

Where hope and opportunity intersect

While serving as the editor of Rutgers University's student newspaper *The Daily Targum*, Rohan Mathew learned that beyond the well-maintained campus of the college there were many poor families in New Brunswick who were struggling to make ends meet.

And rather than just sit back and watch, he decided to do something about it.

Mathew noticed a trend among many of the low-income residents of the city – whether they were unemployed and unable to find steady work or simply struggling at minimum wage jobs, many had aspirations of starting their own businesses. Although most lacked the funds and the means to launch their own companies, Mathew discovered that the drive, ambition and talent among the city's working class was abundant.

This discovery led Mathew, with the help of fellow *Targum* editor Joe Shure and other Rutgers students, to found an organization of their own: The Intersect Fund. Launched last November, the non-profit group has already begun making a difference in the lives of struggling citizens turned successful entrepreneurs.

The organization offers orientation and training courses, loan assistance and other services to help new businesses get off the ground. But according to Mathew, he learned that there is one additional ingredient to finding success.

"When we first founded The Intersect Fund, we believed that all that was needed for people to realize their dreams in becoming a small business was just the tools, the resources and the capital to do so," Mathew said in a speech at the Harvest of Hope dinner, where he was presented

with the Rich Cunningham New Leader for Justice Award.

"But what we found was, it was actually more than that," he said. "What was needed was hope."

Mathew pointed to some of the people he has helped, several of whom were in attendance at the Harvest of Hope gathering, as examples of what can happen when people do not give up on their dreams even after being told that they will never achieve them.

"For every one of them (who succeed) there are entrepreneurs who are being told by people in their lives that they don't have what it takes to run a small business, that they should just go get a job, that this is just a waste time," Mathew said. "So it is really much more than just writing a business plan or getting a loan. It is really all about that hope."



Rohan Mathew, founder and executive director of The Intersect Fund, speaks at the Harvest of Hope dinner. **Photo by Scott Alessi**

Among those who have turned hope into achievement is Zakiya Forbes, founder of The Lounge Society, a small business located at 75 Throop Avenue in New Brunswick, just across the street from Sacred Heart Church. Forbes sells jewelry, perfumes, soaps and various other products while also operating a clothing pantry that provides attire for people in the community.

Jamaica-native Sharon Levy has also turned a personal passion into a profitable business. Levy's company, Taking Tea in Style, not only sells a wide variety of unique tea blends but also offers full-service catering for parties, which includes tea, food and even music. Levy has expanded her business to sell products at several

Continued on page 4

Rich Cunningham remembered as man who empowered others

The community of Sacred Heart this fall mourned the loss of New Labor founder Rich Cunningham, a true community leader who died following a four-year battle with cancer Sept. 4.

Cunningham, 32, was well-known and respected in New Brunswick for his role in empowering low-wage workers to stand up for their rights and to obtain better working conditions. His vision led to the creation in 2000 of New Labor, an organization that has since grown in numbers and in scope to serve many of the young immigrant laborers in the city.

Cunningham's memory was honored at the Harvest of Hope dinner by friend and colleague Nancy Finn, former director of the Unity Square program. Noting the irony that Cunningham — an unwavering advocate for laborers — left this world during Labor Day weekend, Finn recalled her departed colleague's ability to inspire others.

"He was so amazingly smart, light years beyond most of us. He could convince even the most skeptical people that his was a noble and just cause," Finn said.

"He gave hope to a population that has little reason to be hopeful," she added. "Through education he gave them the courage to stand up for what they knew was right and the freedom to grow into a powerful force for workers' rights and immigration reform."

"That's also how Rich battled his cancer — with hope for a future with his wife and daughters, with courage even in the darkest hours, and in the final moments of life experiencing that freedom to let go."

Sacred Heart pastor Father Joseph Kerrigan also recalled what an amazing man Cunningham was and how vast his contributions to the community had been.

"Rich Cunningham was a brilliant young man who, in local circles and national circles, gave so much to the world of labor and to the poor," Father Kerrigan said.

Cunningham is survived by his wife, Heather, and their two-year-old twin daughters, Lily and Reese.

Summer in the City



Unity Square residents gathered in the shadow of Sacred Heart Church for a local celebration of the 26th annual National Night Out Aug. 4. **Photos by Scott Alessi**

National Night Out celebrated in Unity Square



In honor of the 26th annual National Night Out Aug. 4, neighborhood residents flocked to Sacred Heart for food, games and an overall good time. Organized by the Unity Square Partnership, the event is part of a nationwide effort to promote crime and drug prevention programs while strengthening community ties.

This year's National Night Out featured food and crafts sold by local residents (pictured at right and above) and a performance by local dance troupe the Dream Team Dancers (above right). And the year wouldn't have been complete without a visit from New Brunswick mayor Jim Cahill, a strong supporter of Sacred Heart's efforts in the community and of the Unity Square Partnership.

Common GOOD

Newsletter of the St. James & Sacred Heart Parish Partnership

Scott Alessi, Editor
scottalessi@gmail.com

Published bi-monthly by
Sacred Heart Parish, 56 Throop Ave.,
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Phone: (732) 545-1681
Fax: (732) 545-5059
www.hub4sacredheart.org

Sacred Heart Staff Contacts

Father Joseph J. Kerrigan, pastor
(732) 545-1681 ext. 2
jkerrigan@hub4sacredheart.org

Alice Bandelt, parish operations manager
(732) 545-1681 ext. 1
office@hub4sacredheart.org

Rocio Ramos, pastoral assistant
(732) 545-1681
Rocio.Ramos7@gmail.com

Robert McLaughlin, pastoral assistant
(732) 545-1681, hubcityrunner@gmail.com

Martha Del Rio, director of Vincentian and Latino community services
(732) 545-1681 ext. 4
MDeRio@hub4sacredheart.org

Joseph Grau, St. Vincent de Paul Conference president
(732) 545-6376, jgrau@hub4sacredheart.org

Sister Veronica Roche, SSJ, Director of Latino Ministry
(732) 545-1681 ext. 3
VRoche@hub4sacredheart.org

Scott Alessi, Religious Education
religioused@hub4sacredheart.org

Our partners:

Catholic Charities Solidarity Team
Father Joseph J. Kerrigan, director
jkerrigan@ccsolidarity.org
www.ccsolidarity.org

Unity Square
Lorena Gaibor, program manager
(732) 545-0329, lgaibor@ccdom.org

New Labor
Lou Kimmel, director of field mobilization
(732) 246-2900, www.newlabor.net

The Intersect Fund
Rohan Mathew, executive director
(732) 447-1324, info@intersectfund.org

Table of Plenty

St. James set to begin annual Thanksgiving drive for New Brunswick families

Once again, St. James parishioners will be organizing the annual Thanksgiving dinner drive to ensure that families in New Brunswick who are unable to afford their own holiday meal will still have a festive Turkey Day.

The drive, run by St. James parishioner Maggie Conroy, will this year bring Thanksgiving meals to 125 Sacred Heart families. Each family will receive a full, traditional holiday meal including turkey and all the trimmings.

Parishioners of St. James are being called upon to donate the turkeys, which will be delivered to New Brunswick on Nov. 21, the Saturday before Thanksgiving. Families in the religious education program at St. James will make a financial contri-

bution of \$5 per family, which will be used to purchase the remainder of the food. Collections must be turned in by Nov. 13. As in previous years, Stop and Shop of Basking Ridge will be also pitch in by discounting food items and delivering them to the church.

The program will require volunteer drivers from the St. James community to bring the meals to Sacred Heart. Conroy will be soliciting volunteers after an upcoming Mass at St. James.

In the event that more turkeys are collected than needed, Conroy said that St. James will donate the extras to the Somerset Food Bank. Each year the food bank is "thrilled" to receive the additional turkeys, Conroy said.



Families at Sacred Heart can once again count on a plentiful feast this Thanksgiving thanks, to the generosity of St. James parishioners.

Stock photo

Thank you, St. James!

When celebrating the good works being done in and around Sacred Heart, those working in the community never overlook the contributions of their sister parish in Basking Ridge.

During his introductory remarks at the Harvest of Hope dinner, Sacred Heart Society of St. Vincent de Paul Conference president Joe Grau made special mention of the efforts of St. James Parish in assisting the poor in New Brunswick through the many programs that bring food, clothing, gifts and other needs to Sacred Heart families.

"Indeed, if not for Sacred Heart's special relationship with St. James, our Vincentian activities would be severely curtailed," he said, leading to a round of applause for the work of Sacred Heart's sister parish.

For more information on how you can contribute to the work being done in and around Sacred Heart, call the parish office at 732-545-1681.

Intersect Fund helps entrepreneurs realize their dreams



Entrepreneurs Ruby Wesley, left, founder of the unique bakery A Taste of Rubies, and Sharon Levy, owner of the creative catering business Taking Tea in Style, are just two of the small business owners in New Brunswick who got their start with the help of The Intersect Fund. The two ladies showed off their products at the annual Harvest of Hope dinner Oct 2.

Scott Alessi photo

Continued from page 2
local stores in central New Jersey and to cater parties throughout the area, including New York City and Philadelphia. Her specialty teas are also available for purchase on her website, www.takingtea-instyle.com.

But starting a company that offers quality products and follows a solid business plan still isn't enough to ensure success. Mathew said that

the local community plays an important role in helping to keep their neighborhood businesses afloat and they have a responsibility to ensure that these businesses thrive.

"We need streets where businesses are not boarded up," Mathew said.

"So I am here today to implore you to patronize your own local small businesses as opposed to the

big box stores. And to look around and realize the transformative effect that starting a business can have on a life, on a family, on a street corner, on a city and on the world."

For more information on *The Intersect Fund*, including ways to become involved in supporting their efforts and the entrepreneurs that they have launched, visit www.intersectfund.org.

Common GOOD

Newsletter of the St. James & Sacred Heart Parish Partnership

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3 • OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2009



Bishop Anthony B. Taylor of the Diocese of Little Rock, Arkansas, delivers the keynote address during the annual Harvest of Hope dinner at Sacred Heart Oct. 2. Bishop Taylor discussed his own fight in Arkansas and Oklahoma against unjust legislation aimed at immigrants. Photo by Scott Alessi

JUSTICE FOR ALL

By Scott Alessi

On the surface, the annual Harvest of Hope dinner may seem like any other small, local fundraising effort.

But upon further inspection, the event more closely resembles an international summit on social justice. In past years, key figures from Guatemala, India and Slovakia have traveled long distances to be a part of the dinner, where they have discussed how the Church works to aid individuals in their corner of the globe.

This year's gathering, however, was focused not on our efforts to help those in need around the world, but on how to provide a better life for the people in our own backyard.

year in the Diocese of Santa Rosa, Guatemala. Father Robert Medley, pastor of Queenship of Mary, accepted on behalf of his parish.

Bishop Taylor recounted his own experiences of battling unjust immigration legislation in Oklahoma, where he served as a priest until being named Little Rock's bishop in 2008. The Oklahoma law, which was passed in 2007, has the nation's toughest restrictions against undocumented immigrants and even makes it a felony for others to aid an illegal immigrant by providing them with transportation or shelter.

When Bishop Taylor arrived in Arkansas, he found that a similar law was under consideration and immediately took action to rally the local church. Last November, he issued a pastoral letter entitled "I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me: A Pastoral Letter on the Human Rights of Immigrants," which was played on a CD in English and Spanish in all parishes in the diocese following last year's election.

"The Church is called to do all in our power to welcome the foreigner, and sad to say, we are one of very few voices that consistently speak out locally in defense of the rights of immigrants," Bishop Taylor told those gathered at the Harvest of Hope. "We are the voice especially of those who due to their immigration status have no effective voice within our legal system."

Bishop Taylor explained in his speech that all human beings have a God-given right to immigrate and in particular, parents have a moral obligation to migrate when they cannot provide for their children in their present location.

Although these people also have an obligation to "work within the system when possible," he said, that is often not a realistic option.

"It is virtually impossible for poor Mexicans to immigrate to the United States legally unless they already have close relatives who are American citizens or legal resident aliens," he said. "And even for these family reunification visas, there is a often a 16-year wait or more!"

Bishop Taylor added that it is clear the immigration system currently in place in the United States is broken and that it needs to be reformed now, without further denial of the human rights of immigrants.

"Justice delayed is justice denied!" he said.

To read the full text of Bishop Taylor's keynote speech at the Harvest of Hope dinner, visit www.hub4sacredheart.org.