

Dear St. Mary's Parent:

I am writing to tell you about an exciting initiative we are launching with the St. Mary's teens, in cooperation with Cor Unum meal center in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Cor Unum was established by St. Patrick's church in Lawrence to provide meals to underprivileged men, women, and children in the community.

Lawrence, although geographically close, is a long way from Winchester. It is the poorest community in Massachusetts, and one of the poorest in the country. I recently asked some of our Winchester teens what they worry about and they responded with statements like "getting into the right college" or "keeping my grade point average." In Lawrence, the children and teens worry about things like whether they can put on enough layers to stay warm on a cold night with no heat in their apartment, whether they will be safe from the gang that hangs out on their corner, or whether there will be enough food for them to have dinner. Cor Unum provides much needed relief by providing a safe, respectful community meal center where children, teens, and adults can enjoy a nutritious meal and some respite from the challenges of every day life in Lawrence.

The St. Patrick's community has developed a creative approach for raising money to build and support the meal center. This campaign, called "Labels are for Jars," has allowed St. Patrick's to engage thousands of volunteers to raise money while also undermining societal labeling. The campaign centers around selling black t-shirts with a label on the chest. The label has printed on it one or two words that are commonly used to negatively label people in our society - "geek", "homeless", "jock", "minority", "pacifist", "prisoner", "slacker", or "troubled teen". On the back of the shirt, it says "Labels Are For Jars" across the shoulders.

Shirts are packaged in clear plastic jars with coin slots cut into the screw tops. Buyers are encouraged to fill the jars with donations from family, friends, co-workers, etc., and to send the donations back to Cor Unum. Labels Are For Jars is comprised completely of volunteers, so every cent collected is used to help feed the hungry in Lawrence. The shirts are sold online and through direct sales groups in local communities called street teams. Street teams are primarily groups of high school and college students, who have a unique power to affect change in our society.

We will be working with the teens at St. Mary's to organize several street teams this year to help raise money for Cor Unum. These teams will be led by high school juniors and seniors and will be made up primarily of 9th and 10th grade CCD students. The program will provide a great opportunity for our teens to work together across class years and give our juniors and seniors a unique leadership experience in the process.

As I mentioned above, the Cor Unum meal center is a safe haven in an otherwise challenging environment. As you might imagine, Lawrence has a number of issues that are not common in Winchester. The crime rate is considerably higher, there are several street gangs that are active in the area, and the city has one of the highest concentrations of level 3 sex offenders in the Commonwealth. Given the external environment, it is truly impressive that Cor Unum has been able to create such a positive atmosphere. After over a year of operations, the center has never had a single incident. I have been to the Cor Unum meal center with my two young daughters (5 and 8) and I can honestly say that I was never once concerned for their safety while we were at the meal center. However, as a parent, I believe it is important to be open about the environment into which we will be escorting your teens. If you have any questions about the trip, please don't hesitate to contact me directly at 781.729.7892 and I will be happy to discuss your concerns.

I truly believe the "Labels are for Jars" campaign will be a terrific opportunity for our teens to make a difference in a community that desperately needs support. I look forward to working with them and Sal to make the campaign a great success.

Best regards, Joe McCafferty

General Permission Slip to Serve at Cor Unum Meal Center in Lawrence, MA

I give permission for my son/daughter _(name here)_____ to participate in the _(Date here)_____ visit to Cor Unum meal center in Lawrence. I understand that the cars will leave St. Mary's parish center at 3:30pm and return at approximately 8:00pm. The cars will be driven by licensed adults in most cases, and occasionally a licensed teenager.

Signature:_____

Name:_____

Contact Number_____

Cor Unum Meal Center Overview

The Setting

Lawrence, Massachusetts, is one of the poorest cities in the United States, and is the poorest in Massachusetts.

Lawrence has a population of just over 82,000 people, 69 percent of whom are Hispanic. An amazing 33.1 percent of the people of Lawrence live below the poverty line. Of children under age 18 in Lawrence, 49.9 percent live in households below the poverty line, as do 27 percent of people age 65 and over.

The combination of economic poverty and an unusually expensive housing market leaves many people in Lawrence without enough money to adequately feed themselves. The majority of those who are hungry are members of families who work and do not earn enough income to pay for both housing and food.

Approximately 75 percent of school-age children in Lawrence qualify for government-subsidized food programs – meaning that three out of four children in Lawrence are at risk for hunger.

The Need

Food and meal distribution centers in Lawrence have long offered assistance to hundreds of adults and children per day. However, given the overwhelming numbers of hungry people in the city, existing centers have never been able to adequately provide for the needs of the hungry. Leaders of food centers have consistently argued that there is a compelling need to expand the provision of food for the hungry in Lawrence.

Lawrence is divided into two sections – North Lawrence and South Lawrence – by the Merrimack River. In South Lawrence, where there are more than 19,000 households, in recent years there has been no center to provide hot meals for the hungry.

The Solution

The Cor Unum Meal Center arose from the vision of a group of men and women from St. Patrick Parish in South Lawrence who in 2001 were moved by compassion to respond concretely to the growing needs of the hungry in their city. After five years of research, planning, and the process of construction, their vision resulted in the completion of the Cor Unum Meal Center.

Cor Unum is a not-for-profit meal center located in South Lawrence that provides free, nutritious meals in a safe environment to the working poor, families with children, the homeless, and the lonely – anyone who is in need of food, regardless of race, color, creed, sex, or way of life.

The Cor Unum Meal Center serves hundreds of people at each meal, 365 days a year. Cor Unum has a small core staff and relies upon a wide volunteer base for the provision of all of its services. St. Patrick Parish, under which Cor Unum is organized, has Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status.

The Cor Unum Meal Center very powerfully responds to the urgent need to feed the hungry in Lawrence, lovingly welcoming all people, providing nourishment for the bodies and souls of all who are in need.

At the end of 2001, a small group of men and women who shared a common concern about hunger in Lawrence began to explore in depth the reality of hunger in their city. They reviewed existing anti-hunger efforts in Lawrence, speaking at

length with the leaders of food programs, government and private social service organizations, local health care institutions, and schools. After extensive research, it was determined that there was a compelling need for additional food for the hungry and a significant demand for a meal center to be established in South Lawrence. Community leaders generously offered their support for a new effort that might address the challenges at hand.

In the spring of 2002, this new effort took the form of a committee that proceeded with the planning and organization of what emerged as the Cor Unum Meal Center. ("Cor Unum" means "One Heart" in Latin.) By the end of the planning process, it was concluded that more than \$1.5 million would be needed to build the Cor Unum Meal Center – a very ambitious goal!

In the autumn of 2004, a campaign was launched to raise \$1.5+ million for the construction of Cor Unum, with Labels Are For Jars at the center of the pursuit of the mission.

In September of 2005, the fundraising goal for the construction of Cor Unum was reached! Thanks to the sacrifice of individuals, foundations, businesses, and the extraordinary number of people connected with Cor Unum through Labels Are For Jars, what had seemed by many to be an unreachable goal became a reality.

With the achievement of the construction goal, Labels embraced the mission of helping raise by September 2006 \$400,000 to fund Cor Unum's operational expenses.

Construction of the Cor Unum Meal Center was completed in September 2006, allowing the doors of the state-of-the-art center to be opened for the serving of meals. The fantastic news was that the \$400,000 goal for operational expenses was reached. Once again, the supporters of Cor Unum and Labels Are For Jars achieved what had seemed to many to be an unachievable goal!

Our mission continues! As the Cor Unum Meal Center expands its services, Labels Are For Jars is committed to raising the funds needed to keep the center thriving. Through Labels Are For Jars, people who want to change the world by feeding the hungry are able to do so in Lawrence, MA.

For more information please visit www.corunummealcenter.org