



Building Community

Keeping You Up-to-Date with the Work of the Acton-Boxborough United Way

Spring 2004

Local Dollars Helping Local People

The Mission of the Acton-Boxborough United Way is to identify and raise public awareness of community needs, link needs with quality services, and raise and allocate funds to support the charitable efforts of the community.

Building Community, the Acton-Boxborough United Way newsletter, is published three times a year and distributed to corporations, businesses and households in the Acton and Boxborough communities. Its purpose is to communicate the health and social service needs of the community and to describe the ways these needs are being addressed.



Middlesex Savings Bank Sponsors Benefit Concert Dr. Elliot Steger to Perform



On Saturday, May 8, Dr. Elliot Steger will be performing a benefit piano concert for the Acton-Boxborough United Way at the ABRHS Auditorium. Accompanying Dr. Steger will be Lello Molinari on acoustic bass and Christine Horn on drums and congas. Opening the concert will be the Acton-Boxborough High School student a capella singing group, *13 Fish Called Jennifer*.

Each year, Dr. Steger donates his time and talents to play benefit concerts for local charitable organizations, including Minute Man Arc, The Liberty Alzheimer's Partnership, the Alzheimer's Association, Loaves and Fishes, and Habitat for Humanity. This is his first concert for the Acton-Boxborough United Way.

Dr. Steger is both a pianist and composer. Steger's compositions reflect jazz, blues, pop and new age influences, as well as the precision of his longtime training as a classical pianist. In 2002, he was nominated by Just Plain Folks

—an organization of over 20,000 musicians, composers, and producers—for best solo instrumental song of the year out of a pool of over 100,000 songs. He has released three CDs: *Images*, *Transition*, and *Making Time*. This concert is a celebration of the release of his newest CD, *Joyful Blue*, which will be available in the near future.

Dr. Steger and his wife Marlene, a software engineer, live in Acton with their two sons. The title of his third CD, *Making Time*, refers to an artist making time for music in a very busy life that also includes a serious commitment to family and a "day job" as a physician at Acton Medical. Of his extraordinary charitable efforts he has said, "I just want people to enjoy my music. I've been blessed with a lot of things, skills and talents, family and health. I want to leave this place a little better than I found it."

ABUW President Ann Little said, "On behalf of

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Concert Ticket Information

The concert will be held at the Acton-Boxborough High School Auditorium on May 8 at 8 PM. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students and seniors. They can be purchased at The Minor Chord, at the United Way office in West Acton, online at the United Way website, www.abuw.org, or at the door.



Agency Spotlight

Helping to Achieve Success

Eastern Massachusetts Literacy Council

About two years ago, Peter Smith's son, Andrew, invited the boys from his kindergarten class to his birthday party. A few days before the party Andrew had heard from everyone except his best friend. Because Andrew desperately wanted his friend to come to the party, Peter decided to call the parents and ask if their son could come. What happened on the phone surprised Peter. The parents could not understand what he was saying, and, as it turns out, were not able to read the invitation. Despite Peter's efforts, the friend did not come to the party. Although Peter had never given much thought to English literacy, the incident bothered him, and he decided to become involved in literacy education.

As Peter discovered, adults with limited English struggle with everyday

life experiences. Many are in low paying, dead-end jobs or are unemployed. As parents, they are not able to actively engage in their children's education or social lives; they usually do not vote or participate in community activities; they have difficulty navigating the health care system; and they are generally isolated from the world around them. EMLC, one of the agencies funded by the Acton-Boxborough United Way, helps adults deal with these issues by providing English literacy tutoring. EMLC trains volunteers and matches volunteers with non-native speakers, as well as with native speakers who are not proficient. In addition to one on one tutoring, EMLC also offers English conversation groups, an option often used by people on the tutor wait list.

After exploring literacy program



EMLC training session at the Acton Library in March 2004.



Business Recognition

Community Support for the Concert

Many organizations and businesses have been generously donating time and money to the concert production. Some local businesses have purchased concert tickets and donated them to ABUW-funded social service agencies for distribution to their clients; other area businesses are making in-kind donations, and many businesses have purchased advertising space in the concert program. (The names of all our contributors will be listed in the next newsletter.) The Acton-Boxborough school system has donated the rental of the auditorium for the concert, local high school students have volunteered to set up the light and sound systems, and members of *13 Fish Named Jennifer* have agreed to perform.

We have also been fortunate to receive generous financial contributions from the local business community: Middlesex Savings Bank is the corporate underwriter of the concert; Bursaw Gas and Oil is a corporate sponsor; and Graham and Harsip and Wells Fargo Home Mortgage are corporate supporters. Their donations will help make this a major fundraiser for the many agencies supported by the ABUW.

We want to thank everyone for their support and express how grateful we are to be working and living in such a generous, caring community. ■

Steger Concert

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our community and the dozens of local health and human services organizations funded by the ABUW, we are truly grateful to Middlesex Savings Bank, Dr. Steger, and Lello Molinari and Christine Horn for their generosity and community spirit." Sandy Campbell, the Executive Director of the ABUW noted, "Middlesex Savings Bank is a very supportive corporate neighbor and their contribution will have a positive impact on the many agencies supported by the ABUW."

Dr. Steger has developed a large local following and he often plays to sell-out, standing room only crowds. Ken Shaffer, the board member who approached Dr. Steger with the idea of a benefit concert, said, "Dr. Steger is such a great musician and performer—this is an event you should not miss." ■



Agency Spotlight

Caring Adults Helping Youth

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Middlesex

options, Peter decided to contact EMLC. He completed his tutor training and was subsequently matched with Raul, a highly motivated student who was working at two low paying service jobs. In addition to becoming more functional in everyday life, Raul, a Brazilian, wanted to open his own business—selling prints. To improve Raul's pronunciation and vocabulary, Peter used "common" materials, not grammar books. Peter and Raul read the *Lowell Sun*, scanned Web pages and reviewed Raul's daily journal of words and idioms that he encountered but didn't understand. They practiced telephone conversations, recorded Raul's speech on a tape recorder and wrote business letters. Now, after a year and a half, Raul is almost ready to "graduate." As his skills have improved, so too has his confidence. He feels more comfortable in society, has begun making business contacts, and has attended a PTO meeting.

Peter says that he has become good friends with Raul and has thoroughly enjoyed the cultural learning experience. Raul describes the tutoring as his "lifeline," the way to make a better life for himself and his family. They will both miss each other. ■

Although we did not use actual names, Peter, Andrew and Raul are Acton residents. Last year 19 Acton and Boxborough residents spent a total of 1153 hours with their tutors and 22 residents attended conversation groups. Twenty-one residents were on a tutor waiting list. For more information about EMLC, call 781- 395-2374 or visit www.emlc.org.

About ten years ago, Caesar saw an ad on TV regarding a mentoring program for youth. He thought it was a great idea, but didn't think too much about it, as he was very busy going to school and getting established in his career. Approximately seven years later he was reading the *Action Unlimited* and noticed a short blurb about the local Big Brothers/Big Sisters program. The ad described the shortage of volunteers, particularly for boys, and the desperate need for mentors. Caesar decided he now had time to volunteer and called the next day.

After Caesar completed his training, he was matched with Adolfo, a 13 year old boy from Brazil, an only child who lives with his mother. As they became better acquainted, they began planning outings every week, usually on Saturday afternoons. Both of them enjoy outdoor activities, and they spend many days snowboarding in the winter and rollerblading in nice weather. Sometimes they go to the movies, and other times they sit and talk over dinner or lunch. As the months and years have gone by, they have become close friends and last fall Caesar invited Adolfo to his wedding in India. Adolfo accepted the invitation and this past winter spent a week with Caesar's family, participating in the five days of celebration. After Caesar and his wife left on their honeymoon,



Caesar, his wife and Adolfo at the wedding.

Adolfo stayed with the family and toured the local sites, including the Taj Mahal.

It has been about two and a half years since Caesar and Adolfo began their relationship. Adolfo's mom says Caesar is a very important part of her son's life; Adolfo says Caesar is a wonderful man who cares a lot about him. Adolfo has also become close to Caesar's wife and calls her his Big Sister. Caesar describes Adolfo as a great kid and says that the friendship they've developed will last a lifetime. ■

Both Caesar and Adolfo are Acton residents. This year Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Middlesex hopes to match 23 Acton and Boxborough youth with mentors; girls will wait 6-9 months and boys, 12-18 months before receiving a mentor. In addition to the initial training, the Big Brothers/Big Sisters staff talks or meets with the mentors every week. For more information about Big Brother/Big Sisters, call 508- 879-7762 or visit www.bbbs.mentoring.org

Some children participating in Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Middlesex, one of the agencies funded by the ABUW, have been referred to the agency by schools, churches, therapists, and social service agencies; other youth, self-refer. Children can be experiencing emotional problems, displaying anti-social behavior, or can be lacking a mother or father and in need of an additional adult relationship. Regardless of the issue, the goal of Big Brothers/Big Sisters is to connect children and adults through long-term mentoring relationships. An adult who spends quality time every week with a child has a positive impact on the child's self esteem and emotional health.

Building Community

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Local Dollars
Helping Local People



News & Updates

ABUW Annual Campaign

The residential campaign raised \$88,523 this year, approximately 8% more than last year. Much of this additional money was due to 93 first time donors. The dollars raised through employee payroll deduction programs have not yet been reported to us, but we are hoping to see a similar increase in those numbers. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the ABUW—we can only help with your help.

ABUW Annual Meeting

This year's annual meeting included a recognition event in addition to the regular business agenda. It was a fun, social event, held at Powers Gallery in the Acton Plaza on Great Road. Approximately 75 people attended, including agency representatives, donors, board members and community members at large. Speakers from the Domestic Violence Victim Assistance Program and Minute Man Arc described various client situations and the importance of the services they provide to the community. Our Executive Director handed out recognition certificates to many corporate and individual donors, thanked outgoing board members and introduced the new board. Our deepest thanks to Larry Powers for helping to make the meeting such a well-attended, successful event.

ABUW Reviews Agencies' Requests for Funding

The Budget and Allocations committee is in the process of reviewing agencies' requests for funding for the next fiscal year. Twenty-seven agencies have submitted applications. The awards will be announced in July after an intensive two-month review process.

2004-2005 ABUW Board Members

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If you wish to make a contribution, you can make an online donation

(www.abuw.org), or send a check to: ABUW, 570 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA 01720.

If you would like more information, contact our Executive Director, Sandy Campbell,

978-263-1777 or stop by our office in West Acton.