



helping today building hope for tomorrow

**Friends of
South End Community Outreach Ministries (SECOM)
Newsletter**

February 28, 2011

*Celebrating 30
years of serving*

Dear Friends,

This year marks the 30th anniversary of SECOM.

To put things into perspective, back in 1981 Prince Charles and Princess Diana got married. Today it is their child that is getting married. Does outliving a royal marriage make SECOM a success story or a product of our times?

For those of you old enough to remember 1981 here are some other things to reminisce about. At the end of the year the Federal Reserve's interest rate was 15.75%. The annual inflation rate was 10.35% and still the unemployment rate was only 7.6% (albeit on the rise). The poverty rate was 14.0% which certainly had an influence on our founders thinking about the neighborhood's needs.

The economy at that time was experiencing a brief upturn between the recessions of 1980 and 1982. After 1982 we enjoyed many years of great prosperity for nation with only minor downturns in the economy. And yet, here we are in 2011 with a poverty rate above 16%. It goes to show the fragility of so many people's financial status.

Back in 1981 SECOM was started as a pantry to serve the nutritional needs of its mostly English speaking and American born neighborhood. It was supported by four churches and was able to meet its mission from the basement of Olivet United Methodist Church. In those days a closet was all that was needed to store the food that was collected. It was a much simpler time.

Since then the neighborhood has become one of first generation immigrants whose primary language is Spanish. We have moved to our own, much larger facility to satisfy the growing and diverse needs of the area. We are dependent on the support of foundations, government agencies, many churches and countless individuals to meet our mission. And, sadly Olivet UMC recently disbanded.

Today we still feed the hungry. In fact hunger relief requires more of our resources than anything else we do. Sadly we distribute far more food now than we did in the early eighties. Back then we expected to feed a handful of families every month and only for a short period of time. Today we feed 175 families per month and most families come back periodically over the course of a year.

But food is not enough in our increasingly complex world. Today we need to prepare children for school and give parents the resources to prepare their child for school. We need to teach the parent to speak English and help them find a job. We are still fighting the war on poverty that was already almost a two decades old in 1981. Now there are just more battle fields to fight it on.

Reflecting on the past says tells me that things haven't changed that much. The situation is more complicated than it was thirty years ago, but the human condition hasn't changed. That can be discouraging. But I always remind myself that we may not have vanquished poverty for humanity, but we have won many individual battles.

We will be celebrating those victories and discussing our future on September 17, 2011. I hope that you will save that date and plan on joining us. We will look back on 30 years of serving and forward to replacing poverty with prosperity in our neighborhood.

Best Regards

Robert

Robert Heys
Development Director

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