

## Caring Corner

### *Sustaining Our Mission*

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I am pleased to report that The Cooperative Ministry made the last of its mortgage payments in September 2017, and we are now completely debt-free. Retiring the mortgage has been essential to our long-range planning for sustaining The Cooperative Ministry's programs and services.

With our debt burden removed, we are intensifying our focus on other dimensions of organizational sustainability. Together these activities will strengthen our capacity to serve our community for years to come.

- We are tracking our goals to ensure they reflect what we hope to accomplish.
- We continue to coordinate with our faith- and community-based partners to refine our services and programs in response to our community's evolving needs.
- We are investing to ensure we are properly staffed and that staff has the resources and training to consistently deliver high quality services and programs.
- We are increasing our financial reserve as part of our planning for year-to-year variations in financial and in-kind support.

The support from our donors for our mortgage retirement campaign has been both gratifying and humbling. We pledge our continuing commitment to honoring the trust and confidence you have placed in us.



**Beth Hughes Irick**  
Executive Director

*Beth H. Irick*

Beth H. Irick

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## A Partner's Perspective

*As it is, there are many parts, but one body. —I Corinthians 12:20 (NIV)*

We regularly ask our partners' views on our shared efforts to help people in our community who are in crisis. In this issue of *Sharing & Caring*, Rev. Derek Thomas, Senior Minister at First Presbyterian Church, shares why he and his church support The Cooperative Ministry.



**Rev. Derek Thomas**  
First Presbyterian Church

*The Cooperative Ministry is very important to us as a church and to me personally. In any given week, we see many people who find themselves in economic need and crisis of some kind or another; and we often send them to The Cooperative Ministry, who are experts in dealing with these very difficult issues and problems.*

*I've served on the board for two years, and it has been a privilege to see the good that has been effected by The Cooperative Ministry here in the Midlands. I want to commend this ministry to you, and thank you for your support of The Cooperative Ministry.*

## Crisis Assistance Adds Shine to Couple's Golden Anniversary



The Johnsons are relieved and happy The Cooperative Ministry could help

Faith, work, and family are the pillars on which Jesse & Roberta Johnson have built a life together. In their golden years, the comfortable retirement the couple had hoped for has proven elusive, as their social security income hardly keeps pace with rising costs for rent, utilities, and food.

In July, major car repairs strained the budget to the breaking point. After paying rent and utilities, Mr. & Mrs. Johnson celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary by sharing the last of the food from their cupboard.

The couple came into The Cooperative Ministry, faces etched with worry over how to put food on the table until their next social security check arrived. We were able to help them from our canned food pantry. Additionally, we gave them a food voucher for one of our partnering congregations to get groceries—including meat and produce—that would carry them to the end of the month.

We were also able to help them with clothes. Their smiles are testimonies to their gratitude and joy.

*The Cooperative Ministry is able to provide food vouchers to about 60 families a week through our partnering churches. Nutrition assistance is the most frequently-requested service among people ages 65 and over.*

### Volunteer Opportunities

The Cooperative Ministry is seeking volunteers for the fall. Opportunities include:

- Data entry
- Reception
- Clerical support
- Clothing Bank greeter/sorter
- Tax return preparation

Prospective volunteers complete an application, consent to background screening, and attend Volunteer Orientation. Hours are flexible, according to the position and the volunteer's availability.

For more information, contact Rhemie Gantz, Volunteer Coordinator, at 799-3853 x650 or (Email) [rgantz@coopmin.org](mailto:rgantz@coopmin.org).

## VITA Volunteers Help Taxpayers Save

People with basic tax returns often find the filing process overwhelming and costly, especially for taxpayers without home computers. You can help by training to be a volunteer tax preparer. One hour of your time can save a low-income taxpayer as much as \$300 in return preparation and miscellaneous fees.

No experience? No worries! You will receive training in tax law to become an IRS-certified volunteer tax return preparer at the Basic or Advanced level.

When you work with taxpayers, seasoned Site Coordinators and Return Reviewers are available to answer questions and check your work.

The Cooperative Ministry, in partnership with United Way and the IRS, offers the VITA Program (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) in the Midlands. VITA tax preparers help taxpayers minimize their tax bill and maximize any refund by claiming all tax credits and deductions they are eligible to receive.

Because VITA services are free, taxpayers receive their entire refund, which is the largest single cash infusion most low-income households experience in a year. During the 2017 tax season, our VITA program helped 7,624 taxpayers file returns.

Training classes for the 2018 tax season will begin this fall. To find out how you can become a VITA Volunteer, contact Tamiko Beckford today at 803-799-3853 extension 213 or [tbeckford@coopmin.org](mailto:tbeckford@coopmin.org).



Dedicated volunteer, Mr. Nash, prepares taxes at Super Saturday event

## The Cooperative Ministry Book Festival is a Best Seller!

Hundreds of book lovers found titles to treasure at The Cooperative Ministry's book festival fundraiser on Saturday, August 26<sup>th</sup>. Hosted by David Hodges at the MassMutual building near Middleburg Plaza, the event raised over \$10,000 to support services for the working poor.

Used and rare books were available for sale. Genres included children's literature; sports; religion; military history; cookbooks; and history. With prices ranging from \$1 to \$1,000, the



David Hodges and his daughter, Susan Powell, book festival organizers and hosts



Bibliophiles browse titles at TCM Book Festival

selection was designed to appeal to everyone from casual readers to avid collectors.

Over 500 titles from David Hodges' book collection were offered along with donations from the collections of August Kohn, Julian & Helen Kohn Hennig, Claude & Irene Neuffer, Jerry & Nancy Brennecke, Walter Edgar, Jerry Hackett, Jamie

Becker, Cliff Moore, Carol Fowler, Joe & Caroline Jones, Melissa & Steve Meadows, Mary Baskin Waters & Samuel C. Waters. Guest authors included Lee Brockington, John Clark, Lucie Eggleston, Miles Hayes & Jacqui Michel, Mark Huguley, Wilmot Irvin, Satch Krantz, Marvin Lare, Val Littlefield, Catherine Matthews, Helen Milliken, Patricia Moore-Pastides, Derek Thomas, and Anita Turnage.

We thank the sponsors and other supporters who contributed to the book festival's success: Ron Bridwell; J. W. Hunt and Company, LLP; the Happy Café; Lizard's Thicket; Attic Attack; and ByFarr Design.

## Autos for Opportunities Smooths Road to Success

Heather smiled as she looked at her "new" car and said, "I am so thankful for all you have done for me; this is truly the 'hand up' I have been looking for."

With little room in the budget after paying living and education expenses, Heather had never owned a car. Through Autos for Opportunities, and a generous parishioner at Shandon Baptist Church, Heather now has reliable transportation for work.



Representatives from Shandon Baptist Church and The Cooperative Ministry wish Heather Brandenburg well

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THE  
COOPERATIVE  
MINISTRY

WORKING HARD FOR THE WORKING POOR

## The Lives You've Touched

1 January – 31 August 2017

Service Category	Monthly Average	Year-to-Date
<b>Clothing</b>	225	1802
<b>Work shoes/boots</b>	6	44
<b>Food</b>	177	1412
<b>Household furnishings</b>	5	38
<b>Insurance Premium Assistance</b>	720	5756
<b>Rent/Mortgage</b>	45	363
<b>Utilities</b>	19	154
<b>Tax return prep</b>	Seasonal	7698
<b>Autos for Opportunities</b>	1 to 2	13
<b>Volunteer Hours</b>	981	7845

