

Sharing & Caring

Working Hard for the Working Poor

Job placement, professional certification assistance designed to help clients become self-sufficient

The Cooperative Ministry is launching two new services aimed at helping clients with long-term financial sustainability.

Bill Taber, Director of Crisis Assistance, is on the front lines of serving clients and knows well where clients struggle and what's needed for them to become financially independent.

"Every client seeking financial assistance receives basic budgeting help," Bill says. "As I help clients look at their income and expenses, many just aren't making enough money. They may be working part-time without enough hours, working for minimum wage, or they just aren't in a job with the potential for increasing wages."

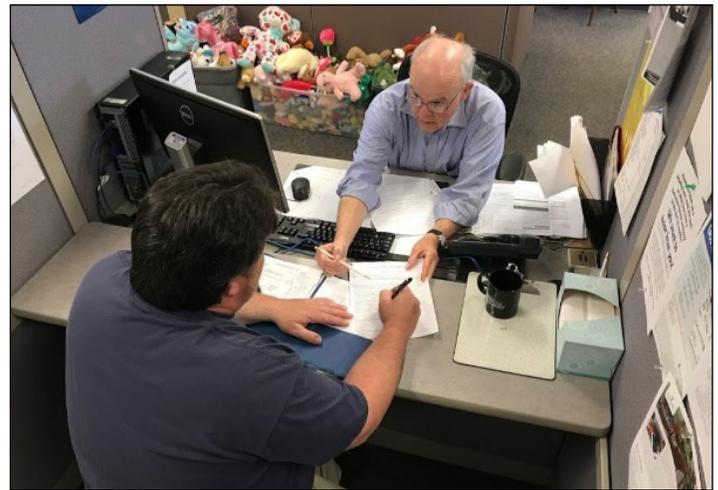
It's out of that concern that Bill launched The Cooperative Ministry's Job Placement Service. Columbia-area businesses can register their staffing needs through Bill's office. Employers are asked to provide reliable, long-term employment with the chance to increase wages along the way.

Since starting the service in April, four area employers have joined the Job Placement Service network, and Bill has been able to help place 20 clients—both men and women.

Robert Williams III, Restaurant Operations Manager for Lizard's Thicket, says, "I've been working with Bill to help people have a better full-time job or have a supplemental second job to meet their monthly needs. About once per week, we work together to fill a job with people who need work."

Bill says, "Because we serve people who want to work, they are so thankful for our help, and employers know that a referral from The Cooperative Ministry is a good referral—someone that we have personally met and gotten to know."

Sometimes, the difference between a good job and a great job can be much-needed education, training, and certifications.



BUDGET COUNSELING - Bill Taber, Director of Crisis Assistance, meets with a client as part of budget counseling services. The counseling is part of the goal to improve self-sufficiency.

This fall, The Cooperative Ministry is piloting a service called Professional Certification Assistance (ProCAP) in partnership with Washington Heights Neighborhood Association off West Beltline Blvd.

ProCAP will provide financial aid for earning a GED or certification to start a new career—or build skills in a chosen career. For the pilot this fall, the service is available to residents of the 29203 or 29204 ZIP codes.

Wanda Pearson, The Cooperative Ministry's Chief Program Officer, says ProCAP will most likely help clients in nursing, food handling and preparation, hair care professionals, and nail technicians as well as others.

"Employment and wages have risen fastest in occupations requiring some type of training, education, and/or certification beyond high school," Wanda says. "Credentials are no longer optional. ProCAP's purpose is to put help within the financial reach of people who are trying to live independently of public support."

Caring Corner by Beth H. Irick, Chief Executive Officer

New signage will help clients, volunteers, and donors



In 2006, The Cooperative Ministry moved to its current location at 3821 W. Beltline Blvd, in Columbia, not far from what is now Prisma Health Richland Hospital.

In 2017, we celebrated a successful capital campaign that paid off our mortgage. The Cooperative Ministry is now

debt-free and 89 cents of every dollar goes to direct program services for our clients.

With the launch of our client-friendly website this past January, our staff and board felt the need to make upgrades to improve our building's visibility to clients, volunteers, and donors—especially donors to our clothing and furniture bank. Our old signage had become weathered and out-of-date over time.

The new roadside sign is 10-feet tall and 4-feet wide, considerably larger than the previous sign. Our visibility along West Beltline Boulevard has certainly improved. We were also able to upgrade the parking lot signs, pointing to the clothing bank entrance, as well as signs on doors that advertise our hours of operation.

We would love to have your church group, civic club, or neighborhood group visit with us. Our tours include visits with staff members, and provide a behind-the-scenes look at how we serve the working poor and those in crisis.

If you would like to schedule a tour, please call Scott Vaughan, our Director of Community Awareness, at 799-2428.

Thank you for supporting our mission, and please consider a gift using the enclosed envelope, and know you are providing a hand up to people across the Midlands. ~ Beth



The Cooperative Ministry's Car Program

Cars are sold for cash or given away to clients

Like many non-profits, The Cooperative Ministry relies on the revenue generated from its cars-for-cash program. The Cooperative Ministry accepts donated cars in any condition and most are sold at auction, generating funds from which 89 cents of every dollar goes to direct program services.

That cash helps with rent and utility payments, purchases new work boots and non-slip shoes, and helps with other needs in our clothing bank.

Towing is free from a 50-mile radius of Columbia. All funds remain in the local community, serving the working poor and those in crisis. Our staff can

answer questions about title transfers and tax deductions.

Occasionally, someone will donate a car that is suitable for driving. Those cars - a five-year average of 10 per year - are donated to qualifying clients needing transportation for work.

The Cooperative Ministry's Car Program has been helped this year through a series of billboards in the Columbia market. We are thankful for corporations that lend their



Working Hard for the Working Poor  **BECKETT FINANCIAL GROUP**

name to this advertising project, creating awareness of our mission to serve the community's working poor.

To donate a vehicle, please call (803) 799-2428 (direct) or complete the donation form online at coopmin.org/donate-your-car.

Income tax volunteers needed for 2020 tax season

Ted Fetner is a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) volunteer who serves out of a willingness to help people and enjoys “seeing the smiles of those receiving refunds.”

Tom McLean says, “Many of the people we serve face a number of challenges - having limited English proficiency, not being able to afford tax preparation, or simply find tax filing overwhelming. I have learned a few hours of service each day goes a long way with our clients.”

“A lot of people need help and tax assistance is one great way to serve our community,” says John Baynes.

For the 2020 season (February through April), more than 200 volunteers will be needed at 18 tax prep sites across the Midlands. Volunteers can work evenings and weekends, and set their own schedule. Free IRS training is both required and provided.

For information on volunteerism through VITA, please contact Ed Palekas, Director, Financial Sustainability, The Cooperative Ministry, at epalekas@coopmin.org or (803) 799-0935.



VITA VOLUNTEERS - These volunteers with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program are regulars at The Cooperative Ministry office. Pictured, from left, sitting, John Baynes and Darryl Williams; Standing, from left, are Tom McLean, Ted Fetner, Nghiep Nguyen, and Jacque Long.

A partner's testimony

by The Rev. C.E. Kanipe Jr.
Senior Pastor, Shandon United Methodist Church

Centuries ago the prophet Micah spoke the immortal words, “What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Shandon United Methodist Church seeks to be obedient to this great biblical heritage.

But it is not easy. The needs in our world today are mind-boggling. Indeed, right here in Columbia the needs of our community can feel downright overwhelming. People walk into our church office needing money for gas, a bus ticket, and a place to stay. They call on the phone asking for help with rent, a water bill, and a power bill.

By ourselves our congregation simply is not equipped to handle these needs. We do not have the expertise, nor do we have access to the appropriate community resources. When we try to go it alone, the best we can do is to put a Band-Aid on a gaping wound. It feels good to be helpful, but in fact we



haven't changed the fundamental situation -- the next month or the next week or even the next day, the wound is still there.

But there is good news. Our congregation is blessed to have a partner ministry that does have the expertise and resources to make a lasting, long-term impact on people's lives. That partner is The Cooperative Ministry. For example, when we help a family with rent, they are still in the same situation the next month. But when we refer a family to our partners at The Cooperative Ministry, that family benefits from a holistic review of their situation – the family budget, affordable housing options, job counseling, etc. – and wide-ranging connections to community resources. This partnership with The Cooperative Ministry enables our congregation to offer people a hand up rather than simply a handout.

I am grateful that way back in 1982 people of faith in Columbia had the vision to form an umbrella ministry for those in need in our community. It is truly inspiring to imagine all the lives that The Cooperative Ministry has touched over the last 37 years. At Shandon UMC we consider ourselves blessed to continue to be partners in this great ministry!

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Beth H. Irick, Chief Executive Officer

Scott Vaughan, Director,
Community Awareness

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