

South Central Immigrant Services

June 2011 Newsletter

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Walk n' Play Program

Allow me to introduce an energetic, enthusiastic fun loving group of mom's and their children who meet every Thursday morning in the Covenant Mennonite Church. We get together to work, visit, play and to support one another. They are Low German speaking Mennonites who come from Mexico, Bolivia, Belize and Paraguay. Some speak little or no English while others are quite fluent. Therefore we speak in both languages.

As a Settlement Worker in our region, I meet most of the immigrants who move to our area. I saw a real need for the Low German speaking moms to get out of their apartments and interact with others. As there is very little green space and basically no play structures on most apartment lots, I wanted the children to be able to spend some time in the park playing at the playground. When you work with a \$0 budget, how does one get this going? Back in 2002, I was invited to a meeting of an organization called Well Connected. Through them I was able to get funding for a child care worker to look after the children in the park. We met in the park where the children played and each week we'd go for a walk checking out the flower gardens as they came to life. We were also given 8 garden plots at Eden Mental Health Centre where families were able to plant their own vegetables. The women really appreciated this opportunity, but the following year I couldn't get any of them to commit because it had been too much of a bother for their husbands. (Most of the women did not drive). When cooler weather set in that fall, the women wanted to keep meeting. The Recreation Centre invited us to use the space upstairs in the arena. The following winter we had a grandma join our group who, for health reasons, could not manage the stairs. Covenant Mennonite Church volunteered to donate space for us on Thursday mornings. We are still there today. When Well Connected came to an end, we merged with CDPI (Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative) in 2006.

Every Thursday is a surprise. We have no idea how many people will walk through the doors. Coffee time is always a potluck of delicious homemade foods. There was a time when I tried to get the women to take turns bringing snack, but they wanted to bring food whenever they came, so that's where it's at. We now have 2 child care workers doing activities with the children, while the women tie blankets for MCC. They really enjoy being part of this outreach ministry. We have made a trip to Plum Coulee where we toured the MCC Depot and watched a video that showed where

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these blankets went and they were able to see the poor living conditions of these families. The women were overwhelmed by the poverty they saw.

Not only do we work, but we also have speakers in and make occasional field trips. We have learned about nutrition, taking care of our teeth and had a visit from a public health nurse. We have watched a series of Low German videos on child discipline, have celebrated birthdays in various ways, have special event parties, taken the children to the kiddy pool in Morden, visited the library and our museum, gone to the miniature farm near Manitou, baked cookies with the children and the women have taught me to make kringel. Kit & Kaboodle spent 2 weeks with the children. Last year we sewed 15 pillowcases for Genesis House (a shelter for women and children in crisis). One morning a friend came with her violin and we spent the morning singing German hymns.

This morning out has become a significant time for these families. Often the women will tell me they were really too busy to come today, but their children insisted. When a new lady came last week, one of our regulars said to her “I don’t know what I’d do without these Thursday friends. When I go home, I have renewed energy to take care of things there.” One of the children asked her mom if she could register for kindergarten in the afternoon, so she could keep attending our group. How cool is that!

SCORE Project

We are excited to announce the SCORE project, a one-year pilot project funded by the Government of Canada and the Manitoba Government. This project is being delivered by Regional Connections, an organization serviced through the Winkler & District Chamber of Commerce.

The Score project’s target is the unemployed worker who is between the ages of 50 and 65 years and eligible to work in Canada. Included in this newsletter is a poster promoting the SCORE project. Feel free to print it out and pass it around or hang it in your workplace.

For more information about the SCORE project, please contact Liz Moffatt at 362-0507.

Upcoming Events

Altona

Gretna Conversation Circle beginning
June 16
International Walk of Flags at the
Sunflower Festival
Altona Ladies group

Winkler

Conversation Circle
International Walk of Flags at the
Harvest Festival

Morden

Ladies group on Tuesdays
At the Library in July and August:
Storytelling time and
mentoring program



This program is supported by the
Government of Canada and the Manitoba Government.

SCORE Project

(South Central Opportunity
for Re-integration to Employment)

For anyone who is:

- Between **50 and 65 years of age**
- **Unemployed, recently retired, or in transition**
- Eligible to work in Canada

Worker Advantage

- **Increased employability** through **training opportunities** that will enhance one's ability to access new part-time or full-time employment
- Assessment of **marketable skills**
- Assistance with **resume writing, interview skills and job market research**

Employer Advantage

- Access to **wage subsidies** and **gap training support** to assist this group of new employees

For more information contact Liz Moffatt, Employment Counselor

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