

Teen Feed Times

Fall/Winter 2005



Inside this issue:

- Goodby Colin... 2
- ...Hello Eric 2
- The Kids Are In The Kitchen! 3
- Holiday Donation Needs 3



Check out University Street Ministry Online!

www.universitystreetministry.org

TEEN FEED SCHEDULE (THROUGH DECEMBER 31ST)

Sunday and Wednesday
7-8pm at Univ. Christian, 50th & 15th NE

Monday and Thursday
7-8pm at Univ. Lutheran, 50th & 16th NE

Tuesday
7-8pm at Univ. Temple Methodist, 43rd & 15th NE

Serving Homeless Youth in the University District since 1986.

Holidays On The Ave

Each Fall in the U District, homeless youth hunker down for the cold and wet weather of November to March. As the season changes and many think about casseroles and holiday gifts, homeless youth face long lines to enter shelter, and routinely 3 – 5 youth each night are turned away due to lack of beds. More youth attend clinic to remedy coughs and flus, and feet experience damage from worn-out shoes and wet socks. Youth face Fall and Winter with robust determination, grappling with the realities of Northwest weather, but grappling also with the association the holidays bring for many of our young people.

To support homeless youth and young adults as they face winter and family memories of the holidays, each 2nd Wednesday night in December we throw a little event we like to call the Holiday Party. It is without a doubt the most rewarding and beautiful event of the

year. We create new memories with young people – a Teen Feed meal for 100+, a Christmas tree with exactly what they asked for underneath, a live jazz band and balloon swords. Most importantly, around each Teen Feed table are the faces of homeless youth and the adults who care about them; folks who are working to keep them safe, and eventually – housed.

To create this annual event, and these new memories, we rely on all of you who support USM during the year with your time, your income, and your prayers. You are the Secret Santa's, the reason a young person opens a bright box with their name on it, looks inside, and beams "How did they know? This was exactly the size and color I wanted!!" You are the reason a young person spending their first week on the streets receives a sleeping bag, shelter, and the listening ear of a Case Manager. You are the holiday party. You are the

backbone for these homeless young people and the agencies working with them. Thank you for what you do during the year, and thank you in advance for making the holiday party happen this year.

This year, please consider being a homeless youth's Secret Santa, the reason there will be a gift under the tree for them. Talk with friends, tell them what we do, tell them who homeless youth are. Ask them to support our youth with donations of sleeping bags, sweat-shirts, bus tokens, or gift cards. If you have a giving tree at your church or work – could it be dedicated to the youth we serve?

--Megan Gibbard

To be a Secret Santa for a homeless youth this year, or to receive the list of needed holiday donations, please email teenfeedsecret-santa@yahoo.com or call 356-9314.

Changes at University Street Ministry

2005 has been a year of important transitions for USM. **Tele Aadsen**, our one-time Teen Feed coordinator and SLY case manager, has decided to take a well-deserved break from the so-

cial work profession, while pursuing a passion for fishing in the Bering Sea. Her unfailing commitment, grace, and connection with the youth we serve will be missed every bit as much as her easy smile and

attentive ear.

Meanwhile, Teen Feed coordinator **Colin Knight** has embarked on the next phase in his life's adventure see "**Changes**", cont. on pg. 4



Goodbye Colin...

After serving for a year and a half as Teen Feed Coordinator, Colin Knight stepped down at the end of August in order to pursue other adventures. First among those is the chance to teach English in Japan starting this January. Here is a copy of his goodbye email sent to the volunteers with whom he worked...

Hi everybody,

I wanted to let you all know of my departure at the end of this month. I am applying for jobs teaching English in Japan, which will hopefully begin a several year journey abroad through Asia, Europe and maybe even South America and Africa. Who knows?

Each of you has been utterly essential in making Teen Feed a safe and healthy program. I have appreci-

ated, perhaps more than you know, your dedication to our youth, your care in the midst of an apathetic world, and, perhaps most of all, your sense of humor. You have made the hard work I have been doing here downright pleasant.

“Your dedication to these youth has never ceased to astound me, you will all be missed.”

To the food team leads: your unquestioning dedication to these youth has never ceased to astound me; you are an amazing group of people and you will all be missed.

To my amazing advocates: your consistent presence, understanding and sense of humor has made Teen Feed a place of safety and care--many, many thanks.

To our reserve volunteers and food teams: without you, I think, many of us regulars would have burned out long ago. Thank you all.

To our churches and the contacts with whom I have most closely worked: like our food teams, you show a dedication to Teen Feed and its youth unmatched in probably any other facet of society. My hat goes off to you.

Best Wishes,
--Colin Knight

...Hello Eric...

Any work place, whether it's a white collar corporate office, or a small non-profit service provider, is built upon a foundation of workers (even if you aren't paid) who make everything go. The folks at the top, with titles like supervisor, coordinator, and director, are nowhere without the rank and file. For this reason, it's always seemed to me a bit awkward when the newbie who is brought in to a program as the supervisor/coordinator/director writes the requisite introductory piece saying, with much verbosity, "Hi! I'm your new _____!" I mean, it's really kind of strange, don't you think? So often it comes off as glad handing and an attempt to prevent any sort of staff rebellion.

That being said, "Hi! I'm your new Teen Feed Coordinator!" As you all probably know (or at least you do now!), I'm Eric, and in September I took over from Colin who will soon be winging his way to a teaching position in Japan. As a long time resident of the U-District I am overjoyed to have the opportunity to be serving within my community in this capacity. Working on issues surrounding homelessness and poverty are something I am extremely passionate about. I've spent the last three years volunteering and as an overnight supervisor at the ROOTS Young Adult Shelter, and have been involved with the activist group Food Not Bombs for the past eight years in varying capacities.

I've only been on the job a very short time, but already am feeling like this is the

best possible move I could've made, one into a position I truly love. I don't know if I can do justice in words to how satisfying this work can be. Probably many of you who have been involved for a while (or more than a while) know what I mean. The feeling that you are doing work which is directly helping other people is one which can't be matched. Of course there are stresses that go hand in hand with this, some of which I've had the opportunity to experience, some of which I'm sure I'll discover later. Still, the headaches are no match for the happiness I feel when I see our guests come through the door, happy to have a safe place to eat dinner, talk, and chill out away from the stresses of the Ave.

Teen Feed is a great
See **"Hello"**, cont. on pg. 4



"I'm so excited to have the opportunity to be a part of this, that I want to jump up and down a lot."

--Eric Wirkman

The Kids Are In The Kitchen!

On September 19th, I was just under three weeks into my tenure as Teen Feed Coordinator, and I was a nervous wreck. The food team for the evening had had to cancel, and I'd been unable to find a fill in. The week before, I'd resigned myself to the fact that I was going to have to put together a youth-food team. I knew that this had been done in the past for the 4th of July, and I was enthusiastic about the prospect of organizing more. However, I'd been hoping to maybe wait until I'd settled in to the new job for a couple of months.

There I was, unlocking the basement of University Lutheran Church and loading in the food I'd purchased earlier that day: Salad fixins', chicken, veggies, mac n' cheese, drinks. At about 5:30, the youth who signed up started to arrive. We washed up, and our food team leader (one of the youth, who took an amazing amount of responsibility on herself-

thanks, you know who you are) started dividing up kitchen tasks. Some of the youth set up tables and wiped them down with bleach rags. I essentially hung out, and rinsed salad. Everything was going too smooth...

Sure enough, at about 6:30, someone asked me what was for dessert. I knew I'd forgotten something! As a vegan who's never had much of a sweet-tooth, it was easy for me to overlook dessert- I either don't want it or can't eat it most times. This, however, was Teen Feed, and it's entirely unacceptable to not have dessert. After quick deliberation a youth was dispatched with some of the remaining funds and an order for Neapolitan.

At seven o'clock, we were ready to go. The menu board was up: "Teen Feed brought to you by: Squatters!" I opened the door, and folk came in as always. The line moved quickly, and although there was a lot of energy, everyone was in extremely good

spirits. I overheard people say that it was one of the best Teen Feed meals they'd ever had.

The night was special for more reasons than that: Tele had come back to the Ave to visit and let people know of her decision to move on. I can't think of a better night than one in which the youth Tele cares so much about were literally taking ownership of the program she ran for so many years for her to return for a final goodbye.

After dinner (we completely ran out of food!), I could sense the satisfaction in the youth crew. The feeling that they could do it, that they could organize and take control of their lives. It made me feel so good to see and feel that empowerment and to have been a small part of it. I knew right then that this was only a beginning...

--Eric

Teen Feed Holiday Donations Needs

Here's a partial list of items we need donated during the holidays (and year-round!). Please consider picking up a few of these to help make our youths' winter a little easier.

- Gift cards for Food or Music (\$30 maximum)
- Discmans
- AA batteries
- Large-sized hooded sweatshirts (pref. dark colors)
- Sleeping bags
- Backpacks
- Disposable hand warmers
- Travel-sized sewing kits
- Battery-operated travel alarm clocks
- Flashlights
- bus tokens
- Pre-paid phone cards
- New socks, gloves, underwear & cold weather clothing
- Dry dog food

Please Drop off any donations by **December 8th** at our office: 4740-B, University Way NE, **call first** to arrange a time.

We also need people to be Secret Santas, and provide gifts for specific youth. If you'd like to be one of this year's Secret Santas, please contact us as soon as possible by emailing: teenfeedsecretsanta@yahoo.com. We ask that all gifts be dropped off **by December 8th, unwrapped**, to allow plenty of time for organizing and wrapping prior to the holiday party. Our office is located at 4740-B University Way NE - please call first to let us know if you're coming by, and we'll be there.

Specific Secret Santa drop-in hours are also:

Wednesday, December 7th from noon - 5pm, and

Thursday December 8th from 4pm to 9pm

If you have any questions, or for a more complete list of donation needs, please contact:

Megan Gibbard
Direct Service Supervisor
(206) 356.9314 cell,
slyoutreach@yahoo.com



"Changes", cont. from pg. 1
ture, after a stellar tenure coordinating our volunteer food teams and advocates, while being the general go-to guy for the immediate needs of youth on the Ave. His steady hand amidst the sometimes-chaotic environs of Teen Feed brought a measure of stability and peace to the lives of our clients that represented the very personification of what USM seeks to achieve.

Eric Wirkman now joins us as Teen Feed coordinator, to fill Colin's sizeable shoes, bringing with him a rich set of experiences with Food Not Bombs and other local organizations, all substantially aligned with USM's mission and values. Eric is settling in to his

new role and even mounted a youth-prepared and led Teen Feed meal on September 19. Please join us in wishing the best of luck to Tele and Colin on their next steps, while supporting Eric and stalwart SLY case manager **Megan Gibbard** as they forge ahead to build on the fine legacy left by Tele and Colin.

--Jeff Albertson

"Hello", cont. from pg. 2
program, due primarily to the critical role that the volunteers and supporters play in providing a safe space for our youth five nights a week. I am so excited to have the opportunity to be a part of this program that I want to jump up and down a whole lot when I think about it. I'm sure I don't need

to say it, but none of this would be happening without all of you.

That being the case, I'm interested to know how folks feel about Teen Feed. Are there possible improvements to the program that I can implement? I am always looking constructive criticism (if you want to send warm accolades, that's not too bad either!) so as to be able to make this program the best it can possibly be, especially when it comes from the people directly involved, whether it be volunteers or clients.

--Eric

I can be reached at:
teenfeed@yahoo.com
Office: (206) 522-4366
Cell: (206) 229-0813



Teen Feed Times is a quarterly publication of University Street Ministry. Questions and comments are welcome!

Board of Directors
Mike Weybright, chair
Jeff Albertson
Luciann MacDonald

Staff
Megan Gibbard,
Direct Services Supervisor & Outreach Case Manager
Eric Wirkman,
Teen Feed Coordinator



University Street Ministry

4740 ~ B University Way NE
Seattle, WA 98105-4516

Phone: 206-522-4366
Fax: 206-5223043
Email: teenfeed@yahoo.com
www.universitystreetministry.org

Since 1986.
Helping Our Youth To Meet
Their Future Off The Street

NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
SEATTLE, WA

PERMIT NO.
5718

