

BACKGROUND

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 under 70,000 people, 72 percent of whom are Hispanic. An amazing 28 percent of the people of Lawrence live below the poverty line. Of children under age 18 in Lawrence, 38 percent live in households below the poverty line, as do 22 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.

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