



Who is my neighbor?

In answer to the question “And who is my neighbor?” in Luke 10:25, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan, an outcast traveler who stops along the road to give assistance and sustenance to a victim of violence. Every day, the staff of Lutheran Community Services Northwest reach out, reflecting the compassionate face of God, in service to our neighbors and our communities. Here is the story of some of the thousands of lives touched each year through our ministry.

Meet our neighbors, **The Kids of King School**

Disadvantaged children helping others in need

by **Kali Thorne**

In a year of unprecedented natural disasters, from the Asian Tsunami to the Gulf Coast hurricanes, Northwest residents have stepped forward to help with boundless generosity. This is the story of one group of Portland children who did not let their own circumstances prevent them from lending a hand.

It's 8:30 a.m. and another group of students knock on my door at King Elementary School to drop off a large bag of change. I point towards the file cabinets. “That goes over there with the rest.”

A collection of coins is growing rapidly at the foot of the file cabinet. Drooping bags, decorated buckets, bulging envelopes and a lime green piggy bank clutter the tan office carpet. When our Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) project at King decided to sponsor a Tsunami fundraiser in this high-poverty school, we had no idea what the outcome would be.

More than \$300 in loose change and straggling dollar bills, donated by six-year-old children who brought in their piggy banks to help

homeless and hungry victims of the Southeast Asia tsunami, has made it clear that low economic status is not a barrier to the students' generosity, which knows no boundaries or limits.

In an effort to teach the importance of altruism and help develop a sense of empathy about the struggles of others among our young students, we decided to sponsor a fundraising contest where students could raise money for tsunami victims. The class that brought in the most was promised a pizza party. Thanks to the help of phenomenal teachers and the children's spirit of giving, more than \$300 was raised, and the children learned the satisfaction of giving and caring for others. Some five-year-olds even gave their entire piggy banks for the cause.

One fifth-grader went so far as to address her church and take up a collection there. When asked why she did this, her answer was simple. “I just thought it was important and I like to give.”

It's exciting to think that children so young and from such disadvantaged homes can give so much. If these children are the future, we have much to be optimistic about!

Kali Thorne was the director of LCS' SUN program at Martin Luther King Elementary School in northeast Portland, Oregon, during the 2004/05 school year. The SUN (Schools Uniting Neighborhoods) program provides before- and after-school enrichment and support activities for children from Kindergarten through 5th Grade.

“Who is my neighbor?” presents the many faces of social outreach ministry, as carried out by our agency in communities across the Northwest.

For more information about the programs of Lutheran Community Services Northwest, and to learn how you can help support our ministry, contact your nearest LCS office or visit our web site at www.lcsnw.org

