



Fresno Metro Ministry

News and Views

Fresno Fresh Access: Metro Community Food Assessment Report 2003-2005

Key factors in food availability, accessibility, affordability and quality in Fresno County

By Edie Jessup, Jeremy Hofer, Phoua Moua

What we found out about food access:

1. People are buying Fresh Produce from Flea Markets.
2. Barriers to buying Fresh Food = Not enough money.
3. One-third of meals weekly are eaten at Fast Food outlets.
4. Healthy foods and cultural food needs are not available in some neighborhoods. Supermarkets are leaving low-income neighborhoods.
5. People are not accessing Federal Nutrition Programs, even though they are probably eligible and need healthy food for their families.
6. Lack of transportation impacts access to markets.

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The Fresno Metro Ministry Community Food Assessment has trained over 80 local neighborhood leaders, conducted over 850 survey-assessments of consumers and 131 retail store surveys, collected data by City Council and County Supervisor Districts and will inform a Food Policy Council in planning for food access. The goals of the Food Policy Council are healthy food access, reduction of nutritional health disparities, and linking Fresno agriculture business to fresh food access. The Fresno Fresh Access Community Food Assessment—

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Summary Recommendations from the Fresno Fresh Access Community Food Assessment

1. Urban/Rural Planning in Fresno City and County for food access and transportation.
2. A Food Policy Council or Food and Built Environment Council that is housed in the Fresno County Department of Community Health under the Public Health Officer.
3. Expansion of study and solutions to increase:
 - Market choices in neighborhoods: Address fleeing of Supermarkets from neighborhoods
 - Fresh local food available in neighborhoods and local institutions (schools, hospitals, Fresno City and County programs.
 - Economic development utilizing our agriculture to solve health and good food access.
 - Full use of Federal Nutrition Programs in Fresno County.

Metro Welcomes CSUF Interns

By Jeremy Hofer and Carmen Arambula

Each semester, Fresno Metro Ministry welcomes graduate and undergraduate interns. While learning “on the job,” Metro’s interns contribute valuable insight, energy and knowledge to our programs. This fall, we welcome three interns who are social work students at California State University, Fresno: Olga Arredondo, Cruz Pinzon, and Souk Phonthaphone.

Olga Arredondo has joined the Hunger & Nutrition Project Team, and just in the nick of time! In October, the Project will be setting off on an ambitious Food Stamp outreach effort that will involve over 100 Central Valley organizations including farmers markets, pantry sites, stores, and other community partners. This fall, she will also help facilitate local Farm to School connections that will improve the quality of Fresno's school meals and educate children on the benefits of eating healthy. Olga is pursuing a degree in Social Work, is bilingual and proficient with a computer - needless to say, we are glad to have Olga on the team!



Olga Arredondo

We are proud to announce the new additions of Cruz Pinzon and Souk Phonthaphone to the Health Care Policy Department! We are expanding our staff to help manage our growing projects and demands. And Fresno Metro Ministry maintains its tradition of surrounding itself by strong, intelligent, independent women.

Cruz comes to us as an immigrant from Sinaloa, Mexico, and has an enthusiasm for immigrant and farm worker rights. She is passionate about social justice issues and will continue Metro’s mission in working with and giving voice to unserved and underserved populations. Cruz is a master’s student at CSU Fresno in the Social Work Department, and will be working on a variety of projects including a domestic violence report in rural and metropolitan Fresno, the launch of the Children’s Health Initiative (CHI) focusing on outreach and enrollment, the awareness and expansion of the Navigators program and much more! We are honored to have her skills and enthusiasm at Metro; she is a fantastic addition to our team!

Souk is returning to us after a long summer absence. She is a CSU Fresno Social Work Intern that is completing her second se-

mester with Metro, and is quickly reclaiming her title as one of our MVIs- most valuable interns. Souk will be rounding out her experience at Metro as she joins the Health Team from the Hunger and Nutrition team. We are happy to have her knowledge and skill transcend all aspects of Metro’s work and look forward to her continued participation and enthusiasm for Metro’s mission and vision. She will

now be coordinating the New Leaders for Better Health monthly meetings, in addition to working on the Navigator curriculum, and the Kaiser Permanente Child Health Plan. Souk brings her experience and compassion to all her work, and is invigorating our programs with her spunk and talent. We are thrilled that she is joined us for another semester!!!



Cruz Pinzon



Souk Phonthaphone

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Community Food Assessment

(Continued from p. 1)

ment is one of the largest Community Food Assessments (CFA) conducted nationally.

This CFA has implications for economic development around food production and distribution linking agriculture to local health solutions through adequate nutrition. The report indicates that increased use of Federal Nutrition Programs and local economic assets will increase use of local fresh produce.

“Where do you buy most of your groceries?”

This open-ended question resulted in the following clarity in the overall sample results. 64% answered that they primarily shopped at ‘Big Box stores’: Food Co, Food Maxx, Costco, Sam’s Club, etc. Only 20% named ‘Supermarkets’ and 13% said that they primarily shopped at ‘Local’ stores. **When asked why they shopped at the stores, price was the overarching determiner (47%),** with convenience, and “close to home” being secondary at 26%. Issues of selection, quality, and preference aggregately totaled 25% in the overall sample.

“Besides stores where do you get food?” The significant responses were at **Fast Food (49%) and at Flea Markets (30%).** The percentage using Fast Food and Flea Markets was true for the entire Fresno County sample, for low income people surveyed, and for those surveyed who did not have a car. However, when analyzed ethnically, there were some differences as to use of Fast Food and Flea Markets. What is remarkable is that Flea Markets, Mobile Vendors, and Fast Food are frequently named as places besides grocery stores where people get food; **gardens and federal nutrition programs are little used.**

Something is wrong in the system. We are farm-workers, harvesting all day produce for others, and we get home and our family doesn’t have food to eat.

— *Coalinga Focus Group*

What is remarkable is that Flea Markets, Mobile Vendors, and Fast Food are frequently named as places besides grocery stores where people get food; **gardens and federal nutrition programs are little used.**

“Transportation is the big issue.” The big story on how people get to the grocery store and back home is that in the overall sample, 67% own their own car. However 18% depend on carpooling. Over 6% use public transportation, and 9% walk or bike. If people have no car, 53% need to car pool. 19% use bus or taxi, 28% walk or bike. Of respondents who earn under \$20,000, 24% must carpool. What we know about carpooling is: people are either dependent on others to get to the market, or, they must pay (sometimes up to \$50 round trip to Fresno from

out in the County). Public transportation (bus) is named as a difficulty in focus groups; and taxis often are \$15 or more. This is an important issue. In the County: Larsen, Perea, and Waterston’s Districts report the most carpooling: 16-25%. Perea’s district (urban) reports having to carpool, and 10% bus ridership.

More fruits and vegetables are needed in neighborhoods.

When asked, “Are their certain foods that are difficult to get in your neighborhood?” one-fourth (23%) reported that they had difficulty getting food in their neighborhood. If they had no car, 1/3 (33%) reported difficulty getting needed foods. Overall of the 23% reporting difficulty getting foods in their neighborhood, 32% named fruits and vegetables as difficult to get. If 1/3 or more are having difficulty with both access and seasonal availability of produce, there are potentially big market opportunities in neighborhoods for more fresh markets.

“We hope this information gets to the right people who can make some changes.”
-- Focus group of surveyors in Southeast Fresno

“What do you see as the main problems getting the food you want?”

30% said that food was too expensive for their families. “We would like lower prices. The biggest obstacle is not having enough money to buy basic food items ... We are afraid to file for food stamps because of immigration status... Having no car makes it hard to go to the store... 90% of the people I interviewed said they had to pay the rent and utilities and the family food suffers because there often isn't enough (money) left over.” -- Focus group in Southeast Fresno

This Community Food Assessment was funded by USDA Community Food Project in 2003-2005. It could not have been completed without over 60 partners and over 80 trained neighborhood volunteers. A complete record of the Community Food Assessment—Fresno Fresh Access will be posted to our website (www.fresnometroministry.org), and be available in hard copy from Fresno Metro Ministry. It will contain all data, and reports by Fresno County Board of Supervisors District and Fresno City Council Districts and a full list of recommendations. For further information or community presentation, contact Edie Jessup or Jeremy Hofer at Fresno Metro Ministry.



Air Quality Update

It's about our health!

SB 999 falls victim to local politics, again.

By Carolina Simunovic, Environmental Health Project Director

It's been a long three years since the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition started working on Senate Bill 999—a bill to restructure the Air District Governing Board—and now it looks like we're headed for one more. My daughter, Isabella Paz Muniz Simunovic, born July 14, 2005, was not even a thought when we started working on SB 999.

SB 999 (Machado) was extended for another year after it became clear that local legislators would not support the measure and instead would block its passage through the California Assembly. This is a major blow to air quality advocates who think that the current Air District Governing Board composition is inadequate.

SB 999 originally sought to add four public members—a medical expert, an air quality expert, an environmental justice expert, and a transportation/land-use expert—to a Governing Board that is currently made up exclusively of elected officials. They are eight County Supervisors representing San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, Kings, and Kern, and three rotating

City Council members currently representing the cities of Ripon, Madera, and Bakersfield. **Why should the Air Board be expanded to persons with medical and air quality expertise? Because our Valley's air pollution problem is causing health problems of epidemic proportions.** Because we have the highest asthma rates in the state. Because over 1,200 people die prematurely due to particulate matter pollution. Because Valley residents spend hundreds of millions of dollars on medical expenses related to air pollution each year. Because the Air District is a public health agency, yet public health is often overlooked when decisions are made that affect powerful industries. Because we need to have a discussion about *health* at the Air District Governing Board level—not just discussions about how much polluting industries will suffer from regulations. Central Valley legislators had already stripped the bill of the environmental justice and transportation/land use positions.

The revised bill would have added the medical expert and the air quality expert to the Board. It also would have given perma-

nent representation to the cities of Fresno, Stockton, and Bakersfield. These cities account for most of the Valley's population, yet Fresno hasn't had a seat on the Board since 1993 and Stockton has never had a seat.

This concept makes sense to most reasonable people—add air pollution and health experts to the board that regulates air quality. This is how other air boards have been tailored throughout the state. This seems like it would benefit the largest air basin in the nation, an air basin with arguably the worst air in the country, and an air district that has performed so poorly that it had to be sued by citizens to comply with the law. (The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District governs the largest air basin in the United States.)

But local power brokers thought otherwise. Industry groups along with some of the Supervisors that currently sit on the Air District Board lobbied local legislators and turned SB 999 into an issue of *local control*. They did not want public members on the Board, much

Update on SB 999 (Continued from p. 4)



less if they were going to be appointed by the State.

On the other hand members of the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition were not comfortable allowing local forces to do the appointing. In CVAQ's opinion local control is what got us into this mess and State intervention is what is desperately needed to help repair the damage. One would be hard pressed to think otherwise when you look at the opposition list for SB 999, essentially consisting of the biggest polluters in the Valley and most of the Valley area County Boards of Supervisors. (See page 6 for a list of oppo-

nents and supporters of SB 999.) The huge amount of opposition is a clear indication of the fear that industry has about expanding the board and stopping the County Supervisors' death-grip on the Valley's air quality future. It is hard not to think that these folks are in cahoots with one another.

Unfortunately, the Valley Air Board will continue (for another year) to be dominated by excessive control from the local Boards of Supervisors. Large cities have lost out yet again. And most of all, Valley residents have lost out on the opportunity to be better repre-

sented and have a chance at cleaner air.

Last time I checked local control was not a top priority for Valley residents. Meanwhile, everyone I speak to seems to be worried about air pollution and wants to breathe clean air as soon as possible. Yet our local politicians (Republican and Democrat alike) would rather worry about "local control" than do what is necessary to clean up our air. It makes me sick. Cough cough.

But still we remain optimistic. We are encouraged by the efforts shown by Senators Florez and Machado, who took on the large oil and ag industries in the Valley in the name of clean air. And we haven't totally given up hope on some of the Assembly's Valley-based legislators. We are going to come back next year with a bill that we hope they will support and help shepherd through the final process.

We just have to keep reminding them that, "It's about our health!"

You are invited!

"One Song, Many Voices"

Metro's Annual Thanksgiving Concert

Sunday, November 20 at 3 pm • Hope Lutheran Church



Come and enjoy the mass community choir performance, as well as selections from College Community Congregational Church Choir, Hope Lutheran Bell Choirs, Unitarian Universalist Quartet, Ronnie Stovall and the Body of Christ African-American Ecumenical Choir, Taize, Celtic Group, the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno, Shrine of St. Therese Choir, Morning Star Praise Rhythmic Dancers, Memorial United Methodist Church, and the University Presbyterian Drama Team.

For more information on becoming a "Friend of the Concert," please e-mail Carmen@fresnetmin.org or call 485-1416.

Update on SB 999 (Continued from p. 5)

These are the organizations and individuals who either supported or opposed adding medical and environmental expertise to the Local Air Board.

Official Supporters of SB 999: Kirsch Foundation, City of Fresno, Fresno County Office of Education, Fresno County Democratic Central Committee, Madera County Democratic Central Committee, El Comite Para El Bienestar de Earlimart, Californians for Pesticide Reform, Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment, Latino Issues Forum, Sierra Club California, Union of Concerned Scientists, Grayson Neighborhood Council, Fresno Metro Ministry, Merced/Mariposa County Asthma Coalition, Relational Culture Institute, California League of Conservation Voters, Natural Resources Defense Council, The Honorable Henry Perea—Supervisor, District Three, County of Fresno, The Honorable Susan B. Anderson—Supervisor, District Two, County of Fresno, fifty individuals.

Official Opponents of SB 999: Buttonwillow Land and Cattle Company, CA Citrus Mutual, A Cotton Ginners and Growers Association, CA Council for Environmental and Economic Balance, CA Farm Bureau Federation, CA Grape and Tree Fruit League, CA Independent Oil Marketers Association, CA League of Food Processors, CA Poultry Federation, CA State Association of Counties, Carris Reels of CA, Inc., Castle Peak Resources, LLC, Cities of Kingsburg, Modesto, Counties of Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Stanislaus, Tulare, Citizens Against SB 999, Dassel's Petroleum, Inc., Delta Liquid Energy, Fastrup Food Stores, Inc., Fresno County Farm Bureau, Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce, Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce, Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce, Imperial Sugar Company, Independent Oil Producers' Agency, Insight Environmental Consultants, Jack Seiler Farms, Jaco Oil Company, Kern County Farm Bureau, Kings County Farm Bureau, Madera County Farm Bureau, Manufacturers Council of the Central Valley, Merced County Board of Supervisors, Nisei Farmers League, Paul Oil Company, Plains Pipeline, L.P, Processes Unlimited International, Inc., Regional Council of Rural Counties, Safeway Industrial Services Division, Salinas Valley CA Women for Agriculture, San Joaquin Unified Air Pollution Control District, Stanislaus County Farm Bureau, Tejon Ranch Company, The Honorable Alan Autry, Mayor, City of Fresno, The Honorable Jim DeMartini, Supervisor (Stanislaus), The Honorable Mike Nelson, Supervisor (Merced), The Honorable William O'Brien, Supervisor (Stanislaus), The Honorable Jack A. Sieglock, Supervisor (San Joaquin) The Honorable Alene Taylor, Supervisor (Kings), The Honorable Jim Wadsworth, Mayor (Corcoran), Thomas Products LLC, Tulare County Farm Bureau, U.S. Rack, LLC, Vector Environmental, Inc., Weatherford, Pacific Area, Western Growers, Western States Petroleum Association, Western United Dairymen, Wholesale Fuels.



You are invited!

Fresno Metro Ministry's 35th Anniversary Dinner and Awards

Thursday, December 1 • 5.30 pm to 8.30 pm • Hope Lutheran Church

Join with us as we celebrate Metro's 35 years and as we honor:

Margaret Hudson, for unleashing the creative spirits and curiosity of school children as they explore her garden wonderland for what is and what can be, for her sculpture and painting with its beauty and imagination, and providing common ground for meeting the common good.

David "Mas" Masumoto, Valley farmer and Valley writer, for unearthing and sustaining in his writing and in his farming the Valley's rich heritage of fertile earth, healthy produce, diverse populations, and caring family traditions and relationships with one another, neighbors, and with the earth.

Champions of Better Air Quality, for the contribution they have made and are making to clean our Valley air so that we can grow healthy children who become healthy adults.

Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno, for constructively engaging other faith groups in conversation, understanding, and community service, and providing a meeting place for others in the community.

The people of Fresno Metro Ministry, who for thirty-five years have engaged in constructive action blending faith commitment with audacity to believe and work together toward the goal that all people in our Valley have health care, healthy food, caring relationships, helping services, housing, a voice in their future, and the clean air they need.

For more information on table reservations, sponsorship and advertising opportunities, e-mail Car-

Penny Mann's Reflections on Metro's 35 years

(Continued from p. 12)

but are turned away. This was just one small moment in a larger community effort to keep VMC from being sold by the Board of Supervisors. We were part of delaying that closure. Several times we used the rituals or the liturgical forms of religious congregations out in the public domain. One Good Friday we gathered outside city hall to do a

"Litany of Loss" which grieved job losses and losses of federal funds for human services. It was based on Luke 19, "When Jesus came in sight of the city he wept over it." Other times we brought dramatic readings or role playing into churches to emphasize the justice teachings of the church and current issues in Fresno.

It is the combination of faith reflection for the purpose of community health and empowerment which makes Metro Ministry effec-

tive, I believe. Despite occasional set backs, we are energized as we stand with others who see a more just and compassionate direction. Our community's life and our individual lives are richer as we act out our faith in the city. The orienting scripture for Metro when we came in 1974 was from Jeremiah 29:7 "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you." It is as relevant and as necessary today as it was then. Many blessings as you move forward into your 36th year!



Metro Ministry Updates

By Rev. Walt Parry, Executive Director

Potential Change in Managed Care Medi-Cal

The State of California appears to be urging that a new structure for providing managed-care Medi-Cal (Medicaid) medical services in Fresno County be adopted. For about the last ten years these services have been structured through a hybrid version of California's "Two-Plan Model." It is a hybrid because the majority of Fresno County Board of Supervisors at the time (Perch, Vagim, and Koligian) voted down a "safety-net oriented Local Initiative" that had been carefully developed through an inclusive community process with primary leadership from Metro Ministry and mediator

Ron Claassen. (Supervisors Levy and Oken had supported the mediated proposal). Because of the majority Supervisors' action, Fresno County ended up with two commercial plans, Blue Cross and Health Net.

The State now seems to be saying that this hybrid version of the Two-Plan model is not good enough. It appears that the State is encouraging Fresno County to adopt a Geographical Managed Care Model. It has been suggested that this new model could be in collaboration with nearby Madera and Kings County that are among thirteen

counties mandated to move from fee-for-service Medi-Cal to managed-care Medi-Cal. The Geographical model would allow any health plan that applies and meets the criteria to participate.

The implications of the various options upon the delivery of health care services that is appropriate medically, culturally, geographically, and linguistically is yet unclear. I was one of the panelists for a two-hour Medi-Cal workshop co-sponsored by Fresno County and the Central Valley Health Policy Institute.

Detour on Road to Child and Adolescent Inpatient Psychiatric Services

Can Central Valley Counties agree to form a Joint Powers Authority with one another that would include collaborative planning and fund development for shared inpatient psychiatric services? **No.**

Can some Central Valley Counties commit in advance to utilizing child and adolescent inpatient psychiatric services in Visalia were Kaweah Delta Hos-

pital were to provide these services? **Maybe.**

Would a commitment from most of the Valley Counties be enough for Kaweah Delta to make the leap to provide these services? **Maybe.**

These two "maybe" questions will soon be discussed by Kaweah Delta and

Valley County representatives. Currently Valley Counties send those children in need of inpatient services to Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Modesto. Metro Ministry led in early discussions on the topic with over 100 community participants. For the last year Metro has been a participant in the effort led by Vera Kennedy of the Child Mental Health Institute at Fresno State.

Community Medical Center's New C.E.O. , University Medical Centers C.E.O., and Fresno County's Communicable Disease Prevention To Be Featured at October 20 Roundtable

Tim Joslin, new C.E.O. for Community Medical Centers will speak at the Thursday, October 20, 7:30 am Community Health Care Roundtable at Trinity Lutheran Church, 3973 N. Cedar Avenue, Fresno. The public is invited to this monthly continental breakfast meeting held the third Thursday of each month.

It is anticipated that Joslin will reveal what its like to step into the leadership of our local largest hospital system as medical needs are up and funding is down. Community had one of its worst financial years last year, largely because of its extensive financial outlays with the new for-profit heart hospital. Community has the contract with Fresno County for medically indigent care, Level 1

Trauma and Burn Center, and clinic services since 1996. It is utilizing its new building on its downtown Regional Medical Center site for emergency and other services, but has not yet moved the UMC campus to the new site. The lack of hospital beds has been one of the primary factors. Joslin's determination to enhance the downtown site to increase the number of insured patients to balance the number of uninsured patients is expected to be one of his topics.

Bruce Kinder, RN, in charge of the University Medical Center site, will reveal the near-meltdown faced by UMC this summer as it had no choice but to divert patients to other hospitals for a few hours. U.M.C. provides the only Level 1 Trauma Center between Los

Angles, Sacramento, and San Francisco. (Children's Hospital Central California is a Level 2 Trauma Center for children. The "Level 1" status denotes those entities that have the trauma staff on site 24 hours a day.)

David Luchini, Division Manager of the Communicable Disease Division of the Fresno County Department of Community Health, will tell about the work of his staff in preventing and dealing with communicable disease. The Roundtables have been featuring one of the seven departments of County Health each month.

Last Month's Roundtable:

The transcripts of the Community Health Care Roundtable are available on Metro's website at www.fresnometroministry.org

Last month **Dr. Dominic Dizon, Medical Director of Ambulatory Care at University Medical Center** spoke about hurricane Katrina. Some of his points: 1) Many of those who remained in New Orleans were waiting for their Medicare or SSI checks had no funds at the end of the month to leave. 2) Tulane

Medical School was probably the best School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in the world, and was wiped out by Katrina. 3) Fresno prepared to do health screenings for up to 400 from Katrina. 4) UMC has opened an after-hours-clinic.

Meg Reeve of Health Access spoke about the prescription drug ballot propositions 78 and 79, saying

- Pharmaceutical companies are spending \$80 million to squash Proposition 79.

- Proposition 78 is supported by the drug industry; Proposition 79 is supported by consumers, health, seniors, and labor groups.

- Proposition 79 has enforcement mechanism; 78 does not.

- Under 79 about twice as many people would be eligible for discounts compared to 78.

- The discounts are unclear with Proposition 78; about 50% under 79.

- Proposition 79 is an enforceable proposition that offers deep discounts to more Californians.

Metro Ministry Updates (continued from p. 9)

By Rev. Walt Parry, Executive Director

Fresno County Board of Supervisors Respond to Grand Jury Recommendation that Fresno County Declare a Health Emergency in Order to Prevent HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C by Making Needle Exchange Programs Legal

In its formal written response, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors voted to forward the County's response to a Grand Jury report on the topic of diseases transmitted, directly or indirectly, by the sharing and reuse of needles and syringes. The response agreed with several findings of the 2004-2005 Grand Jury Report, but disagreed with others.

The County agreed that Fresno County has a large number of intravenous drug users who are at risk for acquiring HIV and, especially, Hepatitis C infections. A recent study revealed that 75% of local injection drug users were infected with Hepatitis C Virus, and that the County Department of Community Health estimates that Fresno County has a high prevalence of injection drug users. The County document also agreed with the Grand Jury assertion that harm-reduction strategies reduce the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C Virus. The County defined harm reduction as a dis-

ease prevention strategy that combines education, counseling, disease testing, health care, drug treatment and access to clean needles. "When clean needle access programs such as needle exchange are included in a comprehensive harm reduction strategy, transmission of disease is reduced," the County response concluded.

Complement of Harm Reduction Services

The document outlined the work of three agencies that provide a complement of harm reduction services. The Fresno County Department of Community Health provides education, counseling, disease testing and referral to drug treatment programs. Secondly, the Fresno County Alcohol and Drug Services Program and its contracted providers offer a full range of education, prevention and treatment services addressing the impact of illicit drugs on individuals and their families. Thirdly, the document

revealed, there is a volunteer organization that provides injection drug users the opportunity to exchange their used needles for clean, uncontaminated needles.

Furthermore, the County response agreed with the Grand Jury that needle and syringe exchange programs do not encourage the use of illegal drugs and do not enhance criminal activity. It also agreed that a legalized needle exchange program, as permitted by State law, would be eligible for increased funding which would subsequently increase clean needle access hours of operation to reach more intravenous drug users and therefore reduce haphazard elimination of contaminated needles and reduce spread of HIV and Hepatitis C Virus.

County Disagrees With Grand Jury Recommendations

However, the Fresno County document disagreed with some of

the statistics used in the Grand Jury Report. It also disagreed with the two recommendations made by the Grand Jury. The first recommendation to which the County disagreed was to establish needle and syringe exchange and purchase programs in accordance with State laws AB136 and SB1159. The County stated that the County has not declared a local emergency and has therefore refrained from participating in needle exchange activities. The Board of Supervisors did request September 27 that the County Department of Community Health under the leadership of the Public Health Officer investigate whether a critical public health crisis exists, and report back to the Board in a month. The County response also disagreed with the other Grand Jury recommendation. That recommendation was that Fresno County establish a relationship with one or more charitable organizations that fund legal needle and syringe exchange programs. The County response was that it will not participate in needle exchange activities until such time that the County determines that a local emergency exists.

My brief comments at the Board meeting indicated that our County's response to the issue must be driven by workable strategies that prevent illness and death. I noted that infection can be passed on to newborn babies and to sexual partners, and that treatment to help people end their addiction is more likely when they have trusting relationships with persons helping them reduce the threat of illness and death.

Now that the Grand Jury has placed this back on the County's agenda there are several conflicting options for the future. One is that Fresno County will declare that a health emergency exists. That would make health-orientated needle exchange programs legal and would facilitate their securing financial support from individuals and foundations. What role County Health would have, if any, would be determined by the County. A second option is that the status quo is continued, with some illness and death prevented for those who utilize the existing small private needle exchange in the community. A third option – and let's hope we don't move in this direction – would be that Fresno County would fail to declare that an emergency exists and then find

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Patsy Finster, Office Assistant

Rev. Kenn Smiley, Cross-Cultural Clusters

ways to terminate the currently operating needle exchange program. Going that third route would only increase disease and death. And of course, most people do not have the money or insurance for the most effective treatment programs that are residential programs. We need access for all to those residential treatment programs.

**"Working together
to build a
better community"**

Fresno Metro Ministry

Reflections on Metro's 35 Years

By Penny Mann

Former Co-Director of Fresno Metro Ministry from 1976—1984

In July of 1976, we packed up four year old Joshua and one year old Lucas and moved from our apartment in Palo Alto to become the co-directors of Fresno Metropolitan Ministry. We were excited by Metro's vision of churches as leaders in the community. At the time we arrived, Southeast Fresno Concerned Citizens, a recently seeded project of Metro Ministry, was in full swing and already had a full time director. The value of

developed many different kinds of educational events with churches which informed our actions in the community. One which was particularly satisfying to me was the Social Ministry Institute held in April of 1983. This was a three day event attended by 45 people representing teams from

ten churches. During the Institute we examined four issues urgent in Fresno at the time and chose two:

pectations? What were the results of our action or inaction? Then we asked, what contemporary similarities are there in Fresno? We did participatory Bible study, issue analysis, action planning and had a lot of fun in the process.

After that Institute we organized a "posada" which went to the doors of Valley Medical Center. We sang the lament that Mary and Joseph sing in that ritual where they seek refuge and hospitality

Continued inside on page 7.

Come celebrate 35 years with us on December 1.

< Details inside on page 7. >

establishing an ongoing organization which could persistently hold public officials accountable and bring marginalized voices to the decision making table was obvious. Metro was unique in its effectiveness and persistence and we were glad to work and serve among so many faithful, committed people. It certainly seems that commitment and faithfulness are still alive and well at Metro Ministry!

Some of the most satisfying work to me was finding ways to deepen Biblical, social and strategic analysis within the churches and carry it out into the community. We

1)The threat of human services funding cuts in both the city and county budgets and 2) the threatened selling of Valley Medical Center by the Board of Supervisors. To awaken our imaginations and strengthen our resolve, we role played some Biblical texts. For example, we looked at Acts 3-4 where a lame beggar is healed by the disciples, the authorities threaten them while a crowd looks on. Some of us played the role of the lame beggars. Others played those in authority or bystanders. Each group asked these questions: What were our choices? What were our ex-



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Working together to build a
better community.