



Dear Friends:

September 9, 2005

"Generational Leadership Development"

This is our phrase to describe our long-term strategy to bring about transformation in the city. What it means is that we live out our mission to be the presence of Jesus here by growing indigenous Godly leaders to serve as powerful role models...for children, youth and families in their own community. It reminds us that breaking generational patterns takes time, patience and big-hearted, Christ-following servants who are willing to invest their lives in helping children and youth rebuild theirs from the inside out – God's way with all of us.

Please help us right now:

As we begin our Fall programs, please remember us financially. Summer always stretches us to the limit. We need over \$138,000 this month to start our Fall programs on budget.

The enclosed information will help you utilize the Arizona Tax Credit for a donation of up to \$200 for Neighborhood Ministries. We appreciate your help and support!

We can see that happening in a powerful way through the eyes of two young adults who grew up with us and in their relationship with Victor, now one of our solid leader/mentors, who also grew up here. Both Luis (21) and Octavio (20) came from fatherless families that gave them little emotional or educational support. "I was completely lost. My brother died and my mother was too hurt to reach out to me," Octavio says recalling his life growing up, "I wanted desperately to belong." As boys, both turned to drugs, gang violence on the streets and ultimately served jail time.

When Luis was in the 3rd grade he attended our Monday night Kids Life. That was the first time that Victor, now his friend and mentor, remembers meeting him. They had little to do with each other because Victor was a little

older and both boys were rival gang members.

The next time they met was years later on a prison visit Victor made with me (Kit) after Jesus had transformed Victor's life. Surprised to see Luis in the prison, they hugged, chatted for a while and prayed together during the visit. After Luis was released, he participated in some Neighborhood Center activities on and off. But it was not until he was playing with a gun and wounded his brother that reality hit and he began to assess what he was doing with his life. "I realized," said Luis, "that I needed to be where people really cared about me and I always wanted to be a youth leader". Victor came alongside and started helping him to understand right from wrong and explaining the meaning of God's Word.



In 2003 and 2004 Luis was part of our summer Kids Club Work Crew (40 urban and 40 suburban young leaders that lead our summer day camp for 500 children in grades K-6). The Work Crew lives and works together for 2 weeks. The fellowship and discipleship that experience provided was a turning point in Luis's life. Today, he has great hope for the future. He is applying for a 2-year internship here and is also working on his A.A. degree, planning to transfer to ASU West to complete a degree in Criminal Justice. "I want to become a juvenile probation officer so that I can make a difference in the lives of kids from his community."

Upcoming Schedule:

- Sept. 17 Training for all Fall volunteers: 9am-3pm at The Neighborhood Center
 - Sept 19-21 Kids Life, Jr High Kids Life, and Senior High Group start Fall programs
 - Oct 29 Reload Phoenix: Citywide Urban Ministry Training Day
 - Dec 10 Neighborhood's Annual Christmas Party!
- For details, call 602-252-5225 or visit www.nmaz.net

Several years ago, friends invited Octavio to attend our high school program. "At first," he admits, "I kept coming back because of the girls." Typically a very quiet person who keeps to himself, Octavio says "my life began to change because I was finally able to lay it all out there and let out all the stress with leaders who really cared." Victor met Octavio during that time and said, "Even though he still used street slang and still had an attitude, I saw leadership qualities in Octavio and I knew there was something there." Now, Octavio is enrolled in our Jeremiah Project. The program trains young adults in job readiness skills and provides college scholarships for adjudicated youth. This past summer Octavio also worked with us as a summer intern and a member of the Work Crew to lead Kids Club. To illustrate what gang life is really like, he and other leaders wrote and put on a play in which gang members got shot and died. When Victor saw the rehearsal, he asked me, "Are

you sure you want the guys to do this skit? It is all about death." I gave the go-ahead, but asked Victor, "What do you think? Can we sneak some hope into the play?" Victor took the raw material of the play and breathed the message of the gospel into its painful finality, as actors from both gangs lay dead on the floor of the makeshift stage. He picked up the mike and stood in the middle of a circle of 100 plus kids. He honored Octavio and the crew for a job well done, for a message needed ... and then he challenged kids to consider eternal life, to consider a life with Jesus, to give up the fantasy of the street life, to confess the sins of the fathers.

Out of this time, the kids asked Octavio to be their youth leader and during the school year he'll be working three nights a week in our youth programs. Both young men say that their lives have been transformed because of the loving, unconditional presence of Jesus they received from staff and volunteers at The Neighborhood Center when nobody else took the time to care.

Reflecting on his growth here, Luis says, "The people here are always there for you. You always feel accepted and safe when things are wrong at home. They don't judge us. When you are hungry, they feed you. When you need clothes, there is the Clothing Bank. And when we are sick, we can go to the clinic. Neighborhood Ministries is a family, a place of refuge."

Thanks for your help,


Kit Danley
President