountains of Haiti, but they will respond to pictures of young Jean-Luc standing in front of the same village. And if these groups use those donations efficiently and with integrity, what harm is done?

The standards for charities are, and should be, lofty ones. It is up to the anti-hunger community, as well as prospective donors, to be wise as serpents while being gentle as doves. The Better Business Bureau’s Philanthropic Advisory Service (PAS), for instance, holds standards for chari-



One proponent, a sponsor named “Angie” defended her favorite charity, a well-known one, vehemently against the claims of the Chicago Tribune. “Angie” opened up a web site for the purpose of defending her charity and child sponsorship in general.

front of a television set, clicking a remote control as images of starving children race across the screen. “At times, I want to turn it off myself,” she says, while her eyes brim with tears.

Some, however, would point out that at least most of these organizations are attempting to help. Some would also point out,

table solicitations. The PAS calls for charities to provide annual reports, which include the organization’s purpose, descriptions of overall programs, activities and accomplishments, eligibility to receive deductible contributions, information about the governing body and structure, and information about

continued on page 8

art by Marcus Best



Following the Chicago Tribune's exposé, some of the charities investigated launched their own internal investigations and instigated significant reforms. One of them forced the resignations of employees who had brought about the appalling conditions discovered by the Tribune reporters.

financial activities and the financial position of the group.

There are well-known relief and development organizations who have failed to meet the standards set up by the PAS and other charity watchdogs. This information is readily available at the web sites of the BBB, the American Institute of Philanthropy, the National Charities Information Bureau, and InterAction. (see sidebar)

So where do we go from here? Even if we don't trust charities and their missions, children will still die from disease and malnutrition. It may be that one of our real missions is not one of overseas development, but reconciliation within the anti-hunger movement. On the one hand, the situa-

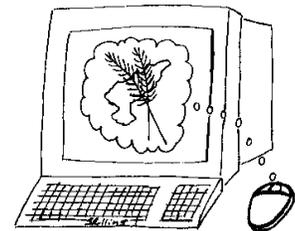
tion calls for a rediscovery of commitment and integrity by those engaged in helping the poor. On the other hand, healing is needed where exploitation and deceit have wounded even the workers. Together, a house of trust needs to be built if we are going to feed the world.

—*Kerry Burkley is a minister working full-time at an advocacy center for women and crime victims and part-time as nursery coordinator for Seventh and James Baptist Church in Waco, Texas. Angie Tello, a recent graduate of Baylor University and a native of the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, is a first-year student in the Writing and Publishing Program at Emerson College in Boston.*

Sources: Chicago Tribune, New York Times, "Angie's CCF Page" web site, Better Business Bureau "Child Sponsorship" section, Seeds Magazine, telephone interviews

Charity Watchdog Organizations:

- **American Institute of Philanthropy:**
<http://www.charitywatch.org>
- **National Charities Information Bureau:**
<http://www.give.org>
- **Philanthropic Advisory Service of the Better Business Bureau:**
www.bbb.org/about/pas.html
(Note: the special section on "Child Sponsorship" is particularly helpful.)
- **InterAction:**
<http://www.interaction.org>
1717 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Suite 701
Washington, DC 20036
202/667-8227



Confessions

(continued from page 4)

ever been possible. At least they can be, if they pay attention. And maybe for some, awareness will lead to compassion, and to action. At the very least, it will for me.

—*Anne Guidry is a lay liturgist in her church in Jackson, Mississippi. At press time she was preparing to travel to Honduras for a Habitat for Humanity project.*

Below are a few online sources for information about hunger spots around the world:

- American Red Cross: www.redcross.org
- United Nations World Food Programme: www.wfp.org
- Lutheran World Relief: www.lwr.org
- World Vision US: www.worldvision.org
- New York Times: www.nytimes.com
- infoplease.com: www.infoplease.com
- Amnesty International:
www.amnesty.org
- Out There News: www.megastories.com
- Bread for the World: www.bread.org
- Pax World Service: www.paxworld.org
- Disaster Relief: www.disasterrelief.org
- CARE: www.care.org

Resources

Grace at the Table: Ending Hunger in God's World

David Beckmann/Arthur Simon

Bread for the World Institute/InterVarsity Press: 1999

\$10.95 plus shipping

The world has made tremendous progress in reducing hunger in the last twenty-five years, say David Beckmann and Art Simon in *Grace at the Table: Ending Hunger in God's World*, but a great challenge remains. The hopeful message of this book is that widespread hunger is no longer necessary.

The book includes eight sections that discuss hunger issues from a theological perspective. It is full of information and practical discussions concerning the causes of hunger around the world and next door, hunger and the environment, a jobs-based strategy for ending hunger, how hunger relates to gender and race, the economics of hunger, and the politics of hunger. The last section offers suggestions for taking action.

Order from Bread for the World Institute, 1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1000, Silver Spring, MD 20910; Phone: 301/608-2400; Web site: www.bread.org.

Mustard Seeds Vs. McWorld: Reinventing Life and Faith for the Future

Tom Sine

Baker Book House: 1999

paperback \$13.99

Due out in September, this new book by futurologist Tom Sine (*The Mustardseed Conspiracy, Wild Hope*) offers practical ways that Christians can live their faith more intentionally in the face of unending societal changes. Sine examines the current global consumer culture and identifies the crisis of foresight, vision, and creativity he says is preventing the church from effectively preparing for the future. He emphasizes the "mustard seed" perspective, helping the reader to see how God works through the seemingly small and insignificant to bring about lasting change.

Just Generosity:

A New Vision for Overcoming Poverty in America

Ronald J. Sider

Baker Book House: 1999

paperback \$11.99

Since Ron Sider first published his bestselling *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, the poor in the United States have become poorer while the rich have become richer. Government policies initiated by both liberals and conservatives, says Sider, have failed to alleviate poverty.

In *Just Generosity*, due out in October, Sider presents an accessible yet comprehensive agenda of ways to reduce poverty. He calls for a new, holistic approach in which people of faith can work with government, media, and business to change both unjust social structures and the root causes of bad moral choices.

To order *Mustardseed Vs. McWorld* or *Just Generosity*, contact Baker Book House, PO Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287; Phone: 616/676-9185; Fax: 616/676-9573; Web site: www.bakerbooks.com.

Worship tools for the church year, with a peace and justice emphasis, from Seeds of Hope.

The Bread of Deliverance



...a worship packet for your church's
hunger emphasis

Four 20-page packets each year filled with prayers, litanies, sermons, activities, art, and more. \$50 per packet or \$120 for all four. To order, call 254/755-7745; fax 254/753-1909; write 602 James, Waco, TX 76706; or e-mail seedshope@aol.com.

Wear a Chain—to Break the Chains of Debt!



Show your support for the Jubilee 2000 Campaign by wearing the "Break the Chains of Debt" lapel pin. The Jubilee/USA Campaign challenges rich nations to cancel the unpayable debt owed by the most impoverished countries who must slash essential services, such as education and health care, to meet a fraction of their debt repayments.

Cost: \$2.50 each, includes shipping (bulk discounts available)- specify #ED 9920

Order/Checks payable: Church World Service, PO Box 968, Elkhart, IN 46515; 800/297-1516; www.churchworldservice.org



compiled by David Emerson Lane

art courtesy of Brown University

“Working Poor” Faring Badly After Welfare Reform

WASHINGTON, DC—The US Conference of Mayors recently released its annual report on hunger and homelessness. Seventy-eight percent of the cities which responded to the report had increases in demand for emergency food. The average for all these cities was a fourteen percent increase. This is despite record-breaking quarters on Wall Street and substantial sustained economic growth in virtually every facet of the economy.

“Even in good economic times, hunger and homelessness continue to be a challenge in cities both small and large,” said Burlington, Virginia Mayor Pete Clavell.

At the same time, the USDA recently reported that participation in the food stamp program fell by 5.9 million people between 1994 and 1997. Because the change happened during strong economic growth and during the sweeping changes made possible by new welfare reform laws, the analysis of the data differs greatly.

Some claim that this is a result of sustained economic growth in the US. Others point out that many people who qualify for the program are not enrolled. Social workers say that, when people are thrown off welfare, they may not know they still qualify for the federal Food Stamp program.

However, a number of other factors could be involved in the trend as well. First, the number of undocumented immigrants in the US decreased by fifty-four percent in the last few years, accounting for fourteen percent of the decline in Food Stamp participants. Second, the number of childless, unemployed adults fell by forty-four percent, accounting for eight percent of the decline. The number of families receiving welfare, however, fell by twenty-eight percent—and these represent sixty-one percent of the total decline.

Perhaps these stories are not at odds with each other, but instead two parts of a trend. People could be relying less on government programs and more on emergency food assistance. If this is true, food banks and soup kitchens could easily find the number of people they serve doubling.

The polite term for this growing phenomenon is “food insecurity.” The Urban Institute recently published a report entitled *Snapshots of America’s Families*, which reports that nearly half of low-income families suffer from food insecurity. “Low-income families” is defined as families that have less than twice the federal poverty line. Taking the average family of four (the poverty line varies by the number of people in a family), this range includes all families making less than \$33,400.

According to this report, half of families making less than \$33,400 had their food supply run out before they got money to buy more, or adults in the family skipped meals because there was not enough money to buy food. Worse still, fifty-four percent of the children in these families ran out of food or skipped meals to preserve food.

The Urban Institute interviewed 44,000 people to come up with these figures. The “official” US Census figures only include income levels, not living conditions, so this study is perhaps the first true “post-welfare reform” look into the lives of the working poor in the US. Seven out of eight (eighty-eight percent) of these families have one or more working members. These are “low-income” families numbering 70 million people. They are working, but they are still skipping meals and running out of food.

The National Coalition for the Homeless summarizes that “more families are moving from welfare to work, but many of them are faring worse than before.” The Children’s Defense Fund states the facts bluntly: “The current minimum wage does not enable people to afford housing.”

Take New York State, for example. After switching to a “tough” block-grant-based welfare system, thirty percent of the people on New York welfare roles found jobs. The problem is that only half of these jobs pay a living wage. Working eight-hour days in full-time jobs, these families are still unable to rise above the poverty line.

And what if they don’t find a job? Half the people currently disqualified from welfare have not been able to find jobs. This is happening while, according to policy analysts, four billion dollars marked for the poor is being held by the states.

“Food insecurity” is the polite term for it. “Pulled from the roles from non-participation” is the policy’s terminology. “Working poor” is the sociological classification. Poor. Starving. Hungry. These are also words to describe 70 million low-income Americans.



Or the more than 30 million children who skip meals—who no longer qualify for government aid.

Sources: Food Journal, Nutrition Week, *Food Research and Action Center*, *National Coalition for the Homeless*, *World Hunger Year*

WIC Celebrates 25th Anniversary

WASHINGTON, DC—The pilot program for the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) opened its doors in 1974 and expanded into a nationwide program in 1975. Since then WIC has grown many times over and has provided nutritious foods, nutrition education, and access to health care to many millions of low-income pregnant women, new mothers, as well as infants and children at nutritional risk. The program served 7.4 million women and children in 1998 alone.

Numerous studies have proven that WIC increases significantly the rate of women receiving prenatal care, reduces the incidence of low birthweight and fetal mortality, reduces anemia among infants, and enhances the nutritional quality of the diet of participants. In addition to health benefits, WIC saves taxpayer money. Every dollar spent on the program results in an estimated \$1.77 to \$3.13 savings in Medicaid costs for newborns and their mothers.

To celebrate the anniversary, representatives from Food Research and Action Center, the National Association of WIC Directors, and Bread for the World held two Congressional events: a breakfast in the US Senate and an evening reception for the US House of Representatives on May 5th. At the breakfast, women and children who had participated in the nutrition program joined with Senators, Congressional staff, and WIC leaders from across the US for a typical WIC breakfast.

—*Food Research and Action Center, Bread for the World*

Give a Woman a Fish:

Finding Refuge Through Credit

DOUALA, CAMEROON/PLEEBO, LIBERIA—Madame Helene Tchakounte dreamed of having her own restaurant. For many years she sold fresh-grilled fish from a market stall in Douala, Cameroon. Thanks to low-interest loans from the Association of Women Entrepreneurs (ASWE), she was gradually able to build her business into an open-air restaurant by the sea.

Madame Tchakounte now assists her sisters in ASWE, an agricultural missions partner of Church World Service, to operate businesses of their own. “You can’t get fresher fish anywhere!” Madame Tchakounte said. “Three shifts of women rent space and we are open from 9 AM to 11 PM daily. We have all improved our lives. Because of the micro-credit program, it is possible for us to develop our dreams.”

Nine years ago, war-widow Sarah Doe fled from Liberia with her nine children. On a ten-day journey to Tabou, Cote d’Ivoire, she could take with her only basic clothing and cooking utensils. On arrival there she relied on food rations to feed her family and on her brother-in-law for a place to sleep. She had no savings.

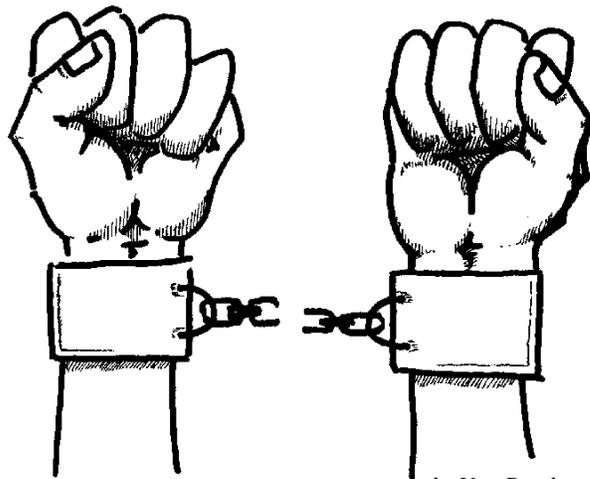
Soon she started baking and selling doughnuts on a very small scale, and through the Small Economic Activities Development (SEAD) program implemented by the International Rescue Com-



art courtesy of Church World Service

mittee (IRC) she formed a club that managed microenterprise loans for women. Now she has returned to Liberia, begun building a house in the city of Pleebo, and is able to feed, clothe, and educate her children with her earnings.

—*Church World Service; Microcredit Summit Campaign*



art by Van Darden

Update: Jubilee 2000 Gaining Momentum

WASHINGTON, DC—The year of Jubilee is an ancient Jewish tradition as proscribed in Leviticus 25. According to the law, every fifty years all slaves were to be released, all debts remitted, and the land was to rest. A new movement, Jubilee 2000, is trying to apply these same principles in our own time.

Speaking for Jubilee 2000, Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Perez Esquivel called foreign debt a “massive and systematic violation of human rights.” Jubilee 2000 aims to persuade developed countries to remit the debts owed to them by poorer nations.

Already the United Kingdom and German government have made announcements that they will change their policies towards indebted countries. This is probably due to the barrage of the media coverage that the organization received during the British music awards. There Bono, lead singer of the rock band U2, accepted an award for the movement saying it is an “idea that might give the millennium some meaning.”

In Washington the Debt Relief for Poverty Reduction Act (H.R. 1095) is quickly gaining support. Representatives James Leach (R—Iowa), John LaFalce (D—New York), Spencer Bachus (R—Alabama), and Maxine Waters (D—California) are the bill’s sponsors. Jubilee 2000 activists are working to introduce the legislation into the Senate. The movement gained more momentum from a meeting in Cologne, Germany earlier this summer.

You can read more about Jubilee in the Spring 1999 issue of *Hunger News & Hope*. See also *Resources* on page 9 of this issue for information about Jubilee 2000 lapel pins developed by Church World Service. For more information, contact the Jubilee 2000 headquarters:

internet: <http://www.oneworld.org/jubilee2000/action.html>

mail: Jubilee 2000/USA

222 East Capitol St., NE

Washington, DC 20003-1036

phone: 202/783-3566

fax: 202/546-4468

