



COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

HELPING PEOPLE FIND THEIR WAY BACK HE
THEIR WAY BACK TO GOD HELPING PEOPLE
PEOPLE FIND THEIR WAY BACK TO GOD HELP

2013 ANNUAL REPORT

HELPING FIND THEIR WAY BACK TO GOD

At COMMUNITY, everything we do and every dollar we invest is about the mission of “helping people find their way back to God.” That is not just our church’s mission statement; that is my mission and your mission. And we live out that mission by being a blessing to the people and places around us. Over the last few years, we have challenged every person at COMMUNITY to do one of these five simple missional practices everyday to be a blessing. These five practices spell B.L.E.S.S.

B - Begin with Prayer - Spend time in prayer for those around you.

L - Listen - Listen for the specific needs of those around you.

E - Eat - Commit to sharing a meal with someone on a regular basis.

S - Serve - Look for opportunities to serve those in need around you.

S - Story - Share your story with those you are BLESSing.



We believe the best way to accomplish the Jesus Mission is for each of us—every single one of us—to bless the people and places around us. 2013 was an amazing year, because 83% of our small groups created their own written mission statements and were commissioned at their campuses to “go B.L.E.S.S. the world.” We are leading the way and setting the example for other churches both nationally and internationally in mobilizing every person for mission.

As you read the 2013 Annual Report, you will see that God has once again favored us with a great year of growth and difference making. God has been very good to us. This report tells a remarkable story, and it’s your story. It’s the story of a community that is laser-focused on “helping people find their way back to God.” It’s the mission that God has for us, all of us.

Thank you so much for your extraordinary generosity. Together, we are accomplishing the Jesus Mission!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave Ferguson'.

Dave Ferguson
Lead Pastor, COMMUNITY



BAPTISM CELEBRATION at the Naperville Yellow Box

2013 ANNUAL REPORT

LIFE
CHANGE

GROWTH

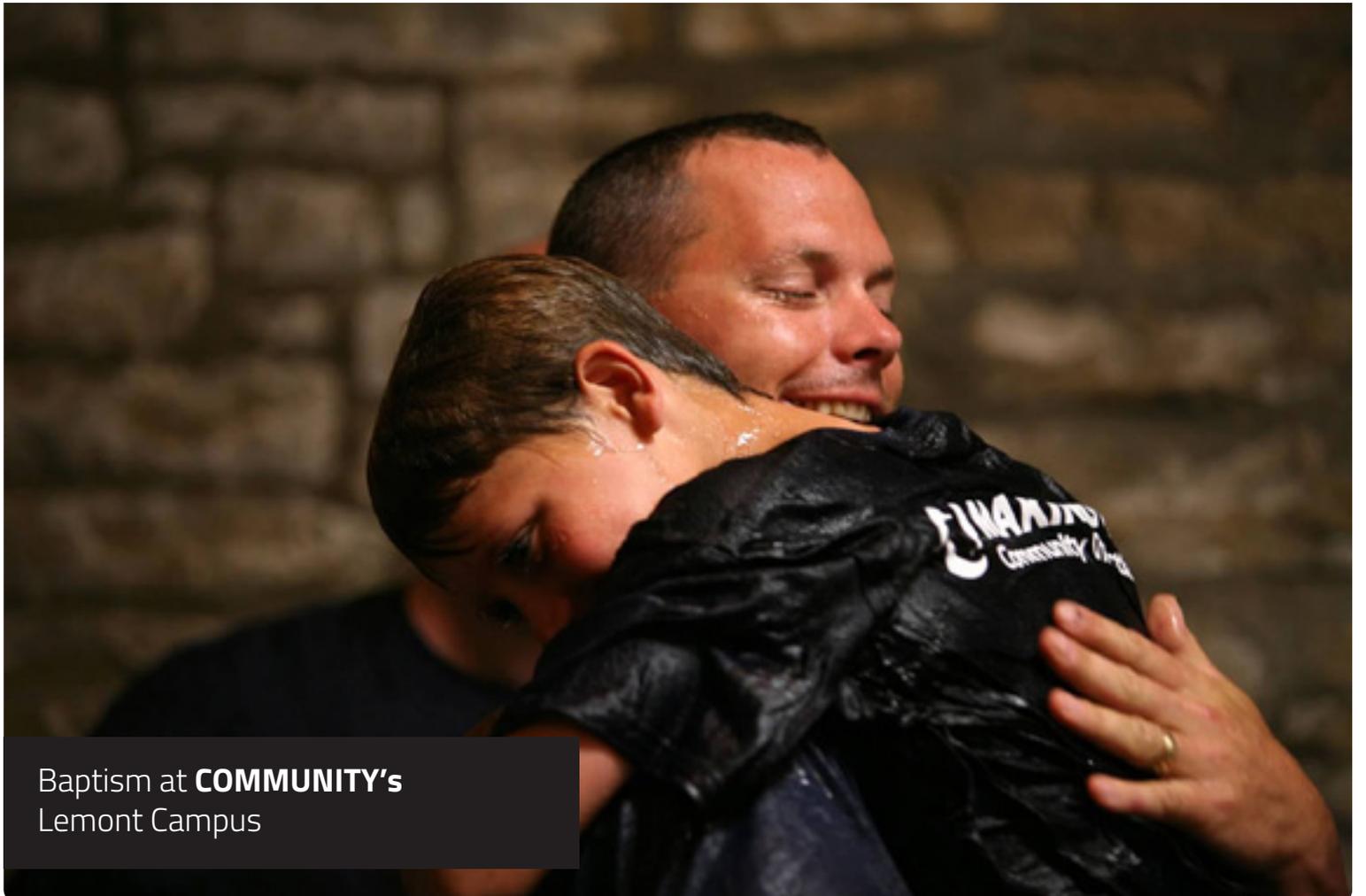
FINANCE

GENEROSITY

B.L.E.S.S.



LIFE CHANGE



Baptism at **COMMUNITY's**
Lemont Campus

Contributors

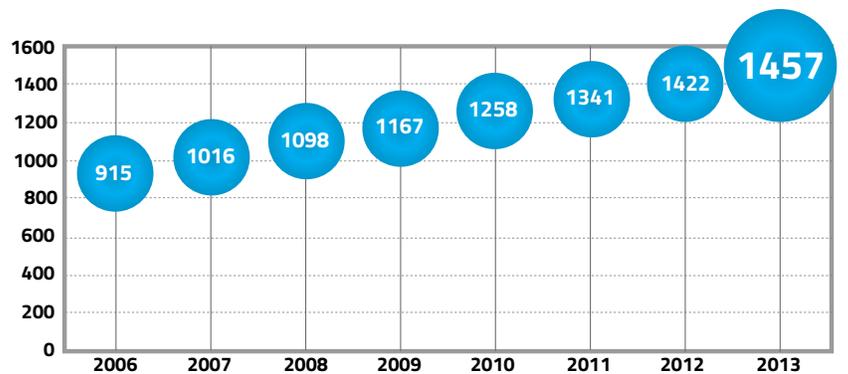
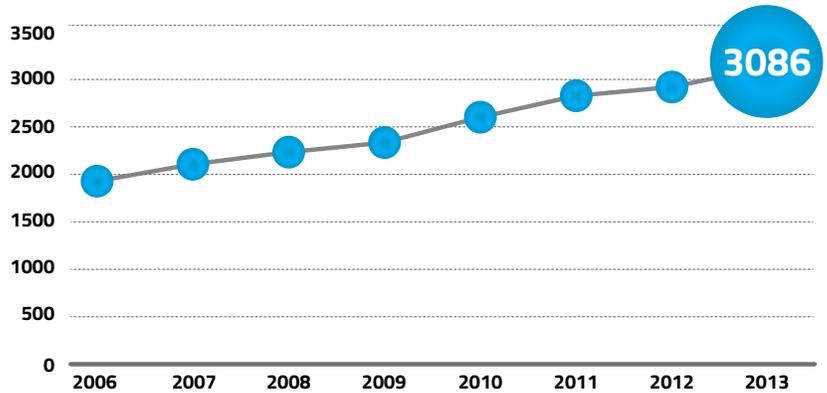
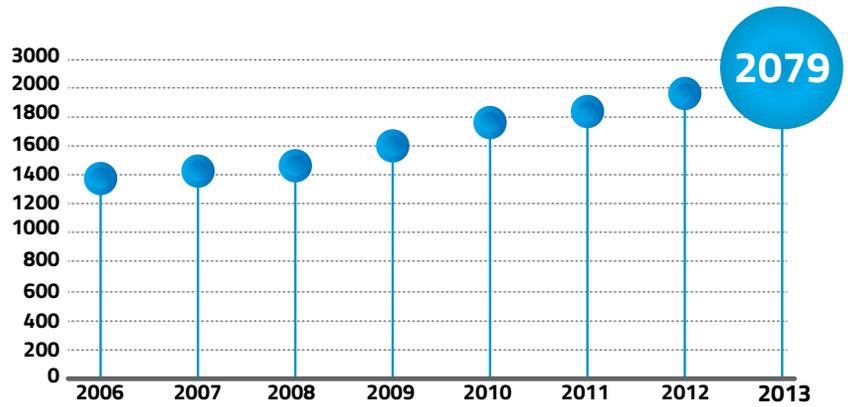
Adults and Students

Connected

Adults and Students

3C Christ Followers

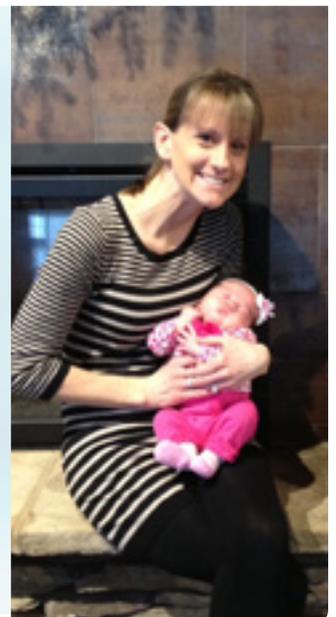
Celebrate - Connect - Contribute



BAPTISM STORY

My parents have always had strong faith; I grew up in the Lutheran church and was baptized as an infant. My sister and I attended church every Sunday with our family, but during my teenage years, church became something we had to do each Sunday, and I didn't see it as an opportunity to connect with God. Through college and the years that followed, I didn't attend church and was instead consumed with my own desires and my need for instant gratification. I would never say that I wasn't a believer, but I definitely grew away from the church. When Ryan and I got married eight years ago, we tried for a long time to find a church home. We attended a church on and off for several years but didn't feel a connection. In 2012, we were invited to COMMUNITY for Christmas Eve service. Our good friends loved their church so we decided to give it a try. Instantly, I loved it. The music, the message and the environment all seemed like what we had been searching for. We've become regular attendees and have even joined a small group. Ryan and I have two beautiful boys, Luke and Ian, and when we learned that our third child could be born with a disability, because of our newly re-established faith I was able to trust God's plan for our family. I was prepared to love and cherish this child no matter what the circumstances and possible challenges we could face. We prayed for patience and strength as we waited for the decisive test results from my doctor. During those weeks, I connected more with God than I ever had in my life, and Maya joined our family, happy and healthy, on November 19. Praise Jesus! Since coming to COMMUNITY, my life has been changed. My faith and trust in God have grown exponentially, and I have learned to 'let go and let God.' My marriage is better, my prayer life has been enriched, and I look forward to worship each week. I am ecstatic to complete the process my parents started for me 33 years ago by being baptized by my husband, Ryan. Thank you, COMMUNITY, for helping me find my way back to God.

Lesley Morris





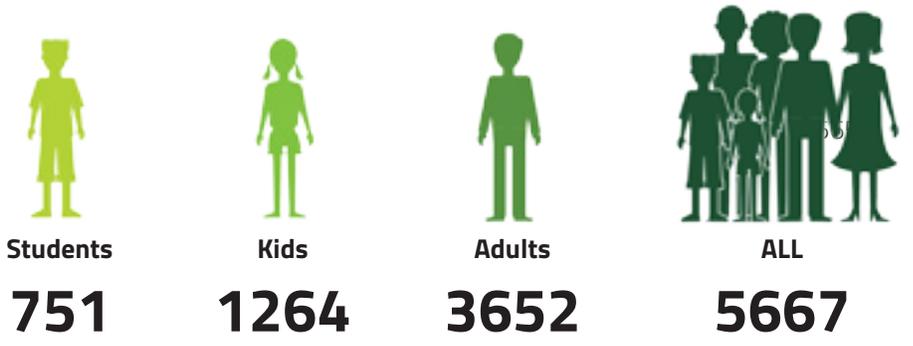
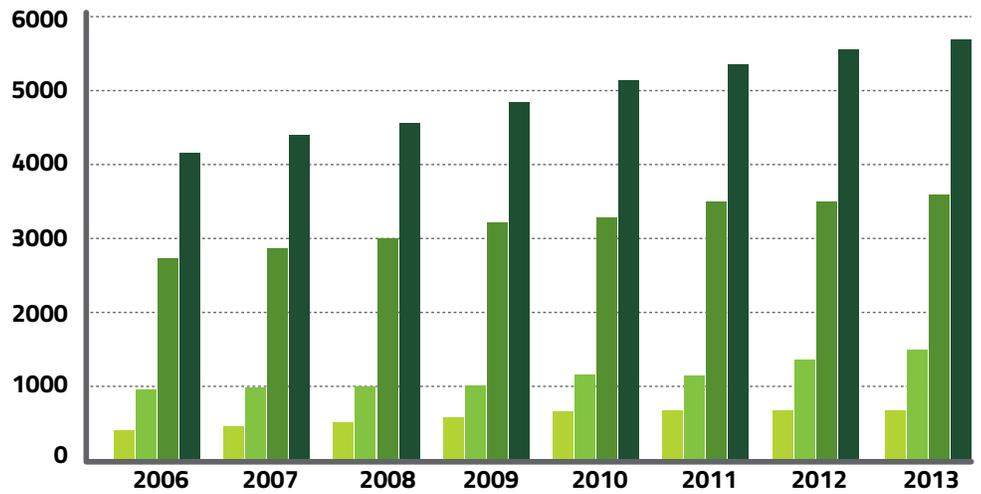
GROWTH



Celebration Service at
COMMUNITY's Romeoville Campus

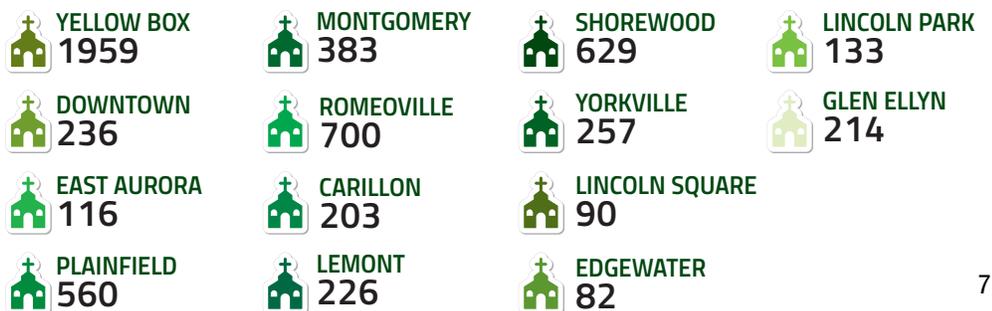
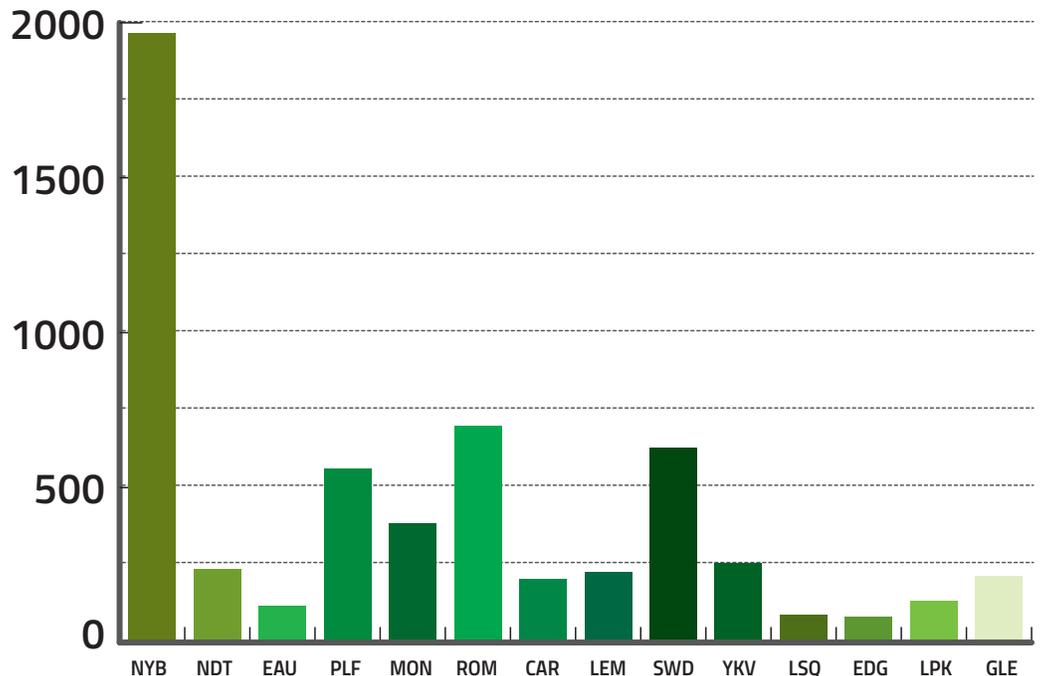
Attendance Averages by Year

Adults, Kids and Students



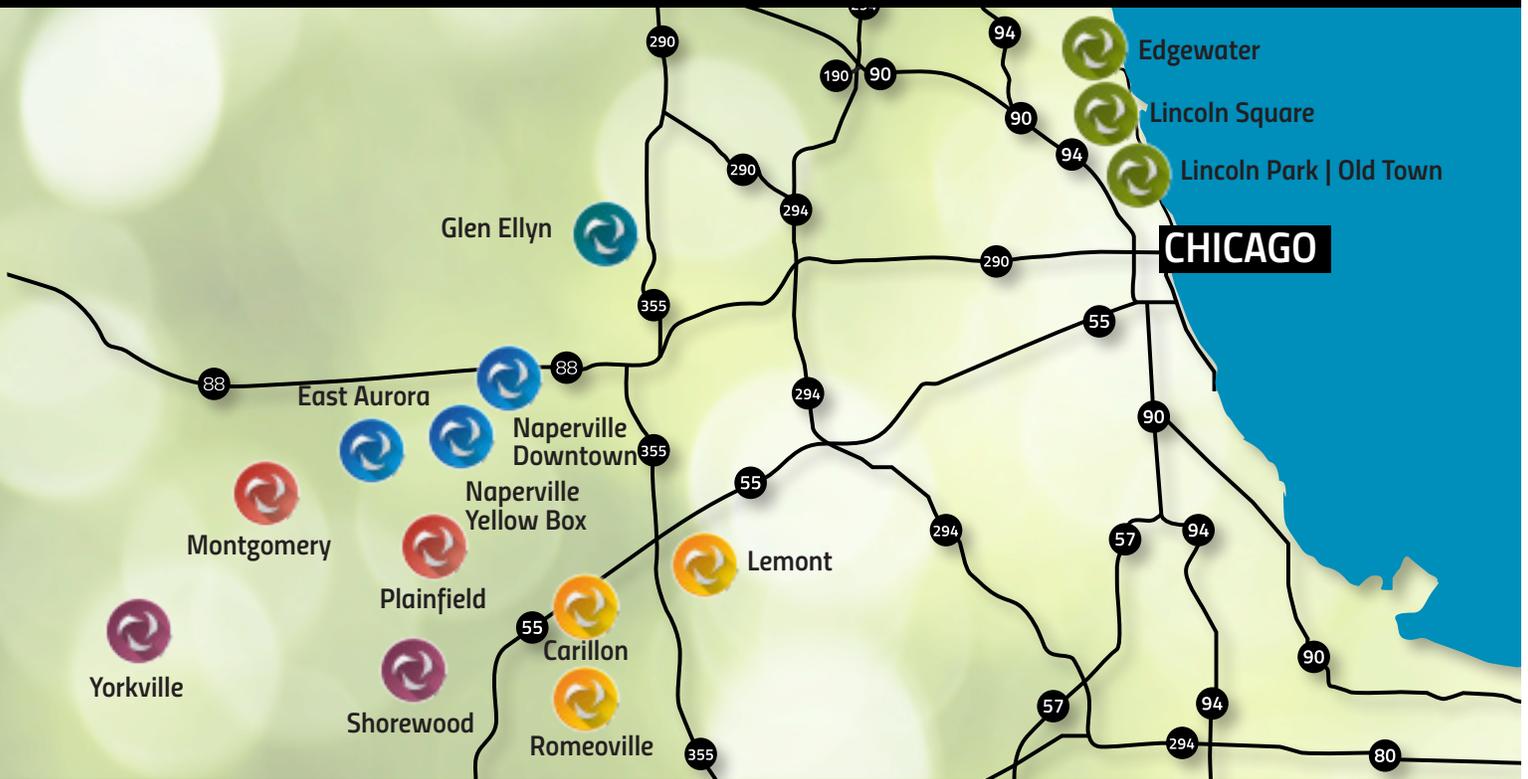
Attendance Averages

By Location



COMMUNITY MOVEMENTS

TWO MOVEMENTS - 14 LOCATIONS



WHAT IS A MOVEMENT?

Several years ago, COMMUNITY set a goal of establishing 200 Chicagoland locations to help more and more people find their way back to God. To accomplish this goal, we are launching new campuses along with new movements. A movement is made up of networks of churches connected by a common mission and financial oversight. Together, our 13 campuses at COMMUNITY make up the Chicagoland Movement. Movements allow for leaders to be a part of COMMUNITY and share the culture and values while exercising more artistic and financial freedom. Movements are another way to attract apostolic leaders and continue to reproduce locations. In October, the Westline Movement, COMMUNITY's second movement, launched in Glen Ellyn with Lead Pastor Brad Prunty.

CHICAGOLAND MOVEMENT

CHICAGO NETWORK

-  EDGEWATER
Launched in 2012
-  LINCOLN PARK | OLD TOWN
Launched in 2013
-  LINCOLN SQUARE
Launched in 2011

KNOLLENBERG NETWORK

-  CARILLON
Launched in 2001
-  LEMONT
Launched in 2011
-  ROMEOVILLE
Launched in 1998

WILLIAMS NETWORK

-  EAST AURORA
Launched in 2010
-  NAPERVILLE DOWNTOWN
Launched in 2004
-  NAPERVILLE YELLOW BOX
Launched in 1989

CIESNIEWSKI NETWORK

-  SHOREWOOD
Launched in 2004
-  YORKVILLE
Launched in 2006

GREEN NETWORK

-  PLAINFIELD
Launched in 2008
-  Montgomery
Launched in 2002

WESTLINE MOVEMENT

-  GLEN ELLYN
Launched in 2013

NEW LOCATION - LINCOLN PARK | OLD TOWN

PART OF THE CHICAGOLAND MOVEMENT

Chicago Lincoln Park | Old Town is COMMUNITY's third Chicago location, joining Edgewater and Lincoln Square. Meeting in the historic Germania Place, Chicago Lincoln Park | Old Town launched October 20, welcoming 288 people to its inaugural celebration service. A team of 45 volunteers contributed and as a result, 50 families requested more information about getting involved in COMMUNITY. Campus Pastor Eric Metcalf and his team have been preparing to launch the new campus for well over a year. During that time, they met with schools and non-profit organizations to learn about the issues and opportunities specific to the area and to engage in opportunities to serve their neighbors. COMMUNITY Lincoln Park | Old Town has already developed a reading and tutoring program at Prescott Elementary School, raised funds for a new washing machine at Lincoln Park Community Shelter, and hosted free barbeques at Larabee Apartments.



Launch Sunday at the new **LINCOLN PARK | OLD TOWN** campus

NEW LOCATION - GLEN ELLYN

PART OF THE WESTLINE MOVEMENT

On October 20, the Glen Ellyn Campus, the first campus of the Westline Movement, was launched at the Abbington Banquet Facility in Glen Ellyn. The launch welcomed 508 people and since then they have seen an average attendance of 220 people each weekend. Already, 60 families are in the process of connecting in small groups, 25 people have taken the next step of contributing on a team and 20 requested information on how to become a Christ-follower. Glen Ellyn attenders are also BLESSing their community. Just recently, \$5,000 in gift cards and household items were donated by attenders to a Glen Ellyn family who lost all of their possessions in a fire.

This first location of the Westline Movement is paving the way for more campuses and movements within COMMUNITY. Please keep them in your prayers as they remain committed to the mission of helping people find their way back to God.



Celebration Service at the new **GLEN ELLYN** location

CAMPUS MILESTONES

CHICAGOLAND MOVEMENT 2013 UPDATES

CARILLON

Giving exceeded budget goals. Started an Alzheimer's/Dementia Support Group. Twenty people volunteered at Isaac Singleton Elementary School in Kid Pal & Kids Hope programs. Groups of 40-50 people volunteered three times for Feed My Starving Children. Memorial Contributions and Culver's monthly fundraising days were used to purchase much needed equipment and supplies. Collected enough donations to purchase 900+ toys for the Giftmart.



EAST AURORA

Kicked off ALL IN with 80% of regularly attending families making commitments. Twenty students attended Blast. Fifth annual Thanksgiving Community Dinner welcomed 130 people (talk about E from BLESS!). Vacation Bible School had 55 kids and Kids' Art Camp had 45 kids in attendance, most of whom don't yet attend COMMUNITY.



EDGEWATER

Tripled Sunday morning attendance. First middle school small group launched in August and grew from two to eight students in two months. New "Club StuCo" ministry launched as an after school club for 6th and 7th graders, and over half the middle school now attends.



LEMONT

Seventy students attended Blast. Launched family ministry with 40 people involved in four different groups. Baptized 16 people. Hosted summer Chill 'n' Grills with 100 attending. Doubled number of small groups. Over \$1 million committed for All In.



LINCOLN PARK | OLD TOWN

Welcomed 288 people at launch. Started 10 small groups. Sent postcard invitations to 52,000 homes. Engaged 45 volunteers on various ministry teams. Fifty families filled out connect cards requesting additional information.



LINCOLN SQUARE

Celebrated Grand Re-Opening at Gateway to Learning. Sent 20 attendees to launch the Lincoln Park campus. Commissioned five small groups. Baptized five people. Connected with almost 700 Lincoln Square residents through participation in neighborhood festivals. BLESSed the neighborhood through holding an Easter Egg Hunt, participating in "clean the park" work day, and completing various projects to improve Gateway to Learning's building and grounds.



MONTGOMERY

Experienced \$70,000 increase in giving over last year. Completed campus renovation project. Helped develop and commission two families to launch Lincoln Park campus. Donated nearly 700 pounds from the Campus Garden to local food pantries. Threw a Halloween Party at Hesed House for 45 youth residents. Held community Easter Egg Hunt for almost 1,000 people. Renovated Hometown Cafe and began hosting weekly programming, holiday events and clothing drives. Record StuCo launch and number of students involved in the Arts. Nearly 50 attended Financial Peace University.



NAPERVILLE DOWNTOWN

Experienced phenomenal 30% growth in the number of small groups. Hosted four artist spotlights featuring world-class performers. Hosted second annual Thanksgiving dinner for more than 120 people.



NAPERVILLE YELLOW BOX

\$12.1M committed to All In. Sent 60+ people to launch Westline Movement. Baptized 150+ people. Chicks & Chocolate welcomed 300 women to enjoy great food and fellowship. Two community service families began attending, and a Russian Church began meeting at the facility. Developed 33 new small group leaders. Commissioned 40 small groups. The Alpha Course launched a pilot group with 25 participants.



PLAINFIELD

Attendance increased 20% over last year. Baptized 27 people. Sent staff, attenders and \$65,000 to Glen Ellyn launch. StuCo participation increased 40% and raised more than \$500 to help fight hunger in the community. Located 11.47-acre land parcel for future campus home! Helped feed 80+ hungry families each week through Creekside Cares partnership.



ROMEOVILLE

Giving and StuCo attendance increased 10%. Raised \$4,000 in BLAST scholarships. Added 50 people to small groups and baptized 28 people. Launched seven Missional Networks with the Institute for Community impacting communities both locally and globally. Continued debt-free construction of Underground project, which received a \$24,000 State grant. Developed 12 small group apprentices to launch new groups.



SHOREWOOD

Gifted COMMUNITY Yorkville the down payment to purchase and expand their facility. Embarked on their largest marketing campaign since the grand opening and welcomed a record 300 new attenders. Established COMMUNITY's first-ever Special Needs Ministry within Kids' City. Celebrated the largest StuCo attendance with 130 students weekly and 105 at Blast. Celebrated 34 baptisms. Doubled the size of East Joliet Giftmart.



YORKVILLE

Purchased a building and an additional unit for future expansion. Celebrated 27 baptisms and nine child dedications. First-ever Vacation Bible School saw 70+ kids and 30 leaders participate. Arts Team grew by 25%. Easter weekend had 500+ people attending four services. Launched a women's term group with more than 50 ladies attending.





FINANCE

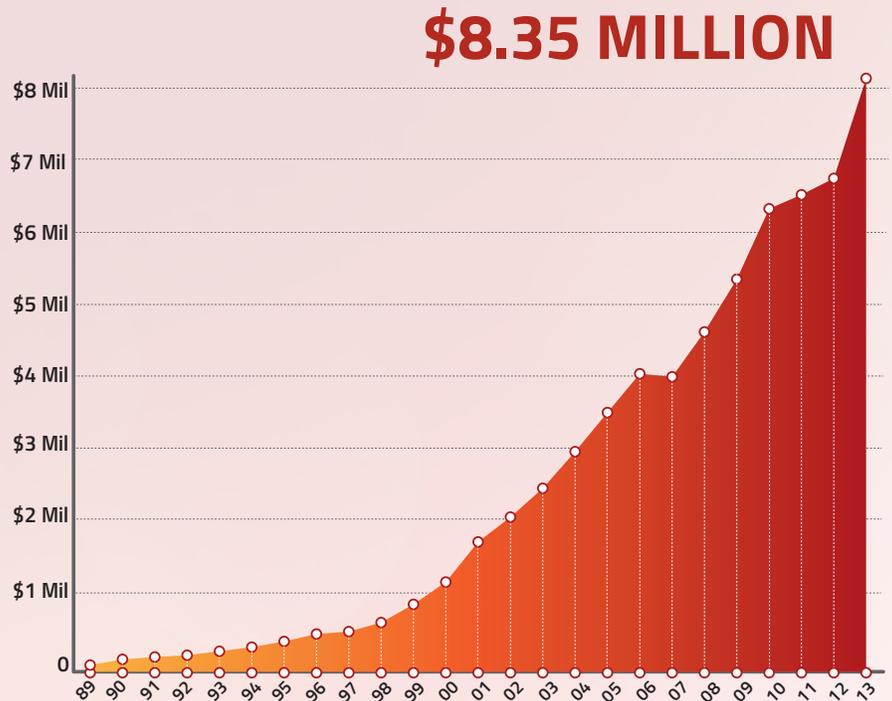
Celebration Service at **COMMUNITY's**
Naperville Yellow Box Campus

Historical Giving

1989 - 2013 CALENDAR YEAR

2013 CALENDAR YEAR Giving
\$8.35 Million*

*Giving for 2013 includes All In initiatives at several of COMMUNITY's campuses. For more information on these initiatives, see page 16.



Resource Allocation

2013 Fiscal Year*
OCT 2012 - SEPT 2013

REACH

Reaching those who are far from God.

RESTORE

Restoring God's dream for the world.

REPRODUCE

Reproducing the Jesus Mission in others.



REACH

Ministry Operations
Facilities
Capital Replacement Savings

RESTORE

Community 4:12
Haiti, Philippines
Benevolence
Hands of Hope

REPRODUCE

NewThing
Multiplier Fund
New Locations

*NOTE: Compensation has been split evenly between Reach, Restore and Reproduce since each ministry is involved in all three areas.

WHAT IS 10-20-70?

COMMUNITY has established a financial model that enables us to operate effectively as a reproducing church. Here's how it works...

10%

20%

70%

10% - MULTIPLIER FUND

COMMUNITY has always been committed to reproducing at every level—leaders, ministries, celebration services, campuses and churches. With multiple locations, it can be challenging to remain missional about new endeavors with so many worthwhile interests competing for resources. By allocating 10% of all offerings to the multiplier fund, we're positioned to reproduce consistently, to invest in leadership residents and to resource our existing campuses as they model our reproducing DNA.

20% - CATALYST

Catalyst operations include creative arts, business administration, and ministry visioning, collaboration and alignment. Operating the Catalyst at 20% of all offerings requires us to continually refine our operations and ensure fiscal responsibility.

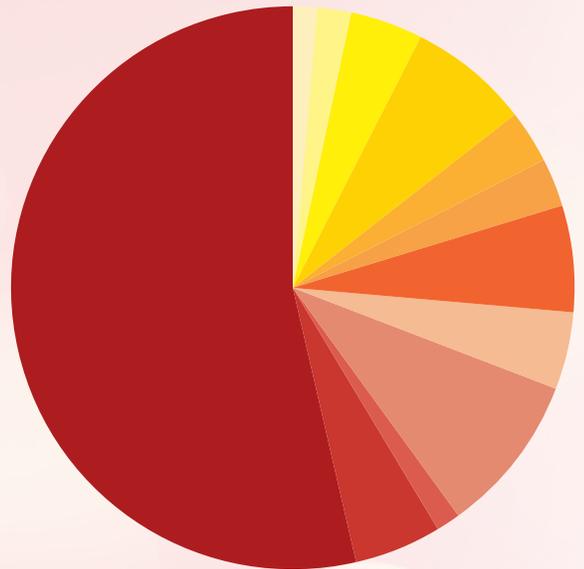
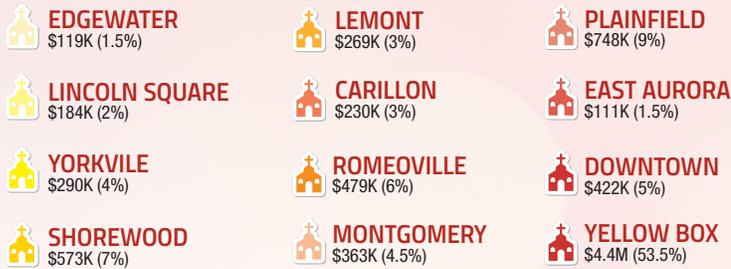
70% - CAMPUS

Each network (2-4 campuses) operates on 70% of its collective annual offerings, which are used for staffing, facility, capital savings and ministry operations. Operating at 70% takes the guesswork out of future staffing, facility usage and other expenditures, since annual budgets are established based on projected offerings.

GIVING BY CAMPUS → \$8.2M

2013 FISCAL YEAR*

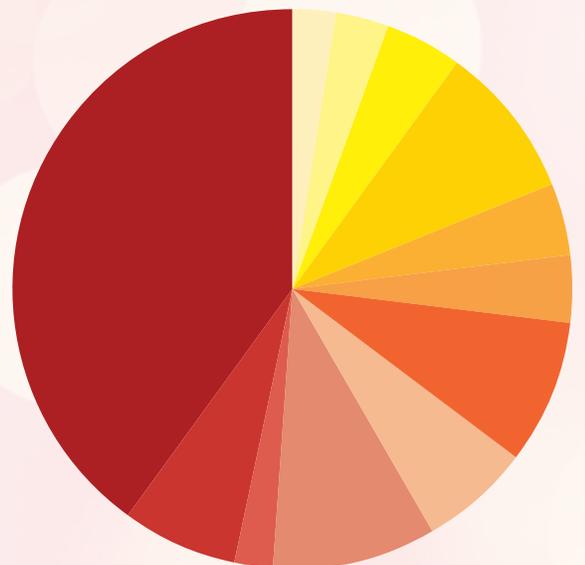
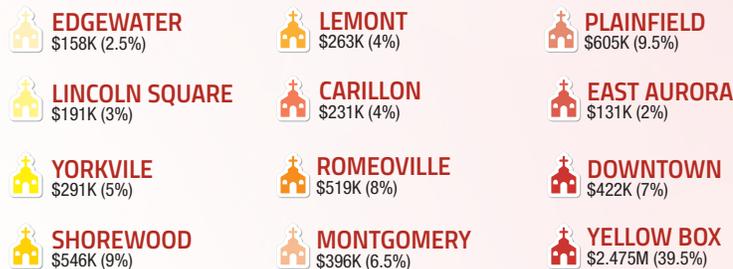
*includes All In giving (above operating budget)



SPENDING BY CAMPUS → \$6.23M

2013 FISCAL YEAR*

*includes each campus' 10-20-70 spending



WHY IS OUR SPENDING SO MUCH LOWER THAN OUR GIVING?

During this season of All In (see page 16), many campuses have taken on capital initiatives. As a result, we are experiencing an incredible season of expanded generosity that will be used for these initiatives in the future.



GENEROSITY



COMMUNITY'S Edgewater Campus at the 48th Ward's Clean and Green Day

all in UPDATES

In 2013, seven COMMUNITY campuses went All In for the Jesus Mission. All In took on slightly different meanings at each location, but one thing remained the same: our unyielding dedication to reaching those who are far from God, restoring the world to His original dream, and reproducing the Mission in others. Here's how we went All In:

NAPERVILLE YELLOW BOX

The Naperville Yellow Box committed \$12.1M to God through All In. Because of this generosity, a new auditorium is in the process of being built, a new training center will be launched at the Yellow Box and a space for community transformation in East Aurora will be established. All In is presenting the opportunity to help even more people find their way back to God in 2014.

EAST AURORA

East Aurora's All In campaign continues to move forward. One of two buildings has been donated, and the adjacent second building is under contract and will be purchased by the city of Aurora in January. Two phases of renovations will begin immediately after purchase. Phase one renovation will include installing an elevator and the renovation of the 3rd floor of one building; phase two will include renovations on the rest of the two buildings.

LEMONT

Lemont has committed \$1,111,624 that will go toward expanding the adult, StuCo and Kids' City celebration spaces, making an investment in an agricultural project in Haiti and setting aside dollars to launch a new campus. Phase one of the build out will be ready for move-in by the end of winter/early spring.

PLAINFIELD

Plainfield is one year into All In. On December 8 Plainfield attenders committed to finish the year strong and a number of new families stepped up to be All In. We're thankful for God's providential hand as we look forward to acquiring land, supporting new church plants, and helping people find their way back to God.

LINCOLN SQUARE

Lincoln Square's All In initiative challenged attenders to pick up the baton from the organizations, churches, and individuals whose generosity supported the campus launch phase and move them toward self-sufficiency. More than 32 families and individuals made two-year pledges to All In, totaling \$280,000. All In is establishing a culture of generosity in Lincoln Square that will help many people the community find their way back to God.

SHOREWOOD

Shorewood celebrated a successful 12-month All In campaign which allowed them to reach 35,000 households and welcome 300 first-time attenders, resulting in 100 new people making COMMUNITY Shorewood their church home. A segment of the community was restored by offering special needs programming to the 1,000 children who'd otherwise have no place to celebrate. To date, COMMUNITY Shorewood is home to a dozen special needs families. Shorewood also helped the Yorkville Campus reproduce by providing the down payment to purchase a facility. As a result, their operational cost was reduced and they become self-supporting, freeing up thousands of dollars annually that can be used to reach and restore hundreds more.

YORKVILLE

Yorkville wrapped up their All In campaign, accomplishing 100% of their All In goals. Their current facility was purchased, 16,000 postcards were mailed to the community and the first-ever Vacation Bible School was held. As a result, many new ministry contributors and new givers were welcomed. Yorkville attenders were stretched in their commitments, but God showed up for each of them and provided in great ways.



COMMUNITY Staff getting a walk through of the new auditorium at the **NAPERVILLE YELLOW BOX**



COMMUNITY is a generous church, and each year we choose one weekend during which we give our entire offering away in support of the Four Teams. That weekend is called Celebration Generosity, and this year we gave away \$536,000! On the following pages you can find updates from each of the teams.

CELEBRATION GENEROSITY GIVING BY YEAR



CELEBRATION GENEROSITY GIVERS BY YEAR



COMMUNITY 4:12 TEAM UPDATE

As we look back on 2013, we're moved by the dedication of countless volunteers and contributors who've stood by us over the years to help us accomplish our mission of "uniting people to restore communities."

In 2013, Community 4:12 celebrated ten years of partnering with schools in East Aurora and six years in Joliet. This year, we provided tutoring and mentoring for more than 200 students and donated over \$10,000 worth of school supplies. We invested \$40,000 to support 40 Parent Mentors in East Aurora who volunteered 10 hours per week in their children's schools in exchange for a \$1,000 stipend. We also partnered with World Relief to begin an Early Childhood program to help prepare 30 toddlers and preschoolers for Kindergarten.

Community 4:12 sponsored a monthly food collection to benefit the Aurora Interfaith Food Pantry and provided a week's worth of groceries to 100 families in Joliet and \$2,000 worth of food to Daybreak Shelter. We once again hosted the Emmanuel House auction, raising \$18,000+ to support this home-ownership program for families living in working class poverty in East Aurora. We believe strongly in partnering with and supporting other non-profits and provided dozens of volunteers to support organizations such as Triple Threat Mentoring, Hased House, Wayside Cross, Lifespring Ministry, and Daybreak Shelter.

Our hallmark event each year is the Christmas Giftmart. This year, we added a school in Joliet to sponsor four total Giftmarts (two in East Aurora, two in Joliet). To support these Giftmarts, we collected 13,700 toys, mobilized 1,200 volunteers, served almost 4,000 people, and raised almost \$17,000 for our partner schools. Giftmart "funds education one toy at a time" and provides the gift of dignity and education to low-income families.

We look forward to 2014 with hope for the families and communities we serve.

Sincerely,
Kirsten Strand, Director, Community 4:12 and Bob Lowe, Community 4:12 Joliet Lead



Volunteers at **COMMUNITY 4:12's** Annual Christmas Giftmart

HAITI TEAM UPDATE

COMMUNITY's Global Ministry strives to "Alleviate Poverty, One Person at a Time," and through the new partnership with Compassion International in Haiti, we are ready to impact lives in ways we never have before. As the organization that sees more decisions for Christ than any other in the world and whose sponsorship strategy was recognized by *Christianity Today* as the leading long-term poverty alleviation method, Compassion has COMMUNITY headed in an exciting direction.

Because of your generosity in 2012, we were able to form a partnership with Duvivier Baptist Church in one of Haiti's poorest areas. Through this partnership, 200 children who were formerly unable to participate in the Compassion program now have the opportunity to help restore their church, community and country.

In 2013, your generosity allowed us to begin two more church partnerships, changing the lives of more than 400 children! Additionally, COMMUNITY can support programs such as the Child Survival Program (keeping children alive to age three) and the Leadership Development Program (giving students a chance to attend college) that enable children living in poverty to enact change.

This partnership is also changing lives of people at COMMUNITY. More than 200 people are sponsoring Compassion children. 20 people will be traveling in February 2014 to build the relationship with Duvivier Baptist Church. The Global Ministry leadership team is larger than it's ever been. Through our partnership with Compassion, we are helping people find their way back to God in Haiti and right here at home.

Thank you for supporting our efforts to alleviate poverty, one person at a time.

God bless,
Jim Melton, Global Ministries



Jim Melton and Dan Drews delivering one of the many **COMPASSION INTERNATIONAL** Water filtration systems that Kids' City raised money for in 2013

NEWTHING TEAM UPDATE

It's been another great year at NewThing! Our mission is to be a catalyst for movements of reproducing churches, relentlessly dedicated to helping people find their way back to God. Here's a snapshot of NewThing's impact in 2013:

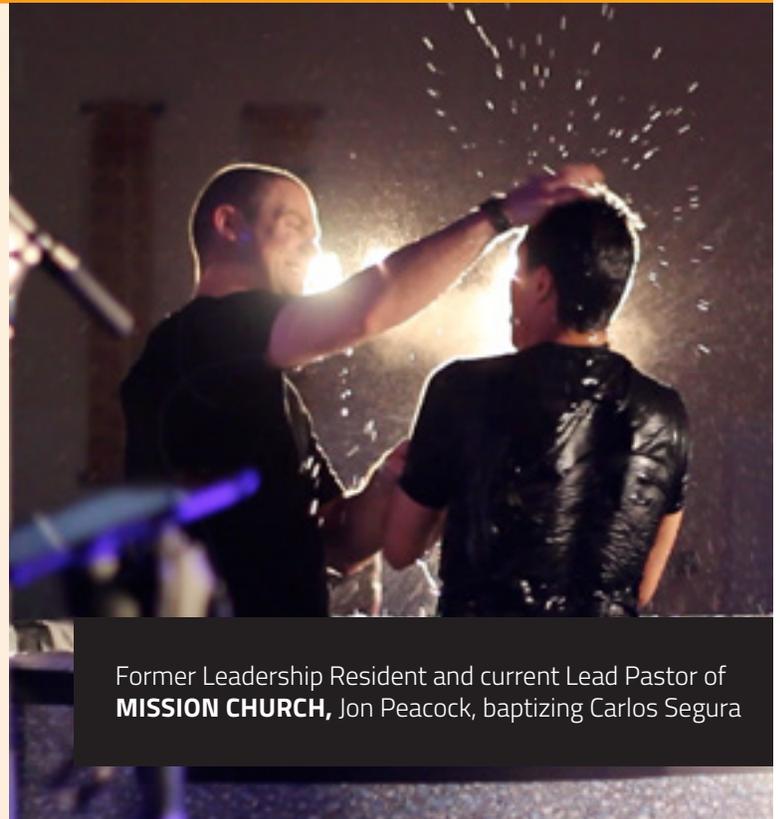
Residents - Leadership residents are our church planters in training. At the end of 2013, we have approximately 60 residents in our leadership pipeline. These are people preparing to lead new things!

Churches and Networks - Every time we plant a church or help another church start a church, we Reach out to those who are far from God, Restore God's dream for the world and Reproduce the Jesus Mission in others. NewThing now has 18 networks on three continents with approximately 140 churches in places as near as Lincoln Park and as far away as India. NewThing is quickly becoming a global church planting movement.

Leadership Development - NewThing wants to create the very best resources to train and equip our leaders and church planters. In 2013, NewThing Online training included top leaders from across the nation that represented the very best thinkers, theologians and practitioners. These monthly sessions provide NewThing pastors and staff with leading-edge leadership and missional practices.

This kind of global impact is possible because of your generosity. Thank you for believing in our mission and entrusting us with your investment in the Jesus Mission.

Patrick O'Connell, Director of NewThing



Former Leadership Resident and current Lead Pastor of **MISSION CHURCH**, Jon Peacock, baptizing Carlos Segura

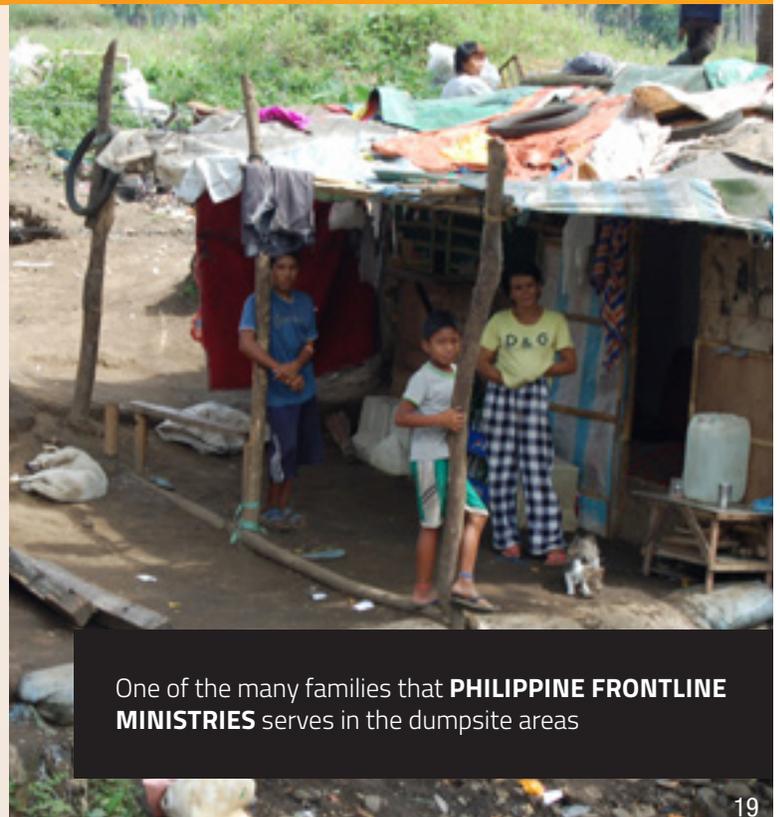
PHILIPPINES TEAM UPDATE

With the closing of 2013, we reflect with gratitude on another year of Reaching and Helping people find their way back to God. We remember that God is always good. We are thankful for our health, our families, our team at Philippine Frontline Ministries (PFM), and our ministry partners who walk alongside of us through provision and prayers. We find ourselves thankful, even for the trials that ultimately push us further to seek God's love, care and guidance.

On November 8, one of the most powerful typhoons ever recorded swept through the Philippines. Over 6,000 people have been confirmed dead, with 1,500 still unaccounted for. Thanks to the generosity of our ministry partners, PFM has partnered with Habitat for Humanity to begin construction of the first 100 homes in Tacloban. Our FACE the Children ministry is also welcoming several of the children who lost their families in the storm.

We recently had the opportunity to share the story of PFM with friends in America and Canada. We asked people to recall the WWJD (What would Jesus do?) bracelets that were popular years ago. And so we ask you . . . in view of human suffering and need, what would Jesus do? The answer is simple: Jesus would do what He did. He went. He gave. He loved. He committed. He served. He suffered. He taught. But He also emptied himself in service to others and went to the cross to pay a debt that was not His. As the body of Christ, we strive to continue Jesus' work through our Worship Centers, Frontline Christian Academy, Prison, Hospital and Outreach Ministries. We are thankful for your continued partnership, and our prayer is that each of you will have a blessed 2014.

Working While it's Day,
Jeff and Rowena Pessina, Philippine Frontline Ministries, Inc.



One of the many families that **PHILIPPINE FRONTLINE MINISTRIES** serves in the dumpsite areas



B.L.E.S.S.

B. Begin with prayer

L. Listen

E. Eat

S. Serve

S. Story



The Annual Plainfield Campus VBS program is planned and organized by a small group as part of their small group mission to **B.L.E.S.S. THEIR COMMUNITY**

HOW WE B.L.E.S.S.

At COMMUNITY, we live out the Jesus Mission by BLESSing our communities in areas where we feel God is calling us. This year, COMMUNITY commissioned 350 small groups using the BLESS Strategy. We've witnessed some incredible outcomes as a result of our BLESS initiative. Here are some of those stories.

CARILLON

Norma felt challenged by Dave Ferguson's book, *Discover Your Mission Now* and when her small group adopted the mission of "Performing Random Acts of Kindness," she decided to apply that to her neighborhood. She read "25 Simple Ways to Be Missional in Your Neighborhood" and prayed about how she could apply this to her neighborhood. She began by inviting three neighbors over to play board games. One of them called later and said that her husband had been taken to the hospital, and she had never spent a night away from him. Norma invited her over for tea and a chat to relieve some of her anxiety. When another neighbor became ill, Norma delivered her favorite meal to her. After each service, Norma intentionally meets some of the newer people at COMMUNITY and a couple of women have accepted her invitation to visit her small group. It's been thrilling for Norma to hear them express their joy in learning the Bible and to observe the growth in their faith journeys. It seems to Norma that the Lord is opening up new vistas to her, even in her 80's. But she recalls that Abraham, Moses, and Joshua were all late bloomers, too! "And it is nice to know that the Lord isn't through developing me yet," Norma shared with a smile. "Life is an adventure with God every day!"

EAST AURORA

As a small group leader, Jackie has had the privilege of hearing group member's stories. Carla, a young widow in her early forties who attends Jackie's small group, has had a tough time keeping her family afloat financially and emotionally since her husband passed. She has two teenage children and an elementary age son with whom she struggles with. Hearing Carla's stories of missing her husband, losing her family home and feeling as if she's losing her children, opened Jackie's eyes to how she could be a blessing to Carla. She began to meet with her regularly and most of their conversations consisted of Carla talking and Jackie listening. In doing this, Jackie has been challenged to see beyond herself and learn what she can do to serve a segment of the community that the Bible talks so much about—the widows. Before they meet, Jackie begins in prayer and then she listens, both to Carla's stories and struggles, and to God's prompting on how to serve Carla and her family.

EDGEWATER

Amanda attends Edgewater, and a friend of hers had recently stopped receiving food stamps and was unable to pay all of her bills, let alone buy groceries. When she called one evening expressing her concern over her financial situation, Amanda listened and then realized that she had made enough dinner to share, so she invited her friend and son over for dinner. The three shared a wonderful time of fellowship, talking and laughing and eating together. There were even leftovers for them to take home. It was such a blessing for Amanda to have them over. Living alone, she usually misses out on the family mealtime experience she grew up with and having that again was a great joy for her. Although it was only one meal and seemed so small compared to the greater need, the three were able to pray together and be reminded that God is our provider and provides for our needs day by day when we put our trust in Him.

LEMONT

When COMMUNITY attenders were asked to incorporate the BLESS strategy into their every day lives, Meredith was skeptical. However, a few months later, while leading a Parenting small group, the BLESS principles were incorporated into the study guide so she decided to give it a try. She started with her family by finding times to eat together, listening actively and sharing her own stories. Then she realized that there were many lonely people at work she could reach out to, using the same simple principles. Meredith prayed and asked God to show her someone she could reach out to. She'd heard about a co-worker named Cindy who was recently divorced, had given up custody of one of her children to her ex-husband and had kept the other child with her. Cindy was a frequent topic of office gossip and she walked with her head down. Meredith decided to invite her to lunch and Cindy was clearly surprised. She accepted, but she later emailed Meredith to try and figure out why she wanted to have lunch with her because she was afraid that it was some sort of work-related disciplinary action. Meredith assured her that she just wanted to get to know her. At lunch, Meredith asked Cindy to "tell me about you," and reassured her that she just wanted to listen and wasn't going to judge her. Cindy poured out her story and talked about being rejected by her family, spending holidays alone and about her pain and guilt regarding the broken relationship with her son. In turn, Meredith shared her own story and revealed her own struggles with grief and loneliness. The two began meeting for lunch monthly and routinely checked in on each other. Meredith invited Cindy to COMMUNITY and she has attended once so far. She listened intently, took in every moment of the service, and then came to Meredith with questions. She hasn't yet made plans to return, but she knows that whether or not she does, Meredith is committed to their friendship. Meredith now knows that God called her to reach out to Cindy to show her His light and His love and she knows that the BLESS strategy gave her the framework to take that first step.

HOW WE B.L.E.S.S.

LINCOLN PARK | OLD TOWN

Lincoln Park | Old Town's attenders asked Sandra Lyles, Resident Service Coordinator of The Habitat Company, a company focused on caring for the elderly in Chicago, "What's your greatest need, and how can we help?" Sandra shared that seniors at Larrabee Apartments simply need relationships and she suggested that COMMUNITY help by providing volunteers and supplies for a few parties. So far, COMMUNITY has organized a Mother's Day Party, a breakfast party and a neighborhood BBQ for Larrabee Apartments and their surrounding neighbors. The Larrabee residents are grateful, and because of the growing friendship and partnership, Sandra attended the Grand Opening of Community Christian Church in Lincoln Park | Old Town. At the service, Campus Pastor Eric Metcalf acknowledged the partnership with The Habitat Company and Sandra got a big round of applause. After service, Sandra shared that she had been praying for God to send some positive people in her life and she wanted to keep attending church. Since that weekend, Sandra has joined a small group, began serving in Kids' City, and she just recently made the decision to be baptized. The Lincoln Park | Old Town Campus is blessed to be a blessing, and Sandra's story a perfect example of why COMMUNITY is all about helping people find their way back to God.

LINCOLN SQUARE

Last Spring, the leaders of COMMUNITY Lincoln Square decided to "Begin with Prayer," asking God to reveal His next steps for their campus. Those prayers led them to a new partnership and home. In October, Lincoln Square celebrated a Grand Re-Opening and began meeting at Gateway to Learning, a training center for adults with intellectual disabilities. Gateway's Director, Cheryl Hennely, stated, "It truly has been a blessing to have COMMUNITY become an active part of Gateway's family." "Gateway to Learning has come full circle with its involvement with a church, having started in the basement of a church, and serving as the new home of COMMUNITY Christian Church. Since September, Lincoln Square attenders have served Gateway by volunteering their time and efforts to Gateway's functions and day-to-day activities. They have also made improvements to Gateway's building, both inside and outside, and raised money to help enable Gateway's participants to be part of an upcoming theatrical performance. Campus Pastor Tammy Melchien has helped Gateway by being the emcee at their Annual Dinner Dance and by working at their Holiday Bazaar. Cheryl concluded, "We at Gateway to Learning are truly thankful for the blessing which has been given to us by Community Christian Church!"

MONTGOMERY

Jim's small group began praying for opportunities to serve under-resourced people in their community. They visited a local low-income motel to take a resident family for ice cream and build a relationship. That same night, 80-year-old man motel resident Allan came along. Shortly after, the family moved out and ended contact, but as the group listened to God, they realized that Allan was completely alone. So they continued building a relationship with him, driving him to church weekly, eating with him, and finding time to hang out together. In the height of summer, he suddenly was evicted from the motel and wandering the streets by day, sleeping in a truck at night. As soon as they found out, the group began serving by finding him a local assisted living residence, and he's been there ever since, meeting lots of people, eating three full meals a day, impacting others. Jim's small group has attended family events at his residence, and he's become the popular guy who brings all the friends! They've learned so much through getting to serve and bless Allan, and he has truly blessed them in return in many ways that none of them expected.

NAPERVILLE DOWNTOWN

Jill wrestled with God for a long time about stopping and talking to a young woman who sat in the median on Wacker Drive. She passed her nearly every day and Jill could feel God's voice speaking ever-so-quietly saying, "Just stop," but she never seemed to have the time. At the beginning of September, after five months of not listening to God, COMMUNITY began the *Get off your Donkey* series. One day as Jill got on the train for work she knew she day she would reach out to that young woman. As Jill approached Wacker Drive she saw the woman just like every other day with her sign out and a cup for money in front of her. Jill sat down next to her and said, "For months, I've passed you and can't get you off my mind. What's your name?" The woman's name was Ariana and she shared her story and an ultrasound picture of the baby she was carrying with a due date of November 2. Jill took her to breakfast and let her know that she wouldn't give her money, but would love to talk to her again. What Jill didn't realize was that once she climbed down off her donkey in obedience, she could no longer just ride by in the coming days. Although personally, Jill was going through one of her toughest times, God still kept prompting her to stop and talk to Ariana. In the weeks that followed, every morning and evening, Jill sat on Wacker and built a friendship with Ariana. She didn't share her faith but just began a friendship and thought of ways to support her. As the relationship continued they shared cell numbers and began texting in addition to their daily encounters. God's plan evolved as Ariana's husband, who begged on a nearby corner, had an Elder from a Chicago church begin stopping daily to speak with him as well. As a result, Ariana and her husband began attending church at least twice a week. When the baby's due date neared, Jill decided to throw a baby shower in Naperville for Ariana. She brought her into her world, her family and her home and received an overwhelming response. Her house was flooded with gifts and people and lives were being changed. Yes for Ariana, but more so, for those who entered Jill's home and chose obedience over fear and "Got off that Donkey". The relationship between Jill and Ariana continues to grow.

HOW WE B.L.E.S.S.

NAPERVILLE YELLOW BOX

Danita is a student mentor in East Aurora through COMMUNITY 4:12, and after a recent mentoring visit, she was reminded of how blessed she is and why she loves being a mentor. Danita decided to surprise the little boy she mentors by bringing him a donut from the bakery around the corner from the school. When he entered the room, she brought him over to the table where a humongous, delicious-looking donut sat waiting just for him. He had never had a donut before and he was actually a bit hesitant to try it. Danita told him it tasted sweet like candy, and after a few minutes it was gone. He had the biggest smile on his face, and Danita was happy and grateful to be able to share this new experience with him. Danita recalled something her campus pastor once said: “Do for one what you wish you could do for many.” “Every little bit counts,” Danita said. “The things we take for granted, little things like donuts, can be very special gifts to others. Mentoring is bringing me such blessings, too. This little guy is just awesome! I love being able to help him grow, and he’s helping me grow, too.”

PLAINFIELD

Cassandra and her family lived down the street from Plainfield attenders Jim and Mariann Miller for several years. Every so often, Mariann would take cookies down to Cassandra’s house and they would talk. Eventually these talks developed into a friendship between Cassandra’s and Mariann’s families. Through this relationship, Mariann shared her story with Cassandra, and eventually she invited Cassandra’s family to COMMUNITY Plainfield. They visited and over the course of a year, they began contributing and their children started attending Kids’ City and StuCo. On a recent Sunday, Mariann had the privilege of baptizing Cassandra, and Cassandra in turn baptized her daughter, Breanna!

ROMEVILLE

Temporarily homeless single mom Jeanette and her baby left an abusive relationship to seek refuge and restoration through the Single Parent Ministry at COMMUNITY Romeoville. This ministry provided her with basic needs and resources to help her survive and get back on her feet. One month later, Jeanette asked how she could use her beautician skills to give back and BLESS others who’ve found themselves in similar situations. The Single Parent Ministry arranged for another single mom, Tracey, and her kids to receive free haircuts by Jeanette for the Christmas holiday season. On December 15, just one day after giving back to a single mom in need just like she once was, Jeanette committed her life to Jesus and was baptized.

SHOREWOOD

In early January, Matt and Jen woke up one Sunday with a new outlook on life and a desire to search for significance in their life. Jen’s boss had heard about the difference COMMUNITY was making in his life, so they decided to check it out. Within minutes of walking through the doors of the Shorewood Campus, they knew God was up to something big in their lives. Soon after, they got connected into a small group and began a new way of life. They learned about the BLESS practices and decided to begin each day in prayer, asking, “Lord, who do you want me to BLESS?” Within a few months, Jen found her answer in one of her co-workers. Meals were shared, prayer continued and a door opened in the conversation for Jen to share the difference God was making in her own life and how that just might be what her co-worker needed, too. Jen’s co-worker and her family took her up on her invitation to come to church and they too, like Matt and Jen months earlier, are now finding their way back to God at COMMUNITY.

YORKVILLE

Christy had been praying with her small group about who she could reach out to and BLESS. One day she took her kids to a local park and met a mom named Janel. Christy immediately saw that there was a lot of pain and hurt in Janel’s life. She was going through a messy divorce and was facing being left with three kids and no job. The two of them talked but left without exchanging contact information. That same week, the two moms got into the same check-out lane at Target and began talking again. They immediately went out to eat and began forming a friendship. Christy had the chance to just sit and listen to all that was happening in Janel’s life. She decided to put together a team that helped Janel move into a new place and another team that helped her clean, set up Christmas decorations and cook. Christy is now looking for opportunities to share her story with Janel of what God is doing in her life. This is what BLESSing is all about.

GLEN ELLYN

Two weeks prior to the grand opening of the new Glen Ellyn location, six families with children lost their homes and all of their possessions in an apartment fire. Lead Pastor, Brad Prunty, was contacted by a social worker at Hadley Junior High asking COMMUNITY was in a position to help serve these families. They immediately set up a relief fund for the families and throughout the month of November they were able to donate \$5,000 in gift cards and furniture that went directly to these families.

HELPING PEOPLE FIND THEIR WAY BACK HE
THEIR WAY BACK TO GOD HELPING PEOPLE
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