

The Seed

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\$2 Million in Tax Refunds!

Since mid-January Lafayette Urban Ministry volunteers and staff have been hard at work helping low-income households and individuals complete and submit their state and federal income tax returns. It's the largest and most used of all LUM Programs during this time of year. So why is LUM involved in the work of H&R Block????? Because so much of federal and state support of working families is funneled through the tax code – that's why. And unless a low-income worker files his or her returns, significant tax credits will be left unclaimed.

For eight years, the Lafayette Urban Ministry has partnered with the IRS Volunteers in Tax Assistance (VITA) Program to bring free quality tax return preparation services to hundreds of low and moderate income wage earners in our community. So far this year, more than 1,000 joint and individual returns have been prepared. More than \$2,000,000 in tax refunds and tax credits have been returned to local households and funneled back into our local economy.

Almost forty LUM volunteers study each year to receive IRS certification to prepare tax returns. It's a big commitment of time and effort, but the payoff for volunteers is big too. Steve Samuels has volunteered at LUM for five tax seasons. He gives seven hours each week. "I enjoy helping people in such a real and tangible way. For some of my clients, a full one-third of their annual income comes from the tax return we are able to secure for them at LUM." And because we don't charge for our service, people of meager means are much more likely to file their returns."

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Steve Samuels says his stereotypes are challenged every time he helps at LUM. So far this year LUM's 40 volunteer tax preparers have completed more than 1,000 returns, free of charge, resulting in \$2 million in tax refunds.

Any married couple or individual with annual income below \$49,000 is eligible to have their return prepared at LUM. The average refund this year is \$2,000! Our clients pay off back bills, get caught up on their rent, purchase new clothes for their children, pay for tuition at IVY Tech and some have even used it as down payment on the purchase of a home. Not only are the refunds important to the tax payer, but collectively they add a significant boost to our local retail economy. When you consider the many jobs created and maintained by this sector, LUM's tax program has a significant multiplier effect as well.

Steve says the best part about his volunteer work in LUM's tax program is that it helps him to better understand the lives of low-income wage earners. "My stereotypes are challenged every time I come to LUM. I am amazed by how hard people work and how far they are able to stretch their limited dollars. It's a real eye opener."

LUM Executive Director Joe Micon says that the tax program is probably the most significant thing we do each year in our mission to support working families and their children. "The positive impact of these dollars can't be understated." LUM will continue to offer its free tax preparation service through April 15. If you'd like to learn more, contact Patti O'Callaghan, the program's director at pocallaghan@LafayetteUrbanMinistry.org



On Narrowing the Academic Achievement Gap

Joe Micon
Executive Director

No matter where you come down on the latest round of public school reforms being debated in Indianapolis, it seems to me that the debate is still missing the mark. I wish I were hearing much more about how we ought to narrow the academic achievement gap that exists between low-income children and those who are more advantaged. Here are the things I believe our Governor and state lawmakers should be looking at:

- Find ways to foster greater **parental involvement** in their child’s education. It’s a myth that states can’t or shouldn’t try to legislate parental involvement. Many states already do. They provide incentives to schools and businesses to promote the involvement of parents in their children’s education. They provide incentives to parents to become more engaged. Most of these interventions have little or no impact on state budgets. Indiana should follow these state’s examples.
- It is well-documented in education research that **up to two-thirds of the academic achievement gap experienced by low-income children occurs during the summer months.** Better off kids continue to make progress during the summer while disadvantaged kids fall back. That’s why LUM is so committed to our new 5th Quarter Summer Learning Program. Indiana needs to invest more in summer remedial education and in summer learning programs that help to close the achievement gap. I would encourage you to visit the You Tube site:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEkIkHwvso&feature=related>

It provides an outstanding illustration of why summer learning, or the lack thereof, has such a measurable impact on a child’s academic achievement.

- **Early intervention is critical.** Access to quality day care for working families and expansion of full-day kindergarten needs to be expanded in Indiana. Purdue’s Reading Recovery Program needs to grow. Indiana should support our state’s best afterschool programs. What might business and community leaders do to support children in K-3 that aren’t reading up to standard?
- **Jobs, jobs, jobs!** The correlation between household income and a child’s academic performance is also well documented. When a family is economically stressed the children suffer too. Perhaps the most important thing we can do to help children achieve in school is to become much more aggressive about implementing policies that lift up working families and the middle class. Health care for everyone, strong public social safety nets, access to new technologies, job training, sound public transportation and jobs with benefits that pay a living wage all factor into the education achievement of our children.

These are the things that would really improve the educational attainment of Hoosier children. Are there considerations I have missed? Am I right on target? I’d love to hear what you think. Email me at:

jmicon@LafayetteUrbanMinistry.org



Look for me at Your Church!

I am spending my Sunday mornings this year worshipping, attending Sunday School and visiting with each of LUM’s 42 member congregations.

It’s a good way for me to say “thanks” for your friendship and support of those we serve here at LUM. When you see me at church, make sure to let me know how LUM might do an even better job!

Special *Thanks* From LUM To...

Central Presbyterian Church – For allowing LUM use of their education building for our Community Thanksgiving Celebration and Afterschool Program activities

Trinity United Methodist Church – For allowing LUM to use its parking lot for departure and return of our LUM Camp busses

St. Andrew United Methodist Church - For donating \$1,184 in proceeds from their recent book sale to LUM's new 5th Quarter Summer Learning Retention Program

Christian Campus House – For another huge delivery of toys for LUM's Jubilee Christmas kids

Bison Financial Group – For their contributions of \$5,000, hundreds of hot dogs, and countless volunteer hours as lead corporate sponsor of Hunger Hike 2010, for the volunteer time donated by Bison employees to LUM's Tax Return Preparation Program, and for the invaluable financial advice given to the LUM Board

The Walmart Foundation and local Walmart Employees – For their \$5,000 gift to Hunger Hike 2010

Duke Energy – For \$1,000 donated for food shared with the hungry at the St. John's/LUM Food Pantry

Meijer – For \$890 worth of gift cards for food purchases for the St. John's/LUM Food Pantry

Anonymous Donor – For a December 2010 pledge of \$50,000 to LUM's Campaign for the Future (You know who you are!)

Scheumann Foundation – For a December 2010 pledge of \$18,000 to LUM's Campaign for the Future

Old National Bank – For a January 2011 gift of \$5,000 to LUM's Campaign for the Future

Kroger – For a January 2011 gift of \$5,000 to LUM's Campaign for the Future

Creasy Springs Health Campus and their Employees – for their \$2,715 gift to LUM's programs

Benton Central High School C.A.A.P. Students – for cooking and serving a meal for our shelter guests

Beacon Academy – For 300 rolls of toilet paper to supply LUM's 9 restrooms



Each of LUM's Youth Programs (Enhanced Afterschool, Achieve!, 5th Quarter, and LUM Camp) share one common goal – to narrow the academic achievement gap between low-income children and those from more advantaged backgrounds.

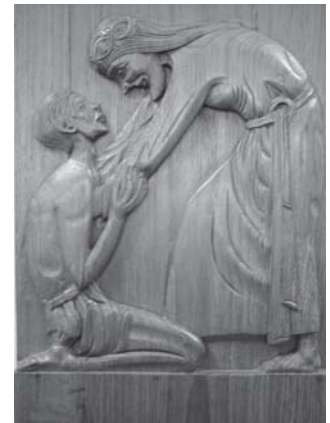
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Return Service Requested

LUM by the Numbers

First Quarter 2011

- 7.9% Lafayette Unemployment Rate
- 19.7% Tippecanoe County Childhood Poverty Rate
- 13.2% Tippecanoe County Poverty Rate
- More than \$2 Million in Tax Refunds returned to more than 1,000 households
- \$4,962 shared to keep 120 families in their homes
- \$5,772 shared to keep 138 families from losing utility service
- \$1,978 shared to purchase prescription medications for 77 individuals
- Overnight stays in LUM's Emergency Shelter - 179 guests; 1,651 bednights
- 30 individuals aided in re-establishing their legal identities
- Case management sessions - 57 clients; 72 sessions
- St. John's/LUM Food Pantry households served – 964 households; 1,588 visits
- After School Program enrollment – 34 children
- Achieve Program enrollment – 15 youth



Briefly noted

- **Volunteers Needed:** Afternoon front desk receptionists, bulk mailers, overnight shelter volunteers, After School Program activity bus drivers, LUM Camp counselors. Call LUM for more information: 423-2691.
- **Miscellaneous Items Needed:** Coffee for our clients, coloring books for children in our waiting room, toilet paper for our restrooms--bring items to LUM, 420 N. 4th Street, Lafayette.
- **LUM's Website** has undergone an upgrade--check it out! www.LafayetteUrbanMinistry.org.
- **A message to Lafayette Urban Ministry donors:** LUM's most recent audit, Federal 990 form and February 28, 2011 balance sheet and management reports are all available for public inspection online at www.LafayetteUrbanMinistry.org, or at the LUM office (420 N. 4th Street) during regular business hours, Monday through Friday. Thank you for your special friendship and generous support of those we serve.