

Redeemer Community Partnership Building Better Neighborhoods

South Central Los Angeles

Winter 2011

How do you find **39 neighbors** who want to study the Bible?

Close a street on Halloween. Line the block with bales of straw, games, jumpers, and a Taco Truck. Then offer a raffle and community interest survey to the 500+ participants. Members of a local congregation, Church of the Redeemer, have been busy visiting those who expressed interest in Bible studies, prayer groups or youth programs. One of these people is our friend Jeannette, who attended last year's Carnival with her family. Through the community survey they asked about and eventually joined a weekly Bible study. Now she is helping others in our community find their place in the family of faith!



Jeannette with husband, Roberto, and son, Christopher

Restoring streets & hearts

Los Angeles has a \$1.5 billion backlog in sidewalk repairs. The raised and broken concrete forces our neighbors in wheelchairs into the streets alongside traffic. Routine trips to the grocery store are complex and perilous. Several of our friends have sustained serious injuries on the sidewalks including broken bones after catapulting from their wheelchairs.

Two years ago RCP partnered with a local congregation to map and prioritize the repairs, gather signatures from neighbors, and advocate for funding. We won a \$1 million commitment from the City to

make the repairs. Phase 1 is now complete!

A few doors down from my home sits a large apartment complex serving tenants with cerebral palsy. The impact of level sidewalks on their daily life cannot be overstated. But the impact of this experience on hearts may be even greater. Through organizing, sharing their stories and advocating for their own needs my neighbors down the street saw a "concrete" change in the community come about. In addition, several campaign volunteers reported feeling more at home in their community now that they are on a waving and talking

basis with those around them. One group, moved by the needs they encountered while collecting signatures, began a weekly prayer time on their block. All who participated gained a deeper understanding of what it means to love your neighbor.

We hope these sidewalks will serve as a local monument of sorts, reminding each of us what's possible when neighbors dream and work together. And in a culture where churches are often detached from their surrounding neighborhood, I am delighted by the church's witness to a loving God who redeems shattered lives and broken sidewalks.



The policy of laying off school teachers by seniority means that when the budget axe falls, it falls hardest on inner-city children whose schools have a high proportion of new teachers. The school where my sons Jordan and Isaiah attend lost 34% of its teachers in 2010, while schools on the wealthier Westside lost none.

Imagine our indignation when the attack on our children's education continued this Fall. Our dedicated, talented and much beloved school librarian was abruptly transferred to another school. Her replacement immediately closed the library during lunch and limited children to checking out just one book per week.

A group of moms who volunteer in the library asked if I would help write a letter to get our librarian back. When they presented their request at the school governance meeting our principal's director told them it was impossible, the superintendent could not help, and if they pursued this cause it would sow disharmony and harm student achievement.

We listened politely and proceeded to pray and organize. Over two days we gathered support from every teacher and more than 250 parents. Two weeks later, our prayers were answered. Ms. Dolores returned, and students are again reading in the library during lunch and checking out three books a week. A new sense of hope is taking root among our parents.

In all these things--redeemed lives, repaired sidewalks, and restored school staff--we take joy in a God whose first impulse toward us is love. We also give thanks for all of you who support this work of community transformation in Jesus' name. Merry Christmas!

Richard Parks
Executive Director



Wishing you and your
family a very

*Merry
Christmas*

from all of us at
Redeemer Community
Partnership!

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P.O. Box 180499, Los Angeles, CA 90018 (323) 733-6173