

New Possibilities and Challenges . . .

Last October we shared our dreams for the future on this page and several of them are coming true. There's almost standing room only at Mass every Sunday. Youth group is active and thriving and young people are deepening their faith. Often there are as many as 100 children taking part in Children's liturgy on Sunday. Music is becoming more and more multicultural with the congregation singing and clapping in languages not their native tongue. The food pantry is bustling, though it could always use more volunteers. Parishioners are actively involved in neighborhood projects. St. Leo's is a busy place.

In order to accommodate our growing ministries, one of our dreams last year was to have a welcoming place for the community. This too, has become a reality as we now have access to the large meeting space and offices in the St. Leo Food Pantry and Community Service building. We're excited about the opportunities it gives us to be a hub of activities and opportunities for the community. The large meeting space will be available for community events and there are offices available for a low rent for agencies who might like to have a satellite office in the area.

Among the initial community events to be offered there was the first in a series of free workshops on home maintenance sponsored by Working in Neighborhoods (WIN) on Wednesday, September 19, "*How to Achieve Simple and Inexpensive Improvements for the Home*" and "*Learning how to use simple power tools.*" The following workshops will be Wednesday, Oct. 10, "*Tips for Staying Safe in My Home*;" and Wednesday, October 24, "*Seasonal Maintenance for the Home in Fall and Winter.*" Classes will run from 6 to 8 pm.

Fairmount Providers' group which brings together community leaders, churches, community centers, and agencies to network and collaborate on common projects to benefit the

neighborhood held its first meeting of the year on Thursday, September 20th.

While our dream of becoming a community hub is beginning to take shape, we are also faced with new challenges. While we have had a weekday ESL class for a number of years that is no longer available. We offer ESL on Saturday mornings from 10:00am to noon, but several of our immigrants and refugees would benefit from an evening class. We would need volunteers and someone to head this program. Our refugees are hard and reliable workers but many of them are unable to find permanent employment that pays enough to allow them to support their families and move ahead so they frequently move from job to job seeking better wages. While some were trained professionals in their native lands, these skills don't translate to similar jobs here. We need help in supporting them to find stable jobs that provide a living wage.

St. Leo's was the initial site of the TriHealth parish nurse program when it began 28 years ago and parishioners, community residents, and more recently immigrants and refugees have benefited from their education and support to lead healthy lives. However these services are likely to be changing and there are no other community resources to take their place. Managing their health care on their own is difficult for our refugees and immigrants due to language, education, cultural differences, the complexity of the healthcare system, and the demands of survival. We will do what we can but will it be enough?

Our plate is full, so our dreams now are that God provides for these needs in ways we are not able to do ourselves.