

# Word on the Street

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Here's Life Inner City in New York City

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## Hanging Out in Front of the Liquor Store: Anna



One thing under-resourced communities rarely lack is liquor stores. You might walk fifteen blocks to find a grocery store, but there's usually a liquor store within five. Not surprisingly, these street corners become informal gathering spots in the community.

The week before Christmas, as Thomas and I delivered homemade treats to neighbors, we found ourselves on one such corner. It was not our planned destination but I now know that it was in God's plans for the day. Before we left the house, I prayed with Thomas that God would bless our conversations and that we would be able to share the gospel in both word and deed. He honored that prayer almost immediately.

Around the corner from our apartment there is one gentleman who Matt and I visit with often. As we delivered pumpkin bread and started talking, I suddenly found myself engaged in a lively discussion about his perception that God seems to want to discipline and punish people more than love them. It started to make sense to me that he would see God this way, for he has experienced many trials in this life. As our conversation came to an end, I was greatly encouraged by the look of hope and lightness on his face as I shared about how our Holy God chose not to punish us, though we are sinful, but gave us an opportunity to know him, through the sacrifice of His son, Jesus Christ.

Thomas and I continued walking and soon came upon our local liquor store. We saw a woman who sometimes visits our church. As we chatted, another friend of hers came by and introduced herself. Even more people came by who knew each other and the atmosphere became quite festive. I not only got to meet more women in the community and invite them to church, but I also found out some needs of these neighbors. One person needed some help cleaning because they're disabled. Another needed prayer for an upcoming surgery. Yet another shared about a struggle with alcohol addiction. It was a great opportunity to just be present and watch the Lord work.

I love the fact that God is going about the work of drawing all men to himself. It is He who is moving and all we have to do is be faithful to go where He would have us go and be messengers of good news.

## One Computer Center, Countless Ministry Opportunities: Matt

Praise God! One of our ministry partners made a large donation that allowed me to purchase five brand new computers for our church. I'm extremely excited because I think God is going to use these computers in big ways. Not only will the youth in the after-school program have more computers to work on, enabling them to learn more quickly, but I will be starting a new ministry at our church. In the coming month, I will be opening up our church two Saturday mornings a month as a Community Computer Center. Like much of what we do, this is the result of listening to the needs of our community and working with you, our ministry partners, to find a way to respond.

Here is a sampling of the many ways that these computers will be used:

- Teaching computer skills to youth, who have little access to computers, will help keep them from falling further behind youth in more affluent communities.
- I cannot tell you how many times I get asked by adults to help them learn how to use a computer, many of whom want to learn basic skills that will help them with gaining employment. Now, I'll be able to respond to that need.
- After the Saturday morning adult classes, we'll open up the Center for anyone in the community, creating a great opportunity to develop relationships with people who wouldn't normally come into the church.
- The Saturday hours also provide an opportunity for friends, ministry partners and neighbors to volunteer or just hang out at the Center and be part of what God is doing through our church.
- This Center will be a laboratory, enabling me to continue learning so that I can help other churches in New York and around the country set up computer labs.

Ultimately, it's not just about computers. It's about inviting people to know Jesus. Please pray for this outreach and that God would use it for his glory. Pray for volunteers to help me with set-up, maintenance and teaching classes. Pray that when people step through the doors of our church to use the computers, that they sense God and his goodness. Finally, please pray for relationships to develop and that many will come to personally know the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

**DID YOU KNOW?** The institution of Sunday School began as a literacy program. Churches listened to the needs of their communities and found that people needed to learn how to read. In response, they decided to teach literacy classes before church services on Sunday mornings using the Bible. That's how the ministry of Sunday School was born. Perhaps in 10 years, a community computer center in a church as an outreach tool won't be such an uncommon thing.

## Praise and Prayer

- Thank you for all the prayers for "Mike," the young man whose story we shared in our last newsletter. He is continuing to grow stronger and has just moved home. Please pray that God would protect Mike and his family from his attackers because they are not in jail. Also, please pray that God would quickly provide a first-floor apartment for the family. They are currently on the third floor and it takes several men to carry Mike up and down the stairs in his wheelchair.
- Praise God for great outreach through our church during the holidays. There are a lot of new faces on Sunday and we pray that folks would continue coming and get more involved.
- Pray that we would see prayer as God's work and that we would pray before we act. We want to grow in the important discipline of prayer.

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