

## **Benton Harbor Summer Outreach Mission Trip**

**Date: August 13-14, 2015**

**Focus:** Provide interactive, engaging, multi-level activities that follow the model of Healthy Living and Health Promotion.

**Target audience:** The underserved population of Benton Harbor, the faith community of St. John's Catholic Church and the Catholic Community Center.

**Coordinator of Mission Trip:** Kathy Ford RN/Parish Nurse-630-922-0081 ex. 28, pastoralcare@hsccl.us

### **Why Benton Harbor:**

There are many positive reasons why Holy Spirit Catholic Community is vesting itself in outreach with St. John's Catholic Church in Benton Harbor:

1. Our pastor, Fr. Dennis, has had a relationship with the diocese of East Lansing that goes back to his days as an associate in East Lansing Michigan. He has developed many pastoral relationships over the years. Over the past 4 years, Holy Spirit Catholic Community has provided donations and monetary gifts to the Catholic Community Center to help their food pantry and clothing distribution site. This year, Holy Spirit provided the Catholic Community Center with 6 computers and money to aid in the establishment of computer classes on site so that the underserved could have an opportunity to learn a skill for entry level jobs.
2. St. John's values align with Holy Spirit's values of living out our faith by sharing God's truth, love, and gifts with all people.
3. The community of Benton Harbor that surrounds St. John's is very impoverished and underserved. Benton Harbor is only a two hour drive from Naperville and we wanted to participate in a project that focused all of our energies and resources on a short term mission that would have the biggest impact on the lives of those we serve with appropriate follow up. Follow up care and compliance of those who participate at the health screenings can be tracked easily by the Catholic Community Center and Lakeland Health Care System.

### **About Benton Harbor:**

**Population:** 10,020

**Unemployment for Benton Harbor:** 17.3%

**Poverty Level Benton Harbor:** 48.5% **Poverty Level Michigan:** 16.3%

**Median Resident Age:** 28.3 **Michigan Median Age:** 40.9

**Estimated median household income Benton Harbor:** \$17,788

**Estimated median household income Michigan:** \$46,859

**Race Percentages Benton Harbor:** Black-88%, white-6.4%, Hispanic-2.2%, Asian-.002%

## **The Catholic Community Center**

The Catholic Community Center was built from donated funds on the property of St. John's Catholic Church in 2006 to deal with the social service needs of a once thriving community. But after economic difficulties, racial tensions, and crime, Benton Harbor is a shell of it's former self. It is currently run by Sr. Maureen McGrath OP. She ministers to mostly an African American community.

The Center provides a caring Christian presence to the people in the Benton Harbor area. Its community outreach services provide information, personal support and assistance with food, utilities and other basic needs. The Center is run totally by volunteers and donations. Volunteers are used for working in the food pantry as well loading/unloading groceries, etc. and packing bags of food for food distribution days.

A Parish Nurse from St. John's comes in monthly on food pantry distribution days to perform blood pressure screenings and answer any health related questions.

Soon, a renovated room that once was the clothing distribution site at the Center will have computer classes open to the community.

Behind the Catholic Community Center, a parcel of property that once was considered a "drug house", is now leveled and fruits and vegetables are grown to supplement the food pantry items.

**"Step Into Health"** event on August 13-14, 2015, will provide the Benton Harbor Community with tools to help them live fuller and healthier lives with health screenings, interactive and engaging activities that show how to make right choices, and alternative and creative ways to incorporate movement, spirituality, nutrition, and emotional well being into their daily lives.

## **Back to School Back Packs and Supplies**

In addition to this outreach opportunity, Holy Spirit Catholic Community will start a back pack collection with pencils and notebooks. This collection will start the weekend of **June 27-28** and will end the weekend of **August 1-2**.

*Any questions regarding the collection of back packs or the mission trip can be directed to Kathy Ford RN/Parish Nurse/Coordinator of Pastoral Care at 630-922-0081 ex. 28 or through [pastoralcare@hsc.us](mailto:pastoralcare@hsc.us).*