



Breaking the cycle of broken families

by James
Brown
Leadership
Development
Director

After 16 years of commitment to South Linden, we are convinced that sexual immorality is one of the most concrete barriers perpetuating the vicious cycle of poverty here.

Out-of-wedlock births, especially among teens, devastates our community and leaves us with a majority of single-parent households.

Researchers say broken families with absentee fathers have more difficulty rising out of poverty. According to Jacqueline Kirby at The Ohio State University, "Approximately 60 percent of U.S. children living in mother-only families are impoverished, compared with only 11 percent of two-parent families. The rate of poverty is even higher in African-American single-parent families, in which two out of every three children are poor."

promising commitment

In South Linden, about 10 percent of babies are born to mothers 17 years of age and younger. This is one reason we started the Promise Ring ceremony for middle-school girls and the Promise Chain ceremony for middle-school boys.

This event symbolizes a decision to remain abstinent from sex until marriage. Participants attend a five-week class on God's perspective for sexuality and marriage, and discuss reasons for remaining abstinent until married. This year, eight young ladies and four young men made that commitment.

This year, Promise Ring candidates from the past shared how important the event was in their lives,

and encouraged their peers to continue doing the right thing.

I participated in the Promise Ring Ceremony for girls, and I was happy to see uncles and grandmothers, along with siblings, share how proud they were to see their sisters take a stand.

One grandmother stopped me outside the ceremony in tears of joy and thanked us for our work with her granddaughter. She encouraged us to continue the work.

Two of our indigenous leaders, Tim Williams and Cheron Banks, conducted the Promise Chain ceremony with the young men.

Tim says, "This Promise Chain series is a time like no other. The young men squirm and giggle as we cover the material, but we take advantage of the opportunity to discuss these important issues.

"It's a great time of bonding. Eventually they let their guard down and talk openly about their thoughts and true feelings."



Out-of-wedlock births, especially among teens, devastates our community and leaves it with a majority of single-parent households.

below: Middle-school girls receive their promise rings.



restoring hope

Building progress

To date,
\$2.2 million
has been
pledged—
67 percent
of our goal!

Since our last newsletter, we've made great progress on our project to build a new facility to house Urban Concern's programs and Harambee Christian School. Harambee Community Center will serve as a life center for the South Linden community. Thanks to all of the volunteers and investors for their time and support to the Harambee Capital Campaign.

Here's an update on where we're at:

- **Land purchased.** We now own two parcels on Bonham Avenue, the site of the new facility, including plenty of room for parking and play areas.
- **Architectural design.** Meacham & Apel Architects, Inc., is working on a design for current classes and a gym/auditorium, future expansion of the school, and plenty of office space for the School and Urban Concern program staff.
- **Campaign materials.** A professionally designed brochure and DVD are available to share with prospective investors.

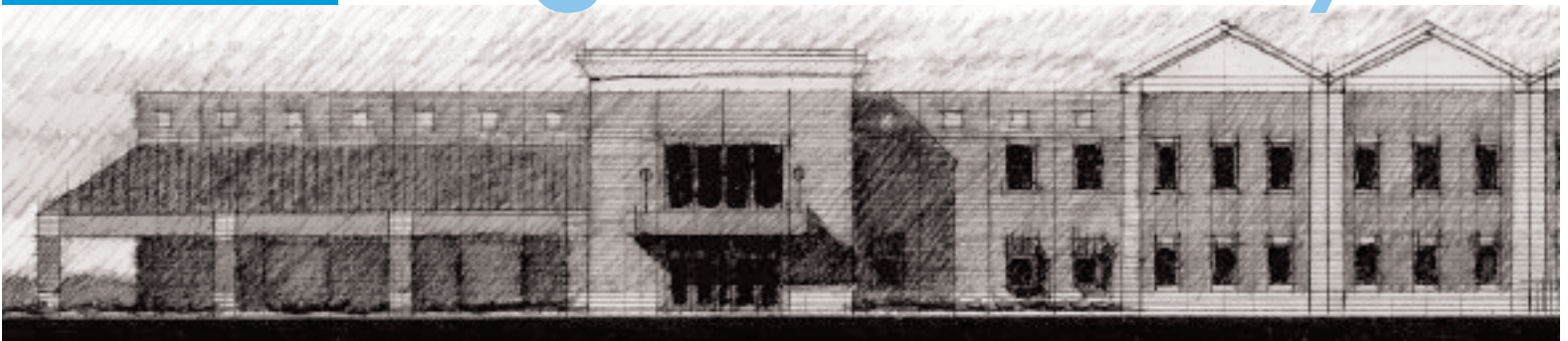
■ **Campaign update.** The goal of the Capital Campaign was raised from \$2.9 million to \$3.25 million to include important features. Xenos Christian Fellowship has increased their commitment from \$1 million to \$2 million, bringing the total amount pledged to \$2.2 million or 67 percent of our goal!

■ **Construction timeframe.** We hope to break ground in July, pending our fund-raising progress.

Would you like to get involved? You can! Help us by prayer support, financially or by connecting us to potential investors for this project. Please contact Alex Steinman at (614) 291-0885 x 115 or SteinmanAl@xenos.org.

More information, including reasons why we're building a new facility, may be found on our website at www.urbanconcern.org or by calling Urban Concern at (614) 291-0885.

building community



"F.I.T" Families in Transition meets the needs of single parents

by Donna Spengler



Wilma Collins leads the Parent Partnership ministry

Many families in the South Linden community are led by single females. These women work hard, but usually at very low wages. Many need more education or work experience to acquire a better-paying job. They often need better furniture and appliances for their living quarters.

Urban Concern's Parent Partnership reaches out to single parents to spiritually strengthen, equip and mobilize them to better lead their families and serve the South Linden community.

The F.I.T. or Families in Transition program gives single moms a strong ministry support team of at least six Christian women who help address their "felt" needs. As the family is supported, it alleviates the overwhelming stress single mothers face so they can become stable, have more choices and eventually become self-supporting; or better yet, become a support to other single parents.

After the ministry team has met their families' needs, the head of the household has an opportunity to join the Support Team and reach out to another family in the community.

Some of the support provided by the team includes help with transportation, child care, connections to community resources and services to help open doors to new opportunities. However, the parent will do as much as they can for themselves.

As Galatians 6:2 says, "Bear one another's burdens and thereby fulfill the law of Christ." Yet, we're also reminded not to do for others what they can do for themselves: "For each one will bear his own load" (v. 5).

Parent Partnership wishes to keep this perspective, and empower, rather than create long-term dependency.

developing leaders

Another excellent year at Harambee School

by Alex Steinman

Once again, Harambee School exceeded academic expectations and has completed another successful year!

For the fifth year in a row, Harambee School increased its average score on the battery of tests in the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT).

Sixty-one percent of our low-income students scored above the national average. This is up from 52 percent last year and exceeds our goal of 60 percent!

Our other major academic goal was for low-income students to average in the 55th percentile in reading and math, which they also exceeded (58th for reading and 64th for math).

We commend the students for their hard work, and our committed staff and volunteers for their diligence. Additionally, Urban Concern's After School Program helped the students complete their homework each night.

Thanks to everyone for supporting our school through the Scholarship Campaign and other activities.

Harambee increased its score on the MAT for the fifth year.



Funding academic excellence through scholarships

by Donna Spengler

How do we fund Harambee Christian School (HCS)? It costs Urban Concern \$4,500 per year to educate one child at HCS which is considerably less than area districts.

HCS parents make an investment in their child's future by paying tuition each month based on their income. Some families can afford to pay the entire amount, whereas most contribute an average of \$400 per year—well below the actual cost needed. That's why we started the HCS Scholarship Campaign.

Each year we set a goal for funding Scholarships to HCS. This year's goal is \$82,000, of which Xenos Christian Fellowship pledged \$22,000 through its Humanitarian Aid and Development Fund. (See www.xenos.org.) We hope other churches will join Xenos and make a pledge.

As of June, 77 people have given \$16,580 or 20 percent of the total goal.

In the fall, any student attending elementary schools in academic emergency may apply for vouchers through Ohio EdChoice Scholarship. We hope many families in South Linden take advantage of this opportunity.

Harambee School is achieving results beyond our dreams.

Please join us by contributing any amount you can afford, so these children can receive a great education and become the young leaders this community needs.

To make a campaign pledge, just download information from our website at www.urbanconcern.org by clicking on HCS Scholarship Campaign.

HCS and its students are extremely grateful for your support through the Scholarship Campaign.



Urban Concern's mission is to empower individuals and families to be agents of positive change in South Linden. Activities include an After School Program, summer Job Club, Bible studies, Parent Partnership and a private Christian school.

The work of Urban Concern staff and volunteers in South Linden is nationally and locally recognized: designated as one of the White House's Thousand Points of Light, and receiving the World Vision Mustard Seed Award and Columbus Dispatch Community Service Award.

www.urbanconcern.org

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Urban Concern's Board last met at Xenos Christian Fellowship on December 6, 2005.

URBAN CONCERN

1478 Cleveland Avenue, Columbus, OH 43211

- | | |
|--|--|
| Dave Glover
(614) 823-6510 x 136 | Executive Director
GloverD@xenos.org |
| Holly Borghese
(614) 291-0885 x 129 | PT Grant Writer
BorgheseH@xenos.org |
| James Brown
(614) 291-0885 x 121 | Leadership Development Director
BrownJ@xenos.org |
| Wilma Collins
(614) 291-0885 x 120 | Parent Partnership Director
CollinsW@xenos.org |
| Wakeshia Harris
(614) 291-0885 x 128 | After School Program Director
HarrisW@xenos.org |
| Donna Spengler
(614) 291-0885 x 127 | Office Manager
SpenglerD@xenos.org |

HARAMBEE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

1474 Cleveland Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43211

- | | |
|--|--|
| Alex Steinman
(614) 291-0885 x 115 | Principal
SteinmanAl@xenos.org |
| Teresa Foster
(614) 291-0885 x 110 | Administrative Assistant
FosterT@xenos.org |

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 1478 Cleveland Avenue
 Columbus, Ohio 43211
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