

# NewsDigest

► WISCONSIN

## Milwaukee Convoy giveaway results in donated buildings

► The Wisconsin-Northern Michigan District of the Assemblies of God has received a big boost for inner-city ministries because a private corporation transferred several buildings in downtown Milwaukee. In December, the district took possession of the property, which had once been a hospital complex that covered 13 acres and nearly 321,000 square feet of building space. The property is valued at \$9.5 million.

"This has been a remarkable experience," says Paul Hamelink, secretary/treasurer and home missions director for the district. "It's an ongoing miracle."

Charles Hackett, executive director of Assemblies of God Home Missions, agrees.

"This is one of the largest gifts ever given for inner-city ministry and it proves that God has plenty of resources to accomplish His will," Hackett says. "It's a supernatural intervention by God."

The miracle came to light during last August's Milwaukee Convoy of Hope, in which nearly 7,000 residents received free groceries, haircuts, school supplies, health screenings, lunch and a gospel message. Unknown to the district and churches participating in the convoy, executives from Aurora Health Care, the corporation that transferred the buildings to the district, visited the event.

Impressed by the Convoy of Hope and concerned about the community, Aurora officials offered the old hospital to the district. "We recognized that with such an opportunity there were also incredible responsibilities," says Hamelink, noting the \$234,000 annual utility bill, plus security costs and upkeep of the property. "We wanted to be people of faith, but we also wanted to act responsibly."

After much prayer and discussion, district officials accepted Aurora's offer.

As the transfer of the property neared, the heating system failed in one building. The fire suppression, water and sewer pipes froze

of the City of Hope Board that is overseeing the transition, says five denominational groups and 19 parachurch organizations have expressed interest in cooperating with the new venture, along with many of

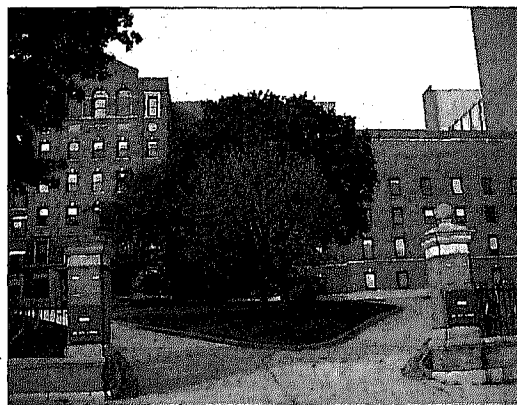
the 20 A/G churches in the metro area.

"I believe God is going to give us a great unity so that we can represent Christ to the city in an undivided way," says Davis, who also is senior pastor at nearby Bethel A/G.

"We're gaining a glimpse into the size of the vision God has for this city."

Davis expects City of Hope to expand the food giveaways, clothing distribution, health-care counseling and job training programs already established. The new facility, Davis hopes, will enable City of Hope to provide after-school tutoring for children, health care for women and children, and housing help for the elderly.

—Kirk Noonan and John W. Kennedy



City of Hope covers a three-block downtown area.

and cracked. Thousands of gallons of water flooded the building. Aurora then offered to pay the \$25,000 insurance deductible for the estimated \$1 million worth of repairs. And the insurance company is allowing the district to renovate the building as desired.

Eventually, the complex, known as City of Hope, will house ministries such as a health clinic and day-care center. "We hope to involve many ministries in Milwaukee," Hamelink says.

John G. Davis, president

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in our struggle and understand that there is help for us.' Sometimes churches are afraid those people living in homosexuality will somehow infect their church. We've demonstrated that this is not true."

Dalton points out that accepting homosexuals into a church community does not have to include accepting homosexuality.

"When people come in, we interview them first," she says. "We stress very clearly that we base this whole ministry on Scripture. It's a very difficult battle. But unless we proclaim the truth, it's going to be a battle the rest of that person's life. That's true for any bondage."

Chambers' burden to reach out to young people goes beyond the walls of his church. He is working with

Charlaine Townsend at nearby University of Central Florida to start a ministry to homosexual students through Chi Alpha, the A/G campus ministry.

"We can't just scream and holler about the sin," Whitten says. "We must be willing to offer God's healing grace and the opportunity for them to become healthy and find the support system they need."

"One person in our church at the beginning said to me, 'I know that a ministry like this is important, but why does it have to be at our church?'" recalls Bricker. "And I said, 'I'm honored that God has allowed us to have this opportunity.' That person is still part of the church and has come to understand that that is true."

—Scott Harrup