

NAM marks 25 years of serving the community

Northwest Assistance Ministries is celebrating its 25th (Silver) Anniversary in 2008 and activities recognizing the community's long-term support of NAM will take place throughout the year.

Since 1983, NAM has progressed from a concept drafted on a napkin to one of the city's largest social service agencies. An early venture in social ministry, NAM has led the way in providing services and piloting programs that now are accepted standards followed by other organizations.

NAM's founding congregations were St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church, Northwoods Presbyterian Church, John Wesley United Methodist Church, Kinsmen Lutheran Church, Hosanna Lutheran Church, Congregation Jewish Community North, Wildewood Baptist Church, Cypress Creek Christian Church, Klein United Methodist Church, and Plymouth United Church (U.C.C.).

NAM was based on a hypothetical model developed at the University of Houston, but nothing like it had been done before, said Rabbi Robert Sharff of Congregation Jewish Community North. Sharff and the Rev. Glenn Wilkerson of Cypress Creek Christian Church were involved in NAM's beginnings and still are associated through their congregations.

Rosemarie Hornsby, a University of Houston student, outlined the concept of social ministry on a napkin when she met with Rev. Wilkerson at a local restaurant. He invited her to a clergy association meeting and the process began that led to the creation of NAM. The 10 congregations signed articles of incorporation in October of 1983. Hornsby became NAM's first director in 1984.

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Amy Shue and daughters, Taylor, 5, and Halle, 2, participated in the Holiday Project food distribution. Shue has her own apartment and job after graduating from the Interfaith Hospitality Network.

Mom regains her independence

Amy Shue used to regularly donate items to NAM's resale shops, but she found herself in need of NAM's services when she and her husband divorced.

"I went from having a car and a nice home in a nice neighborhood to really having nothing," Shue said. "I spent the money I had fighting for custody of my daughter."

Her brothers helped in the short term. "I needed to figure out something I could do to get back on my feet," she said. "I'd never been on my own. I'd always been married."

One brother got on the internet, visited NAM's website and discovered the services NAM has to help families in need. "All the times we'd dropped stuff off at

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NAM boosts financial health and sustainability

Many of the clients NAM serves live paycheck to paycheck.

One unexpected medical emergency or car repair is devastating to their precarious financial situation. One crisis can lead to an eviction or to utilities being turned off.

When these folks come to NAM, we assess their situation and give them tools to rise out of their circumstances and to regain their independence. One of the most important life skills we teach is budgeting and the importance of saving for a rainy day.

Like our clients, NAM also must carefully budget to ensure that the money we give out and spend on programs does not exceed the money that we take in. When revenues are down, we adjust expenses accordingly. Our goal is to break even at the end of each fiscal year.



Experts recommend that non-profit organizations also save for a rainy day. They recommend a **cash reserve** of at least 90 days of operating expenses. For NAM, this would be \$1.5 million!

NAM started to build up a cash reserve a few years ago and had a modest cushion of 40 days. Then, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the Gulf Coast. The cushion was very quickly spent to meet the need.

The community responded generously to the crisis, but because many donations were earmarked for hurricane relief, NAM suffered an operating deficit at the end of the 2005-06 fiscal year.

The 2006-07 fiscal year was one of **recovery**. NAM started the year almost \$400,000 behind. We took measures to cut expenses and to increase revenues.

I am proud to say that we saw an **improvement of over 90%** by year's end. NAM ended the year with a deficit of about \$44,000, which is mostly depreciation. On a cash basis, we came out approximately \$100,000 ahead. This is amazing, given the catastrophic year before.

As we enter the second quarter of the 2007-08 fiscal year, our focus is on **stabilization**.

We do not plan to grow or add any new programs. We must bolster support for the programs we already have. Additional monies raised may be used to begin building our cash reserve and to perform much-needed maintenance on our building.

NAM recently participated in a Capacity Mapping exercise with other zip code assistance ministries in the area. We were rated in four areas: Governance, Human Resources, Finance and Development. We received perfect scores in Governance and HR. We received near perfect scores in Finance and Development; our weaknesses were the lack of a cash reserve and the lack of a formalized major gifts program. Work in these two areas was already underway at the time of the study.

As NAM continues to rebound, we are taking steps to ensure our fiscal health and sustainability for years to come. Hurricanes and other disasters are unforeseen, but we can be better prepared to meet them.

NAM will continue to be a good steward of the donations we receive. Last fiscal year, 90 cents of every dollar received went to direct services.

NAM is one of the most cost-effective and efficient charities in the entire Houston area. Building a cash reserve will help ensure that we are here for the long term.

Sincerely,

NAM President & CEO

NAM Statement of Activities for Fiscal Year 2006-2007

(unaudited)

Total Support and Revenues	\$8,434,782
Expenses	
Program services	\$7,585,893
Management and General	\$592,254
Fundraising and Development	\$301,223
Total Expenses	\$8,479,370
Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	\$(44,588)

NAM's current fiscal year runs Oct. 1, 2007 to Sept. 30, 2008. In NAM's last fiscal year, 90 cents of every dollar went to direct services.

NAM Programs and Services

Assistance Office	281-583-5600	Corner Resale Shop	281-885-4544
Children's Clinic	281-885-4630	Senior Services	281-885-4600
Development	281-885-4605	Shelter & Energy Assistance	281-885-4531
Donations Hotline	281-885-4545	Workforce Development	281-885-4506
Family Violence Center ..	281-885-4673		
Interfaith Hospitality		Other agencies at NAM	
Network	281-885-4567	Harris County Social Services ..	281-885-4591
Meals on Wheels	281-885-4622	Harris County Hospital District.	281-587-8596
NAM Counseling Ctr.	281-885-4537	Even Start	281-586-1888
Rotary Learning Center...	281-885-4616	Gulf Coast Community	
NAM Resale Shop.....	281-897-8952	Services	281-397-0176
Second Chance Resale	281-880-9000		

Jeans & Jewels sets record

The 2007 Jeans & Jewels gala drew more than 600 NAM supporters to the Woodlands Waterway Marriott and raised nearly \$500,000 – a record for the nine-year-old event.

Proceeds help fund NAM's programs and services to help needy families in north and northwest Houston.

Bill and Nancy Strange volunteer, donate to NAM

Some people volunteer at NAM. Some people donate financial resources. Bill and Nancy Strange have done both for a long time.

Nancy recently recalled her first impression of NAM 20 years ago when she became involved through Northwoods Presbyterian Church.

"I thought, wow, this is little. NAM was still in a small strip shopping center. They had a tiny, tiny pantry and a little bitty store. Counselors shared a cubbyhole with other counselors," Nancy said. "I've been involved with NAM through three moves, and NAM isn't little anymore."

Nancy has served as a volunteer counselor in the Assistance office for 20 years. Her husband, Bill, became involved and served on NAM's executive board for five years. In addition to volunteering, the couple has supported NAM financially.

"My time on the board was the most fulfilling years of my life, helping the mission succeed and working with other dedicated people," said Bill who recently retired from Deloitte. "I was always impressed with the dedication of the paid staff. Working at NAM didn't seem like a job to them, but more of a calling. I also was impressed with the sheer number of volunteers. That told me they must be doing it right."



Bill Strange visits wife, Nancy, at NAM's Holiday Project toy room. Nancy volunteered as one of NAM's Holiday coordinators. She has served as an Assistance Program volunteer interviewer for 20 years. Bill has served as an executive board member. Both are financial supporters.

Giving back to the community is important to the Stranges. "We've been blessed and can give back our time and some of our resources," he said.

Nancy said, "It's amazing to me the number of problems some people have. They just haven't learned to make the right choices. NAM doesn't provide a handout. We point them in a direction so they can make better decisions."

Bill and Nancy agree that being involved with NAM is an opportunity. "It really puts your life in balance. When you look at the problems other people are having and see how you might be able to help, it's very rewarding," Nancy said.

Bill said, "You're twice blessed. You bless the person you're helping and you bless yourself."

The Stranges say the way the organization operates is another factor in their support. Last year, 90 cents of every dollar donated to NAM went directly to program services.

"NAM is the best run organization that we've ever seen. We're confident our services are going to the right places," Bill said.

The Stranges have been involved in the Jeans & Jewels gala and the Three-on-Three basketball tournament. In addition to her work in Assistance, Nancy is serving as one of the Holiday Project coordinators.

"We see what a wonderful organization this is, and they use the money wisely. We're confident it will be used to help people," Nancy said.

Bill said, "NAM has a methodology for changing peoples' lives for the better at a reasonable cost. It makes you feel good to help out."

Save the Date

Sunday, Feb. 10

Interfaith Service


celebrating NAM's

25th anniversary

3:30 p.m.

Cypress Creek

Christian Church




NAM NOTES

Northwest Assistance Ministries
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ABC Pest, Pool & Lawn honors Stars of NAM

Carole Little, NAM President & CEO; Raleigh Jenkins of ABC Pest, Pool and Lawn Services; NAM Executive Board member Regina Curry of Spring ISD, and donor Bob Jackson enjoy the festivities at the Stars of NAM major donor appreciation event hosted by Jenkins and wife, Kim, at their offices at 8448 N. Sam Houston Parkway West.

'If someone believes in you....you begin to believe in yourself....'

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NAM, I'd never been above the first floor. I didn't realize those other programs were in the building," she said.

Shue and her children were accepted into the Interfaith Hospitality Network for families in transition. "It's an awesome program," she said. "The staff – even folks not in IHN, other people in the NAM building – everybody I came in contact with was positive, and had a friendly word and told us we going to make it, even the security guards at the front desk."

"If someone believes in you, it's contagious. You begin to believe in yourself and it grows into something big. My whole life I was told I couldn't do this or that, but I can do anything now. I learned you can do anything if you put your mind to it."

Now, Shue has a job, and her own apartment. She hopes to return to school at night and eventually complete her college degree. She would also like to give back to the program that gave so much to her.

"I didn't think I could get a job and support my kids, but I can. I barely make

enough to pay the bills, but it's doable even if you have to struggle a bit. I'm happier now than when I had all those nice things. It's better to make the effort to get the things we have than to have things given to us. Even the kids appreciate things so much more."

"I'll always take with me that NAM was like a loving family, so positive and caring. Every congregation and so many different people did all kinds of things for us."

A woman at one congregation found out Shue's son liked to read and enjoyed Harry Potter books. When the latest Potter book came out, the woman brought a copy for her son.

Shue said when she came to NAM, it was a relief to have some place to stay while she figured out how to get back on her feet.

Later, she watched other people in need come to NAM.

"You could see the relief in their faces that someone gave them the time of day. Relief, that's such a gift," she said.

CJCN corned beef fundraiser helps synagogue, NAM

Congregation Jewish Community North, 5400 Fellowship Lane in Spring, has announced a unique fundraiser: Kosher Corned Beef Sandwich Lunch Sale.

Proceeds from this fundraiser will benefit the synagogue and Northwest Assistance Ministries. Congregation Jewish Community North (CJCN) is one of NAM's founding congregations.

Sandwiches cost \$10 each, \$4 of which is tax deductible, payable by check made out to CJCN.

Each sandwich order includes a quarter pound of Kosher Corned Beef on seeded rye bread, potato chips, pickle and cookies.

All the sandwiches will be pre-sold. Orders of 1-9 sandwiches will be available for pick up on Monday, March 3, at four locations including NAM'S Second Chance Resale Shop at 3645-C FM 1960 West next to Incredible Pizza. Orders of 10 or more will be delivered free to buyers in the Northwest Houston area.

"NAM's mission is to strive to meet basic human needs through Neighbors Helping Neighbors," said Steve Natenberg, Chair of the Corned Beef Project Fundraiser and President-Elect of the synagogue.

"The Congregation's mission is to enrich its members' lives through worship, education, celebration and community involvement in accordance with Reform Jewish values and traditions. We are looking forward to helping fulfill both missions with the success of this delicious fundraiser."

Maria Magee, NAM Development Director of NAM said, "I was delighted to try one of the corned beef sandwiches. It was very good, and the portions were very generous."

Orders can be placed now, and several sponsorship levels are available. For more information, please see www.cornedbeef.cjcn.org. Full payment must be received by Feb. 16, 2008.

Congregations set aside differences, pooled resources

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“We hoped the coalition would be a way for congregations to pool their resources to serve the poor and underprivileged people in our area,” Rev. Wilkerson said. “We hoped it would be an answer for congregations who wanted to be involved in providing services that addressed the systemic causes of poverty as well as addressing individual human needs....It’s been wonderful.

Sidelines with Sarah:

The need doesn’t go away....

There’s still a need. The holidays are over and we have all gone back to work. NAM has gone back to work too. Because, there’s still a need for all that NAM does. The December holidays don’t make the need go away. The government, child support, or a job doesn’t make the need go away. A lottery ticket doesn’t make the need go away (how I wish it did).

On Tuesday, my clients at NAM’s Assistance Office included:

- A young woman on disability with renal failure who was raising her 13-year-old niece. She’d also raised her sister who now attended A&M University;
- A pregnant woman who had to go on bed rest making her leave work three months before she had planned. Since she wasn’t working, she had couldn’t pay her bills, and

“We set aside our theological differences and pooled our resources in a manner to better serve the will of God in addressing the needs of the poor. We all basically have the same goals...to reach out in the name of our faith and serve people.”

Rabbi Sharf said, “We had no idea what on earth we were getting ourselves into and how it would turn out. Spiritually, it has been uplifting. We overcame something that could have overwhelmed us.”

- A woman who lost her job and had just started substitute teaching until she could find more permanent employment.

And so, you can see, the government, child support, or a job didn’t make the need go away.

My client on disability had paid a \$700 car repair bill which caused her money problems. NAM pledged \$400 toward her overdue rent and gave her food. NAM helped the pregnant woman with rent through a grant program and gave her food until she could be recertified for food stamps. NAM helped the substitute teacher with rent money and food. All interviewers in the Assistance Office have heard similar stories to relay. No matter the month, no matter the year the need doesn’t go away at NAM (how I wish it did).

“NAM’s first year budget was less than \$150,000 which was targeted for rent and set-up costs,” said Carole Little, NAM President & CEO.

Rabbi Sharff served as treasurer and collected receipts from the thrift shop and cash donations from the food bank in a shoe box and deposited them in the bank every Friday. Now, NAMs 2007-2008 budget is projected to be \$8.92 million. Last year, the organization touched the lives of more than 103,000 people through its Assistance Program, Food Pantry, Meals on Wheels, Children’s Clinic, Interfaith Hospitality Network, Rotary Learning Center and Workforce Development Program, Family Violence Center, Counseling Center, Fifty Plus Senior Center, and Resale Shops.

In the intervening years, 37 additional congregations have joined with the original 10, along with 18 Service Partner organizations and more than 130 business Community Partners to support programs and services to help area residents in need. NAM has moved three times and now owns the four-story building at 15555 Kuykendhal near FM 1960. The congregations took a leap of faith when creating NAM. The area was prosperous and many of the congregations were new. Many were living one paycheck beyond their means however, and when the economy crashed, many families put their house keys under the door mat and left. It seemed like entire subdivisions were in foreclosure. The county had no presence in the area in terms of social services and no other social service agencies served Northwest Houston.

“NAM has been successful because our executive board and staff members work hard to be fiscally responsible with the funds the organization receives and to be responsive to the community’s need for services,” Little said. “We have stayed true to our mission of neighbors helping neighbors throughout the years and our supporting congregations, organizations and businesses recognize our efforts to be fiscally responsible while helping families in need toward self-sufficiency.”

If you would like to see how far NAM has come, please call Jamie at 281-885-4609 to schedule a tour.



Rotary Club of Willowbrook repairs playground

Rotary Club of Willowbrook members Tom Jackson, left, and Wayne Roush spread wood chips to create a new play surface for the Northwest Assistance Ministries playground. The club received two grants with support from Rotary International and the Rotary District to make playground repairs and to purchase energy efficient light bulbs for Meals on Wheels participants.

Lou says 'Thank you!'



I want to thank the community for being so generous in supporting Northwest Assistance Ministries and the Jeans & Jewels gala.

I am humbled and honored to have been asked to be this year's honoree at the gala. I would like to thank the gala co-chairs, Susan Diehl and Valerie vonBerg, as well as the Jeans & Jewels Luncheon and Style Show chairs, Susan Beam, Rosalie Pfau and Jo Aman.

I'd like to thank the NAM staff, and each and every volunteer who helps keep the gala and the movement of this wonderful organization going forward in service to all.

Lou Shirley

NAM's Wish List

Donations of cash or in-kind donations welcome.

Development Department

Digital video camcorder (\$500)
Adobe Creative Suite 2 Software (\$450)

Food Pantry

Nonperishable Food Items (900 families per month)
Full time Pantry Assistant

Building Maintenance

Upgraded security monitoring (\$15,000)
New Box Truck for IHN, Food Pantry and Resale Shops (\$45,000)
Relamp and Clean Marquee (\$5,000)
Upgrade landscape sprinkler system (\$15,000)
New carpet on 2nd floor hallways, 3rd floor clinic file room, 4th floor learning center (\$15,000)
New tile (\$25,000)
Clean and seal four air handlers (\$30,000)
Expand parking lot to add 200 parking spaces (\$450,000)
Replace window gasket system on entire building (\$1,000,000)

Business Office

Heavy duty paper shredder (\$2,000)

Interfaith Hospitality Network

Toiletries/hygiene items (15-20 items monthly/ \$150)
Baby clothes/bottles/blankets/wipes/bath tubs (\$200)
2 new large capacity washing machines (\$700)
2 new large capacity dryers (\$700)
2 large Crockpots (\$100)
3 sets of silverware (\$50)
3 sets of dinnerware – plates, bowls, etc. (\$150)
15 Pillows quarterly (\$75)
5 sets of towels quarterly – face, hand and large bath towels (\$100)
Educational DVD's – math, reading etc. – for all grades (\$70 each)
Computer for families (\$500)
Printer for families (\$300)
1 year subscription to children's magazines (\$80)
2 Bassinets (\$200)

Family Violence Center

Toy vehicles (10 at \$5 each)
Toy tool set (\$10)
Toy Doctors set (\$10)
40 pounds of sand for sand tray (\$5)
Play Dart Set (\$10)
Dress-up clothes for girls (various)
20 Miniature toys for sand tray (\$100)

Fifty Plus Senior Center

Van drivers, especially on Fridays
Senior Wheels volunteer drivers

Ride-along volunteers to assist drivers on Wednesdays and Fridays
Back-up bingo caller
Bunn-O-Matic Coffee Maker (\$350)
Dart baseball board (\$400)

Children's Clinic

Toddler booster car seats (100 @ \$50 each)
Antibiotic ointment (\$300 worth of individual tubes to go home with patients)
Bicycle Helmets (50 @ \$20 each)
Breathing treatment medication (\$100-\$300 each month)
Moving file cabinets in Clinic file room so it can be recarpeted (\$1,200)

Shelter & Emergency Assistance

Six 17-inch flat screen color LCD computer monitors (\$2,100)
Laptop computer (\$1,000)

Information Technology

Surge protectors for workstations/equipment, (Belkin - 3540 joules rating) - 30 (\$1,200)
Printers - 10 (\$2,000)
Server – (\$6,500)
Workstations - \$700 ea. 10 @ \$7,000; OR Thin clients, \$500 ea.; 10 @ \$5,000
Telephone system - NAM – (\$75,000)
Volunteers - priceless!

Resale Shops

Copy machine (\$600)
Rolling racks (16-20 racks @ \$75 each)
Shopping carts (30-40 carts at \$400 each)
Gently used items: furniture, houseware items, dishes, small appliances, linens, toys, books, clothes.
Volunteers

Meals on Wheels

Coolers - 28 or 32 size (25 @ \$17 each)
Volunteer drivers

Rotary Learning Center/Workforce Development

2 locking file cabinets (\$1,000)
New PCUs in the computer lab (30 computers @ \$600 each)

Communications

The internet has become a fast, cost-effective way to communicate. Please log on to NAM's website, www.namonline.com and contact us with your email address. We keep email addresses confidential and do not sell or loan them to third parties.



NAM President & CEO Carole Little accepts a check for more than \$5,000 from Steve Hotchkiss of Holy Comforter Episcopal Church. The congregation held a barbecue kick-off to benefit NAM and the church.



U.S. Foodservice staff members load turkeys and pies for NAM's Holiday Project benefiting needy families. Staff members also collected toys.



NAM Development Director Maria Magee, Volunteer Coordinator Jamie Hartwell and Corporate Liaison Julie Anderson-Smith accept toys for needy children from the Conservatory at Champion Forest Director of Operations Steven Lipps, Executive Director Sandy Allie and Social Director Lisa Mortensen. The Conservatory hosted a dance for NAM volunteers and Fifty Plus members as well as a party for children in selected NAM programs.

Corporate, Foundation gifts

Administaff
Baker Hughes Foundation
Bank of America, N.A.
Caldwell Companies, Inc.
The Conservatory
The Crump Foundation
Data Retrieval Corporation
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Hand Foundation
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Fingers
Houston's #1 Furniture Store

Finger Furniture is pleased to celebrate the opening of its new-concept store in Willowbrook by supporting Northwest Assistance Ministries.

ART for the Hungry

If you've ever wondered about Architectural Wonders, then this year's Art for the Hungry Project is for you.

The theme is Architectural Wonders and groups, organizations and businesses are invited to build architectural wonders from non-perishable food items. Once the sculptures are completed they will be on display from March 30 through April 13 at Willowbrook Mall, and the public will be invited to wander among the wonders and vote for their favorite design.

Registration is now open for the event, and a limited number of spots are available. The sculptures must include at least 1,000 food items which represent the participants' entry fee for the event. After Art for the Hungry, the food will go to NAM's Food Pantry to help needy families in the area.

The project kicks off NAM's Survival Over the Summer (SOS) food drive to help feed hungry children during the summer months when they are not in school.

Groups, organizations and businesses that are unable to build a sculpture still can participate in SOS by conducting a food drive.

NAM expects to feed more than 5,000 area children during the summer months through the Art for the Hungry project. Groups that have participated in the past include congregations, schools, businesses, service clubs, and civic and professional organizations.

"Art for the Hungry is important to ensure children in need have meals throughout the summer," said Carole Little, NAM President & CEO.

"Many area children receive free or reduced price meals during the school year. When school isn't in session, many of these children go without nutritious meals.

"During the school year, the school breakfast and lunch programs enable low-income families to stretch their resources and survive because they don't have to provide those meals to their children.

"The cost of feeding their children during the summer may mean parents must choose between food and paying the rent or running the air conditioner. The community's support of Art for the Hungry really does help children survive over the summer."

Awards will be presented for "People's Choice" and "Judges' Choice." The public can vote for the People's Choice Award with a 25-cent donation counting as one vote. Money collected from the voting will go to NAM's Food Pantry. While the sculptures are on display, large signs will recognize participating organizations.

For information, entry forms and sculpture building guidelines, call NAM's Events Coordinator Tanecia Snid at 281-885-4608.