

SENIOR NEWS

Churches offer Drive Thru prayer services

Special to the Answer
 By Vincent Funaro and
 Ravelle Mohammed

Drive Thru's usually consist of burgers fries and sodas, but Calvary First Assembly of God Church in Stockton, Calif., is offering up something different on their menu: prayer.

On the city's "Serve Our Stockton Day" the parishioners of the church lined up along the sides of the streets holding signs asking drivers if they needed prayer.

"We spend some time praying for them and they drive right on out and go about their business," said the church's pastor, Larry Rust, to Fox 40 news.

Rust believes this style of offer-

ing prayer is efficient in today's society where everyone is constantly on the go. "I think one of the things we realize is that we live in a very busy society," said Rust.

The pastor also believes that prayer is exactly what Stockton residents need at this time.

"Just a lot of different needs, the crisis that Stockton is in and people are hurting today and we believe that prayer is the answer to that," said Rust. "And the needs have the church praying for things like people's finances, their children, their marriages, their foreclosures and their physical needs."

"We just came here to get prayed for to make our life easier," said Taliyatha Hill, a woman who pulled

up with her family for a quick prayer, to Fox 40 News.

But this is not the first time churches have offered Drive Thru prayer.

Back in April, it was reported that Chandler Church in Texas was using this same method of offering prayer.

Pastor Roger Storms and Matt Myers of Chandler Church explained in an interview that Drive Thru prayer was very successful in reaching people outside the church and highly beneficial to the community.

They also said they were not trivializing prayer using this method and that the response from the community was positive.

Back in 2009, ABC reported on Matthew Cordell of Queen Creek, Arizona, a man who also offered prayer to drivers by setting up a stand on the side of the road.

Drive Thru prayer seems to be spreading.

The senior citizens of Memorial United Methodist Church in High Point, North Carolina are offering up a side order of faith with their new drive-thru prayer service.

Edith Southerland has told The Christian Post she presented the idea to her ministry group after reading about another church that had successfully executed the service.

She said, "There's such a need for prayer in these times that I

thought we could have a drive-thru prayer."

Those in the "Silver and Gold" ministry as they like to call themselves, because almost everyone is at least 60-years-old, meet every Tuesday from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. - welcoming those in need of prayer.

According to Southerland, volunteers would stand at the entrance of the church parking lot, holding up signs inviting residents to stop in for a chat and to pray.

Southerland told CP, the drive-thru prayer allowed her to "go outside the walls of the church as we are commanded to do."

She added that she was "humbled" to be able to help those who had started to lose hope.

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CHRISTIAN NEWS

Ministry Helps the Valley's Growing Homeless Population

By Amanda Wynant
Answer Staff Writer

A recent report from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development estimated the homeless population in Las Vegas at just over 16,000. Another report, from The National Alliance to End Homelessness, gives Nevada the award for having the highest percentage of homeless people in the country. With the Las Vegas economy in the tank, more and more are becoming homeless every day. Sadly, the silver state lacks funds to help them get back on their feet.

Figures like these are what prompted a group of six concerned individuals to begin a ministry called W.I.N.G.S. It stands for: Wellness-Independence-Networking-Goals-Success. W.I.N.G.S. is a ministry that provides help for below poverty level people and women with children in Clark County. Over the past 6 years, W.I.N.G.S. has helped more than 200 people to find help and re-enter society after living on the streets.

B.J. Rice, 51, of Northwest Las Vegas is the President and founder of the program. She said, "The Lord

ministered to my heart about helping the individuals that were living on the streets who didn't have employment or a permanent place to live." That's when she and a few others founded W.I.N.G.S. and they've been working hard to help those who need it ever since.

The program provides participants with housing, food and clothing, onsite childcare, transportation and basic life skills training. Rice says, "We provide families with housing at a very low cost. They reside in the facility 3-4 months max. By living in the facility, the clients regain control of their basic living and financial needs." W.I.N.G.S. also provides job related assistance and advice. The W.I.N.G.S. workshops assist people in preparing resumes, filing out job applications, interviewing skills, job readiness, work place etiquette and dressing for success.

Rice related a story about a woman who had lost both her husband and her job within six months and was about to be evicted from her apartment – with no money. "She was nervous and really confused. I could tell she was scared and didn't know what to do." Rice

called HELP of Southern Nevada, an organization that assists families and individuals to attain self sufficiency through direct services, training and referral to community resources. She spoke with the director who immediately stopped the woman's eviction and made arrangements with the property leasing office to pay all of her back rent and late charges. Rice recounts, "The next two days I went to the Texas Station Employment Office with the client to seek employment." Rice was successful in helping the client to find employment, maintain her housing and get back on her feet financially.

"I look back over so many things God did and all I can do is give him all the praise and glory," says Rice.

Rice says, "W.I.N.G.S. provides clients with support group sessions and seminars designed to provide helpful hints and solutions to challenges they've experienced in the past, challenges to expect in the future, success stories and stumbling blocks." They also have a job placement assistance program to help provide clients with jobs. Wal Mart and Station Casinos, as well as other local businesses, have hired

W.I.N.G.S. participants in the past and continue to work with Rice and her staff to provide jobs to those seeking employment.

As for housing, W.I.N.G.S. provides a homelike environment to individuals and families in an effort to rebuild self-esteem, self-sufficiency and to promote independent living. However, the ultimate goal is to help their clients successfully obtain employment and housing. According to Rice, W.I.N.G.S. has agreements with housing management complexes to waive a portion of general move-in fees for their clients.

Rice says, "Upon completion of the total program 70-75% [of participants] will achieve the outcome measurements set, and will return back into our society with higher self esteem, self sufficiency, independent living, a stable job, Birth Certificate, State ID, Social Security card and employment cards (Health card, TAM card and Sheriff card)."

In February, this year, the group opened a thrift store, in North Las Vegas, to help fund the W.I.N.G.S. program. Rice volunteers in the store, along with 7 other volunteer

staff members. They accept donations of clothing, shoes, small appliances and other miscellaneous items.

The organization has need of a 9,000 square foot facility to house 30 people. They estimate a price tag of one million dollars for the building. Rice says, "The thrift store is one of our many fundraisers to generate funds to purchase the facility of interest." However, they rely on donations and support from individuals, churches and small groups. "If we could get one million people to donate one dollar, that would be a true blessing."

The group is beginning a Gospel fundraising brunch that they will hold the last Sunday in every month.

The first brunch will be held on September 24th. Contact B.J. Rice for more information on time and location visit the website at: bjrice@asecondchancethriftstore.com.

To donate goods, services or monetary gifts, stop by the thrift store at 2815 West Lake Mead Blvd., in North Las Vegas. The hours are Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 6 PM and Saturday, 10 AM to 6 PM.

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CHRISTIAN NEWS

Local family business rocks new look



By Victoria Hawkins
The Answer Staff Writer

Danger Wear Clothing Company started out as a childhood dream that came to fruition in 2002 when husband and wife team, Veronica and Maxwell Edwards began running their newfound clothing business right out of their home. The name originally intended to brand a clothing line, has instead grown into a family business specializing in meeting all mens' clothing needs. Those who are familiar with the company may have noticed over the past couple months that the store has seemingly disappeared. The good news is that they have recently moved into a new and improved building of their own at 1030 N. Rancho Drive, Las Vegas 89106.

Veronica and Maxwell are the dynamic duo behind Danger Wear. Their complimentary personalities and strengths go beyond their marriage and reflect in their roles as business partners as well. "I'm more of the sales rep, he is the manager," shared Veronica noting Maxwell's previous business ventures including an antique shop and landscaping. His experience coupled with her vision has helped them get to where they are today. "I'm not afraid to dream big and he knows how to make it happen." With the help of her son, Daivon Watts and her sister Rhonda Watts, the family runs their business under the mission of providing satisfactory service to everyone they meet.

"We try to be humble and pleasing to customers, we are representatives of Christ and us are in His image and want everyone to have a great experience on leaving. We want to make sure everyone's treated right," said Veronica.

Connecting with people on a real level and establishing genuine relationships with the customers al-

lows Danger Wear owners to meet the needs of their clients. "When you learn about your customers you learn what they like, you have to learn the likes and dislikes," said Veronica. Being hands on in terms of fit, styling, and price bracketing helps customers to get the most out of their experience and feel at home. There is no fuss or rush either, because the family serves as personal shoppers ready to give quality direction and advice.

Daivon explained to his mother how recently he had someone come in at 11am and stay until about 6pm. This is just one example of the length of time they are willing spend to help anyone who walks through the door. "We have very good personal relationship with the customers. It's almost like counseling; they become friends who keep coming back," Daivon said. This investment gives customers the unique opportunity to come in and express what they would like to wear and have the staff to make that look happen.

This commitment to people is born of a steadfast belief that faith should influence how they conduct themselves both personally and professionally. They credit fellowship at their home church, Nehemiah Ministries, for teaching them how to run a sound business and be financially responsible in biblical terms. "Learning under such a strong ministry has helped us grow and prosper running a Christian business. God is good, when you submit to Him, He will give you the desires of your heart," Veronica said. The past five years leading up to the move is proof enough for her that even childhood desires can come true, especially when the priority is pleasing God first. According to Veronica, she and her sister Rhonda, have dreamt of having a business and clothing store since they were little (Danger

Wear focuses on mens' clothing but has a growing womens' section). "It started with me and my sister and now me and my husband. Putting God first made the difference, trusting Him in the hard times. I truly trust Him to keep the doors open or close them, I just show up and serve people," she said.

The servant's heart and dedication this family has displayed over

the course of God's making their dream to reality has enabled them to open their new storefront a couple months ago. Danger Wear continues to offer discounts on great quality clothing for already inexpensive prices. From casual to formal, there is a wide selection including name brands, for just about any man and for any occasion."If you want to go to church, to a con-

cert, or to school," Veronica says they've got it covered, "even if you're just going bowling or out eat."

Danger Wear Clothing Company is now located at 1030 North Rancho Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89106. Call (702) 433-1330 or visit their Facebook page for further reviews, promotions, and sales information.

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CHURCH NEWS

Houses of Worship feeling the financial woes of recession

By Toni Terrell
Editor in Chief

With Las Vegas still leading the pack in foreclosures nearly four years after the announcement of the country's recession, the effect on houses of worship has surfaced and the pictures aren't pretty.

The massive wave of defaults that started with subprime borrowers and the unemployed has spread to upscale homeowners and church congregations who can no longer afford their places of worship or see no point in paying.

The Church at South Las Vegas, known for its outreach to prostitutes in Sin City, filed for bankruptcy protection recently and members of the church agreed to not pay the mortgage after they discovered they owed the bank more than triple the amount the church building was worth.

The 23,635 square foot edifice is only worth \$2.375 million while more than \$7.653 million is owed in mortgage, according to reports listed in Vegas Inc.

"After much deliberation, the leaders and the congregation said, we don't want our donations to keep going down a black hole with no light at the end of the tunnel," said Pastor Benny Perez to The Christian Post. "So, it became a stewardship issue. We stopped making payments [on] May 1."

Perez, pastor to the 4,000 mem-

ber church, said that First Bank, the church's largest creditor, took action against the church when the plan to default on mortgage payments surfaced. First Bank filed a lawsuit against The Church at South Las Vegas in June seeking to foreclose the property and appoint someone over the church's finance.

Leaders of the church were unaware of its "upside-down" mortgage status until an appraisal of the property was received during their plans to construct a new worship center. Reports show church attorneys tried to negotiate with the bank to reduce the principal down to \$2.5 million after they discovered the property's true value, but the bank refused.

The Las Vegas church does not stand alone in its financial woes during this economic storm. The past few years have seen a rapid acceleration in the number of churches losing their sanctuaries because they can't pay the mortgage.

Just as homeowners borrowed too much or built too big during boom times, many churches followed the trend and now are struggling as their congregations shrink and collections drop because of rising unemployment and the weak economy.

Since 2008, nearly 200 religious facilities have been foreclosed on by banks, up from eight during the

previous two years and virtually none in the decade before that, according to real-estate services firm CoStar Group, Inc. Analysts and bankers say hundreds of additional churches face financial struggles so severe they could face foreclosure or bankruptcy in the near future.

Nationwide, nearly two-thirds of congregations saw their income drop during the recession, according to a study released this past week by an inter-faith group of researchers. Congregations of all sizes and denominations in all parts of the country felt the impact.

The Miami Archdiocese closed 13 struggling South Florida parishes and seven Catholic schools. The archdiocese also cut funding for its pro-life office and pregnancy care centers.

At Coral Ridge Presbyterian, one of Fort Lauderdale's largest churches, giving spiraled down as most other churches. That dip was especially pronounced in the younger members, Director of Communications Vinny Cesar reported.

More than 90 metro Atlanta churches were posted for prospective foreclosure from 2006 to 2010, according to a review by the

Kennesaw-based real estate research firm Equity Depot for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. At the end of the day, roughly 50 of those churches were actually lost through foreclosure proceedings. Of 113 churches currently listed for sale in metro Atlanta, at least 33 are foreclosures or churches in serious financial trouble, estimated Rick Arzet, an associate broker with Prudential Georgia Realty, who specializes in churches. Although that's just a small fraction of the churches that dot the Atlanta landscape, the situation is the worst he's seen in 40 years.

"Churches are the tail on the dog," Arzet said. "The people in churches are the same people who are your neighbors," he said — the same people who are losing jobs and cutting back on spending and that includes donations to the collection plate.

"This is one case where there are a lot of similarities between the secular world and the religious world," said Chris Macke, a senior real estate strategist for CoStar Group, a Washington, D.C.-based real estate services firm that monitors the phenomenon.

In many cases, pastors built

larger churches at the crest of the economic boom expecting good times to continue forever, he speculated. When projections changed and the population growth didn't appear, many churches were left facing large loans and dwindling revenue.

Some small churches, predominantly African-American congregations, dominate the foreclosure lists. But statistics show medium-sized congregations and even one megachurch with debts of more than \$18 million has shown up also.

After battling financial difficulties for several years, Crystal Cathedral Ministries declared bankruptcy last October. Church spokesmen say that will allow the ministry, known for its soaring glass building and global weekly broadcasts, to reorganize and repay its many debts. But money may not be the only problem.

The fate of the towering, 31-year-old church, famed for its 10,000 panes of glass, is playing out in bankruptcy court, following the ministry's filing for Chapter 11 protection after falling \$50 million in debt.

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