

## **Volunteering Can Make a Difference for You** **By Tom Schroeder, member Immanuel Lutheran Church, Palatine**

*Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. Romans 15:17*

Becoming involved in a cause or an organization allows one to experience some amazing things. Certainly, volunteering can make a difference for many of the people being helped. But what about you? Are you being changed in a way that makes a difference in your life?

Recently, I had the opportunity to experience some amazing things by volunteering my time for several Lutheran Church Charities activities. Through Lutheran Church Charities' human care ministries, I have witnessed Christ's presence in many people whose generosity, commitment, love and caring spirit help make a difference in the lives of others everyday.

On September 15<sup>th</sup>, I visited Kum Bah Yah House, a baby wellness clinic at Ebenezer Lutheran Church in Chicago. Then on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, I visited Tabor Lutheran Church in Chicago to see and learn about Discovery Time, a weekly gathering of three- to 10-year olds; and later that day, I visited the home a refugee family from Liberia now living in Chicago. Lutheran Church Charities has been working with both of these churches to locate and coordinate volunteers and donations.

### **Kum Bah Yah House**

Kum Bah Yah House, established out of a partnership between Ebenezer and St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Park Ridge, opened in November 1986. This partnership was developed to address the community's need for affordable baby wellness programs. The infant mortality rate in the North Lawndale community was the highest in the nation. Through the efforts of 11 volunteers and three nurses, the baby clinic provides wellness checkups and developmental assessments for children ages two months to two years, and provides health information and guidance to parents. The North Lawndale community has experienced a significant decrease in infant mortality. Kum Bah Yah House also distributes diapers, handmade baby blankets, formula, wipes and clothing for these young children. They rely on donations for all of these items. Over the last three years Lutheran Church Charities has arranged for the donation of furniture, a freezer, food, baby clothing and supplies to help meet these needs.

### **Discovery Time**

Tabor Lutheran Church is a small congregation of about 70 members, yet is reaching out to the community through various youth programs. Each Saturday, approximately 20 children spend two hours worshipping, singing, praying, learning Bible stories and working on arts and crafts that relate to the day's theme through a new program called Discovery Time. On September 30<sup>th</sup>, Tabor Lutheran extended its youth outreach by opening G-Force, a new youth center for children from 6<sup>th</sup> grade through high school. Now these children have a safe environment where they can come to know Christ. Lutheran Church Charities has supplied Discovery Time with donations of food, clothing, school supplies, Christmas gifts as well as coordinating volunteers to work with the children.

### **The Sombala Family**

In 2006, the Sombala family, fled persecution in their homeland of Liberia. Daniel and Sia, their eight children and three extended family members came to Chicago to start a new life. For 18 months, the family has attended Tabor and lived in a sparsely furnished, three-bedroom, two-flat on Chicago's North Side. Tabor contacted Lutheran Church Charities to put a request in their weekly Making A Difference newsletter for furniture and household items for the family.

While awaiting the Lutheran Church Charities truck and trailer loaded with furniture and household items for the Sombala family, I visited with the children. For 1 ½ hours, Dorothy, James and I sat on the bare floor of their living room and played, talked, drew, read a book and took pictures. When the truck from LCC arrived everyone pitched in to help the six volunteers unload and set up the furniture. Personally, I really had fun, enjoyed getting to know them and felt blessed to have met this special family.

### **What God Has Instructed**

God wants us to serve others in His name. He wants us to do so willingly so that in all we do we do it in Christ's name. God instructs us to help those less fortunate and to...

*Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land. Deuteronomy 15:10-11.*

My involvement in Lutheran Church Charities' human care ministry has extended beyond the "feel good in helping others" stage to realizing that through my involvement I, too, have been changed. Others, especially the children, have made a difference in my life as well.

To find out more about opportunities to volunteer visit the LCC website at [www.LutheranChurchCharities.org](http://www.LutheranChurchCharities.org) or call Dianna Bonfield, LCC Volunteer Coordinator, at 866-455-6466