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Cathie Rowand | The Journal Gazette
From left: Jeff Kachmar, Ann Frellick, MaryJane Coursen, Betsy Kachmar, Tom Coursen, Roger Reece and Francis Frellick have started a local chapter of Bread for the World.

New chapter gears up to battle hunger

Rosa Salter Rodriguez | The Journal Gazette

There's more than one way to fight hunger, says Jeff Kachmar.

His weapon of choice: the pen.

The 56-year-old semi-retired health insurance and financial services exec has been instrumental in starting a Fort Wayne chapter of Bread for the World. On its website, the organization describes itself as "a collective Christian voice urging our nation's decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad."

Members don't ordinarily organize canned-food drives or solicit donations for sending emergency food aid to the famine-struck in the Horn of Africa, Kachmar says. But they do write letters – and, these days, type emails – to members of Congress to urge them to support policies that alleviate hunger and poverty.

"Bread for the World is unique in that they're really an advocate for the hungry," Kachmar says, citing biblical verses that call on Christians to work on behalf of the poor.

Kachmar, who attends Fort Wayne's Unitarian Universalist Congregation, says he and his wife, Janet, a Citilink administrator, were active with a Bread for the World chapter when they lived in Indianapolis. The couple moved to Fort Wayne about six years ago.

The local chapter was started last fall, after he received encouragement from the Rev. Roger Reece, executive pastor of Associated Churches of Fort Wayne and Allen County. The two met by chance at a hunger conference in Shipshewana.

"We're very much a nascent organization," Kachmar says, adding there are about a half-dozen local members, including Reece and some members of

■ Band bilingual, multipurpose

Members of Practice at 5! want to bring a Christian message that will resonate with the growing number of young people who, like them, have roots in Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America – but grew up in the United States and also speak Tuesday

■ Let Scriptures shape character

God has inscribed a sense of morality on human hearts through the natural law. Scripture must also be the foundation of forming a Christian's conscience and our moral guide. Saturday

■ Guidelight

Classes Clear Waters Serenity Center & Shop, 3207 Covington Road, will have a beginning tarot class from noon to 6 p.m. Jan. 21. Call 459-9200 to sign up. Unity Christ Church, 3232 Crescent Ave. Saturday

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Get involved

- For more information on the chapter, call Jeff Kachmar at 482-6268 or go to www.bread.org

STOCK SUMMARY

Associated Churches' peace and justice committee.

But the group already has sponsored a letter-writing workshop, and members have met with staff of local federal legislators. The group also has secured the head of the organization, the Rev. David Beckmann, to speak at 10 a.m. Sept. 17 during "Forgotten People: A Call to Action," a social ministry conference at Fort Wayne's Life Bridge Church, 12719 Corbin Road.

Beckmann also will preach at 9 and 11 a.m. and participate in a forum at 10 a.m. on Sept. 18 at Fort Wayne's Trinity English Lutheran Church, 405 W. Wayne St. Beckmann, a Lutheran pastor and economist, is a winner of the World Food Prize who believes ending hunger is achievable in the current generation.

In the next year, Kachmar says, the local Bread for the World chapter's goals are hosting letter-writing workshops at 10 churches and participating in the annual nationwide Offering of Letters to Congress, in which churches collect letters on a key topic to forward to key representatives.

Kachmar says one doesn't have to be eloquent or totally versed on hunger issues to write an effective letter. The group usually doesn't take a detailed position on specific legislation, he says, but offers concern and general support of programs such as food stamps or the Women's Infants & Children's program.

The current letter-writing emphasis is reforming foreign food and other aid to make it more efficient, while next year's campaign is expected to focus on maintaining programs that provide "a circle of protection" for the poor during what's expected to be a round of federal budget cuts, he says.

"Because they've been around for such a long time, they're known in Washington, and they've always been very careful about being nonpartisan," Kachmar says of the national advocacy group.

It doesn't cost anything to be a member of the local chapter, he adds, but people can opt to join the national group for \$30 a year, which includes a subscription to a newsletter.

"I think the folks who are involved with this are concerned about the (hunger) issue and are wanting to shine a continuing light on it," he says. "It's folks who get tired of sending the money and sending the food - and not seeing any systemic change."

rsalter@jg.net

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