



## August Update



Dear Bethel friends and well-wishers,

Thank you for your recent financial donation to Bethel Neighborhood Center. Your donation enables us to enrich the lives of many students through our youth program, and meet the emergency food needs of many individuals and families who were/are affected by the pandemic and unemployment. We have brought relief and hope to more than 20 families last month by helping them with their rent and utility bills because of the grant we received from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) of Greater Kansas City. The USDA food program and regular food donations from the 'After the Harvest,' First Baptist Churches of Olathe and Stilwell, and Oak Grove Assembly in Roeland Park, Kansas, have allowed us to distribute more than 6,500 lbs. of fresh produce every week to our community. Thank you once again for your generosity.



We have concluded our Virtual Summer Youth Enrichment Program in the first week of August by giving away backpacks filled with school supplies to our summer program participants. Receiving supplies from us made our students and their parents very happy. The mother of Khual, a second grade student, said, *"Khual woke up early in the morning and was ready to come down to Bethel to pick up his backpack and school supplies before his brothers woke up. He insisted that we leave home early to be on time to pick up the backpacks for him and his two older brothers. Thank you Bethel for the backpacks and school supplies for my three boys. My entire family had Covid-19 and my husband missed many work days. The help we received from Bethel mean more to us than you will ever know."*

One of our staff members, Nico, noticed that the kids adjusted well to having online classes and were still very active. Another staff member, Keith, noted that, *"One girl was inspired to make a model of a Native American house from 500 years ago and built a very detailed house. A picture of her artwork can be found on our Bethel Classroom along with another students' picture of rocks spelling out Bethel and a heart. I didn't think as many would participate as much as they did."* Ms. Lah Paw, another staff reported that her students learned about 'MyPlate,' food labels, the importance of eating healthy and physical activities, and they asked their parents to buy more fruits/vegetables and exercise more. Thinking of the online summer program, Ms. Jackie was concerned before the actual classes began but she was surprised by the active participation of our students and how much the students enjoyed being with other students although everything was done online. Even though COVID has changed our lives, it has not changed the work we do here at Bethel and the opportunities our children have to learn, explore, and have fun!

The death of Benjamin Ortiz, one of our senior program participants due to Covid-19, was very difficult for our community. He and his wife participated in our senior program regularly until we were closed in the middle of March. He was in the hospital for 18 days and passed away on July 24th. In the picture, he proudly displayed what he made at the arts and craft class a week before Valentine's Day this year. We will miss him. Please pray for his wife, Maria Ortiz and other family members.

May God bless you and keep you healthy and safe this summer!

*Mang Sonna*

Rev. Mang & Nem Sonna, Bethel Neighborhood Center

