



February 2011

Dear Friends,

### **LIGHT**

How many of you are ready for a *lighter* month? I mean LIGHT in 2 distinct ways: opposite of heavy and absence of darkness. As I've been actively connecting out there, I am noticing that at this moment things feel heavier than normal and darkness seems quite present. This calls for prayer, praise and perseverance. Prayer: casting all our cares on Him and coming under His yoke; Praise: because a spirit of heaviness is exchanged for a garment of praise; and Perseverance because we will reap a harvest in due time if we don't give up.

### **SHINES IN THE DARKNESS:**

Probation, area hotels, lower income neighborhoods, a school for pregnant & parenting teens and now a continuation school are all soliciting mentoring help from Project 18. Answering this cry from our community provides a source of hope for these kids. For everyone involved, it's definitely a bright spot in life. This just in from the mom of a mentee:

*My son's mentor is a true blessing in our life and goes above and beyond the call of mentoring! His teachers, friends and psychiatrist have noticed how much happier he is and how his confidence level is improving... You have my utmost gratitude and thanks. I know it in my heart God paired them up! Miracles are an awesome sight and I get to see one every time they are together.*

And from one of our mentors:

*I was paired up with a young, sullen teen who had vandalized a local business. We have been hanging out a lot and recently went to see the snow fall on the lake. The boy said, "This was the best day of my life ever!" A total attitude shift is occurring. Both the mentor, the family and the boy are stoked.*

We also get troubling news occasionally. One of our young mentees tried unsuccessfully to end his life this month. That's about all I can say, except that we are definitely on the front line of life and death for many of our teens. Katie Cassidy from Public Health trained our mentors this month on practical tools for suicide prevention. Shasta County's youth suicide rate is nearly twice the state-wide rate, and nationwide, 25% of our youth have contemplated suicide. This is where the rubber meets the road and we are *ever learning as we engage* the people groups around us!

### **CALLED TO MAKE TRANSFORMATION TANGIBLE:**

The difference between a "vision for transformation" and "actual transformation" lies in sacrificial, grace-filled, loving action that engages and positively affects society. In order to see a city transformed, a certain

(over please)



Encouraging students at Simpson University



Project 18 mentor training - Suicide Prevention



8 new mentor matches made this month



Fabulous February Facelift Finale!

measure of tangibility is required. Tangibility is a daydream without engagement. Engaging the community often gets back-burnered because we are focused on “making disciples.” But Jesus made disciples in the context of engaging people as He was going. He was doing 2 things at once: making a positive impact at street level AND discipling others to do the same. His disciples learned *while* doing rather than *before* doing. We don't want to be 'backstage in the dressing room preparing for a big entrance,' while someone else is showing the nations how to live!

### **MINISTRY PRACTICUM:**

For five days this month, I was able to share vision and the practical action of transformation with Simpson students. By the end of each session, many commented they had been thinking too small. They saw the mandate to disciple nations more clearly and learned about prayer evangelism from Luke 10. Some even expressed interest in helping at-risk teens alongside us. Inspiring and mobilizing young people is fun and we hope to have more of these opportunities!

### **THE CROSSING: OUR WORK COMPLETED**

This month we held 4 work days at the Crossing; we removed moldy carpet, got some leaks fixed, prepared the back dock area, painted hallways, removed worn out seating and readied the stage for its new design. Various contractors and architectural designers are helping because people with expertise are now needed to finish the job. Approximately \$50K in renovations still awaits, so pray for the March 19 fundraiser to be successful. Redding Transformation voluntarily stepped down from interim-directing the Crossing due to a variety of reasons. We believe in the vision and need for a space like this, but found a dual leadership model too difficult to navigate. We ask you to continue to pray for the success of this center.

### **GRANT FAVOR**

We have been meeting weekly with a community consortium writing a proposal to reduce gang activity in Redding. This is a large federal grant with many community players including the county schools and city police. The grant will be submitted this week and we will also present a local grant request to the Community Development Advisory Council. Please keep both of these mentorship funding opportunities in prayer as they are being considered.

**PRAYER and CONNECTING**As we look to the immediate future, we see more connecting work ahead. We envision a period of prayer as well as strategic conversations with you and other key teammates in the coming weeks and months. We will be gathering focus groups to discuss the strategic fronts for our community and engage in prayer on the following dates:

**Tuesdays, March 22 and 29 at noon**

**Saturdays, April 2 and 9 at 9 am.**

Please let us know if you'd like to come to one of these and which time is best for you. Location of gatherings TBD. Know this, we are thinking regionally, seeing a grander picture of practical works (like building up entrepreneurship, establishing a hope center in a broken south county neighborhood, spearheading a region-wide conference on transformation in order to plant the paradigms and principles deep into good soil, expanding mentoring and so much more) and we desire to partner with you in both prayer and action!

*Walking in the light,*



Jon and Natalia Thompson