

Connecting Points

Volume 7 ♦ Issue 2

Quarterly Newsletter of Family Connection

Spring 2003



Happy Spring! The first of April always brings a sense of wonder and anticipation into my heart! The flowers budding, (How many of you have checked your garden for those little red or green buds pushing their heads out of the ground?), the geese returning home, the birds singing, the new baby animals, and the wonderful smell of fresh new life everywhere! I love it all.

Easter is here, too. I love shopping for the my Easter outfit. How many of you get a new Spring outfit for Easter?, and putting out the colorful Easter & Spring decorations around my home. The feeling of new life and hope is exhilarating! My first bouquet of daffodils is gracing a table in my living room. For me, they make the promise and hope of Easter and Spring a reality.



Dorothy Richards

Just as we anticipate the colorful flowers, and the joy of Easter Morning, the guests we serve anticipate their visits. They prepare for them for weeks, even months. The “annual” visitors will be coming back soon. They come from one end of the country to the other—from California to Massachusetts. Soon, we will have a guest from England. We have guests who come annually, monthly or just when they can. We welcome all of them, and many have become close to each other over the years. Some email or write each other, some email or write us. They have a common bond, and are giving what they can to help each other. Watching some of these guests is like seeing a flower growing and blossoming—they find the situation they are in is not the end. They can have a life, friends, laughter. We hope with the Family Connection Hospitality House we can encourage these feelings of friendship, hope and love.

Our guest list has changed and grown over the years. We have seen new guests come, unsure and lost; we have seen joy with the release of a husband, father or brother. Most of the time, the family member brings the released inmate back to meet us. That is one of the highest compliments we feel we can receive. To have them feel we were such a positive part of their life, that they want to share us with a loved one. We hope that the Family Connection Hospitality House has always extended a warm and welcoming hand to those that need it, and can continue to do so.

Life and love and joy is what makes this world worth living in. When I see guests “make themselves at home”

my heart feels full. I thank them for what they give me.

Happy Easter! Happy Spring! May you all blossom with the joy of Easter!

Dorothy Richards
Executive Director

P.S. The Human Race is July 19th! Plan to participate!



Spring begins with the whisper of new flowers, like the quiet conversation of angels walking through a meadow together.

Our Ongoing Mission...

To provide temporary shelter, emergency supplies, services and support to the families of inmates in an ongoing effort to facilitate visitation, and strengthen the family bond.

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Connecting Points

Board Points

Ann Marie Rossing tells of the beginning of Family Connection. This history will continue throughout its tenth year- 2003.

It is hard to believe that the Family Connection Hospitality House project is going on its tenth year. For some time, I had planned to put together a more complete history of how the project got started, so here it finally is! Like any organization, as time passes, the history of the organization gets lost if we don't make an effort to remember the roots. Many wonderful people helped to make it happen. There were ups and downs, mistakes made and blessings shared. It is good to remember our history and grow from the many experiences shared. For me, the most important thing about this project has been the very active reminder that when God has a plan, He will see it through. He only asks us to be faithful to His call and to trust that He can do it. He does use His people and we need to be willing hands and feet to carry out His will. In the end, God is the one to be glorified by what is accomplished through those He calls.

As you may already know, it is out of my history of growing up in an incestuous family that I was asked to be a speaker at one of the first "Impact of Crime on Victims" classes in the South Dakota State Penitentiary in about 1993. My dear friend Linda Mellegard was teaching in the school at the penitentiary at that time, and she asked me if I would be willing to share my experiences in that class. As a result of that prison program, Reverend Leroy Iseminger who was the pastor of the St. Dymus congregation at the South Dakota State Penitentiary asked me to preach at one of the church services then subsequently asked me to come and share a bit with a support group he facilitated for the families with an incarcerated loved one. The name of the support group was WAIT, which is an acronym for We Are Inmates Too. It was that evening that I had an opportunity to hear the stories and experiences of these dear women who were struggling with shame and pain for a crime they did not commit. Their burden was heavy, yet so many were concerned



Ann Marie Rossing

about the other wives and mothers who lived far away and could not afford to come to visit their loved ones. I felt that evening that God had *removed my blinders* and showed me the very private suffering of these dear family members that I never even gave a thought to prior to that evening. I knew about the inmates and their situations, but I never wondered how their mother was doing. I never wondered if he is married or how his wife was holding up. I

never thought that his grandmother might be suffering or his brother feeling shame. I learned a lot that evening that I never thought about in my nice comfortable world. I learned that the families with an incarcerated loved one are the "**invisible prisoners**" that most of us do not see or think about, and they too are "doing time".

The families began to tell stories about how many would sleep in their cars or stay as long as possible at the bus station because they could not afford money for gas and a place to stay. Pastor Iseminger shared that he wished someone would help to get a place for these families to stay or at least have a cup of coffee and a place to freshen up and find support.

The ride home that night left me with many emotions and questions. Could I do something here to help? My husband David offered his support, but I knew nothing about how to do this or where to start. I felt that I was given a clear message and that was that I needed to do something here to help. I often say, "When God *removes your blinders* to see a need, you can never put them back in place again."

I remember coming home that night with a hope and a conviction. My husband supported my efforts and encouraged me to let Pastor Iseminger know that I was willing and that I should call Reverend Roger Fredrikson who would be a good resource

for how to get started since he was the founder of the Glory House. That was March 15, 1994.

When I called Pastor Iseminger, he encouraged me to get in touch with Jack Noordgard, from Lutheran Social Services of Illinois. He then put me in touch with a woman named Jane Otte, the director of the Vienna Hospitality House near Marion, Illinois. Jane provided me with a wealth of information about the plight of the families, procedures for running the house and other pragmatic information that was most helpful in getting the project started.

I was also put in touch with Judee, who was engaged to an inmate, Jeff, and she was involved with the Family Awareness project. This was a project for the local families and children with an incarcerated loved one. Family Awareness did a survey in the prison that explored the needs of the families left waiting on the outside. Some of the most compelling results of that survey that were returned include:

- 48% of the families left outside have an income of \$5-10,000 annually
- 47% would need to travel 250 miles one way to visit
- 39% said that if there were a place to stay, their families would be able to visit
- Of those men who have children, the greatest majority are under age 13.

Armed with that information, the next step was to put together a group to further explore how to proceed.

The first formal gathering to explore the project met at New Hope church in mid April 1994. Present at that first meeting was Pastor Leroy, Pastor Roger Fredrikson, Dick Braithwaite, Justin Berger, Cathy Brechtlesbauer, Judee Howard, Betty Unruh, Bernie Hall, and myself. We talked about the need and some thoughts about a place for the house. All agreed that this facility was needed and many ideas were generated for what to do next.

Hospitality Director's Points

We've had some very busy months here at the Hospitality House and expect that trend to continue because of the Spring and Summer months coming up and the good traveling weather they bring. Also, many people take their vacations and spend a part of it with us visiting their loved ones. Another reason we have been so busy is because of the variety of people we open our door and hearts to.

One weekend last month we were fortunate enough to be able to serve many different people in several different ways. We had a mother here to visit her son, a sister to visit her brother, a parolee here to live until she found employment and a place to live, three college professors for a conference, and two women here to visit inmates during one of their quarterly powwows at the prison. After the powwow and visitation on Saturday, we all met back at the Hospitality House and participated in some wonderful conversations. Even a state legislator, who attended the powwow, came over to see the House and met with some of our guests.



Jennifer Koepsell

Even though these people came for many reasons and from varied backgrounds we were able to come together and find some common ground over coffee and cookies. We served people as near as this state and as far away as Massachusetts and New York in a single evening. During this one evening friendships were formed, support was given, ideas and phone numbers exchanged. People who under any other circumstance might never meet, met here and I was lucky enough to witness strangers supporting each other during very difficult times in their lives. This is not an uncommon experience here since our guests feel comfortable and safe here and

can share their stories with people who truly understand the unique situations they are going through. Many times this is as valuable to them as finding a place to stay for the evening.

Jennifer Koepsell
Hospitality Director

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A second meeting was held, May 23, 1994 this time including former SD penitentiary warden, Herm Solem, Sandy Leonard, a local teacher, Reverend Dennis Thum, former chaplain at the penitentiary now ministering at University of Sioux Fall, David Harnish, Prison Fellowship representative and Linda Mellegard my friend who taught in the prison and some of those present from the first meeting. At that meeting, we adopted Hebrews 13:2 as a Biblical underpinning of the project and our goal was clarified: *"To establish a facility which will provide temporary housing for the wives and children of inmates in the SDSP. The house will attempt to meet the need for support, information, childcare, emergency clothing, and food needs if necessary."*

That summer, Judee, Pastor Leroy and myself spoke with Reg Hanson of Lutheran Social Services about our desire to begin this project. He offered to provide administrative support for our work, which also lent credibility to what we were doing. Tom Walsh and Steve Anderson were the two individuals who actively helped guide us with the administrative and organizational needs. Steve Anderson remained with the project for a number of years eventually administering the financial duties for the project, serving on the Board of Directors and functioning as Treasurer.

Pastor Roger suggested talking with Ted Thoms and Don Dunham Jr. about possibilities for property. The third meeting was then scheduled and held July 14, 1994 in Mr. Dunham's new office in the Chamber of Commerce building. Both realtors met with a group of seven of us including some local families and Pastor Iseminger's wife Orpha. There was discussion about location and possibly even a piece of property near the prison owned by the state. Once again, our goals and hopes were further clarified and shared. The gracious way people responded to us gave us the courage to continue. Mr. Thoms admitted he had an adopted brother who was in prison and understood the plight of the families personally.

Family Connection Staff

Dorothy Richards Executive Director
Jennifer Koepsell Hospitality Director
Mary DeJong Children's Connection Dir.
Carol Y. Larson House Assistant

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Vice President Bonnie Gregerson
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Jorgenson
Kelby Krabbenhoft
Bonnie Larsen
Ann Marie Rossing
Herm & Maisie Solem
Mary Lou Steib
Ronda Stenslend
Monte Walz

Children's Connection Points...

Children's Connection activities have centered around our work in four elementary schools in Sioux Falls. We currently have a total of nine groups and approximately 30 students who come to those groups on a weekly basis. Although we acknowledge that the one commonality within the group is having a parent or family member in prison, we don't dwell on that. My goals for these kids are for them to know that they are lovable and capable and for them to know that there is a safe place where they can come with their concerns and be appreciated for who they are.

We start each group by ringing a chime and listening in silence until the chime stops ringing. We then pass a heart-shaped rock around the circle. The person with the rock has the floor and everyone else becomes a listener. The heart reminds us that we can speak from the heart without fear of judgment or ridicule. This is a time when children can bring up issues that they have on their minds; and it teaches listening and empathy skills as well as the ability to communicate. Every group member has the opportunity to "pass" if they don't want to share at that time.

Typically, each group also includes an activity related to one of the following:

- development of a positive self image.
- improved relationship and decision making skills.
- increased understanding about families and the effects of imprisonment on families.

Unlike most adults, children are not able to always put their thoughts and feelings into words so we need to *do* things that relate to those thoughts and feelings. We play games, draw pictures, act out stories, sing songs and other creative activities to try to get to the heart of an issue. Our time is limited – we normally have the recess part of the lunch hour – but the groups are spirited and the children enjoy their time together. It helps for them to know that they are not alone in their struggles.

As we enter the last quarter of the school year, we are thinking about how to continue to help children over the summer. Often, due to limited resources, children with an incarcerated parent are looking at days and weeks with no plans and nothing to look forward to. This can be a recipe for children going down paths that lead to trouble. At Children's Connection, we are currently identifying children who would like to go to summer camp as well as resources for funding those experiences. We have had wonderful responses ranging from camps offering partial to full scholarships to an anonymous donation of \$2500 to pay for camping activities for these children. We are grateful that so many understand the life-changing experience that summer camp can provide. We will keep you posted on our progress.

Thanks to everyone who sees a child in need and responds freely and lovingly. I once had an instructor who said that every child

who is not nurtured and guided is a person who will exact a far greater price from society later in life. I hope our hearts can remain open to helping not only our own families but all children.

Mary DeJong
Director, Children's Connection



This space is for our guests from all over the globe to share recipes with each other. Thank you to all who have submitted recipes- we are looking forward to more!

Hugs and Kisses Cake

- 1 yellow cake mix
(remove 1 cup and set aside)
- 1 1/2 sticks margarine
- 4 eggs
- 1 lg. can of pumpkin
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2/3 cup evaporated milk (small can)
- 1 tsp cinnamon

Mix 1 stick of margarine and 1 egg (slightly beaten) with the large portion of the dry cake mix. Pat into 9x13" pan that has been greased and floured. Mix together pumpkin, 3eggs, 1/2 cup of brown sugar, 1/2 cup granulated sugar, canned milk and cinnamon. Pour over cake mix in pan. Mix the remaining cup of dry mix with 1/2 stick of margarine and 1/4 cup of sugar. Crumble with hands and sprinkle over top of cake. Bake at 350° for 50-55 minutes.

Jeannie C.
South Dakota



Camperships are available! The time is now!
Camp time will be here before you know it!

If you know any children that qualify for our programs and want to go to camp, or you would like to donate campership money, please call 357-0777.



CAMP
FUNZEE - WUNZEE

Let's help as many children as possible enjoy the camp experience!



From a Guest's Heart...

A special "Thank You" note from a special guest...

Dear Family Connection,

I want you to know that my son and I (and his dad) owe you a huge debt of gratitude.

I met my husband in 1999, and he was always in trouble. We began dating in January of 2000. He made some drastic changes in his life. He made his last mistake in June of 2000, when he left the jail's custody while serving a six month sentence for a simple assault that he committed in 1999. He left the jail to be with me- he says that he couldn't bear being away from me. To make a long story short, He is now serving a four year sentence for escape. He was caught in April 2001. My husband, who could not keep himself from getting arrested at least once per month, has not been arrested,

except for the escape in April 2002, all since we have been together. We had our son on Aug. 4, 2002 and my husband began his prison sentence on November 13. If it was not for your house here on the corner, my son would have now forgotten his father. I love my husband so much and I miss him terribly, but I want you to know that you have truly achieved your goal of keeping families together while they are apart with my family, and your help means the world to us. Thank you!!!

Sincerely,
A Guest

Family Connection thanks all the angels who make visits like this possible.

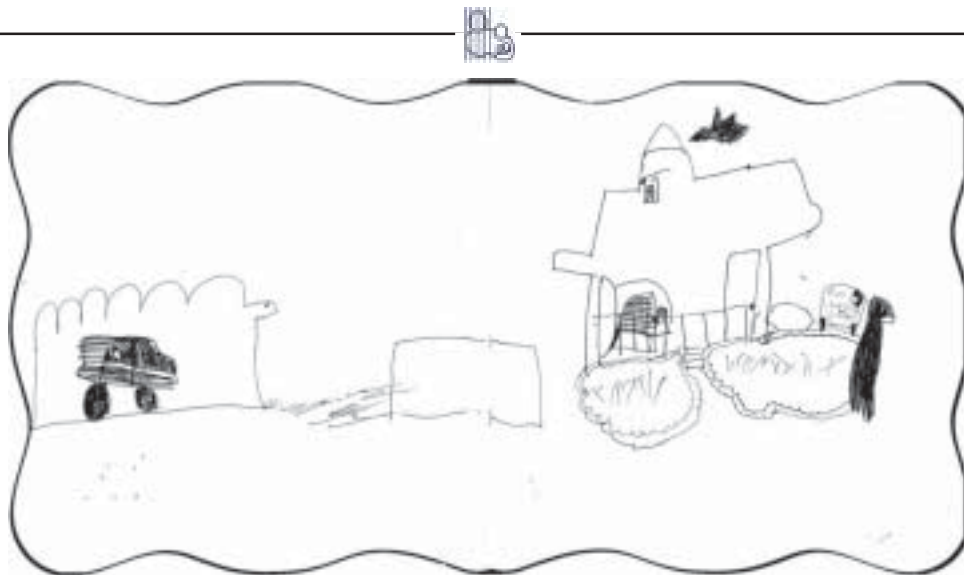


Saturday, July 19th
Registration 8:00am
Walk Begins 8:30am
Run Begins 8:45am
Falls Park

Walk or ~~Run~~
for
Family Connection

Call 357-0777
for more information or
to register your party! We will
mail you a registration form
or you may pick one up at
the Hospitality House at
303 N. Minnesota.

We need one volunteer to
represent Family Connection
that Saturday morning.



This artwork was done by one of the children staying at the Hospitality House. A wonderful likeness, don't you think?



- 10 We have speakers available for church or civic group meetings,
- 10 We have a videotaped walk-through of the Hospitality House,
- 10 We have printed material about our programs available to the public,
- 10 We invite your group to hold your meeting at the Family Connection Hospitality House. Call 605-357-0777 for more information or reservations.

JOIN US!

for a morning of fun,
sweat and cheers!

Connecting Points

Gifts/Grants

Please remember us in your Wills and Trusts

Blessed are the givers...and grateful are the receivers

Individuals

Asbenson, LuRay or Loretta
Bergh, Evelyn
Berndt, Robert & Joanne
Blashill, Evelyn
Braithwaite, Richard
Bray, Norma L. - Trust
Brynjulson, Robert & Carol
Crandell, John & Nancy E.
Dennis, Roger A.
Elson, Dr. David and Julie
Giebink, Brad & Mary Ann
Isakson, Joseph L.
Jensen, Dorothy
Johnson, Belva
Johnson, Daniel
Johnson, Marsha A.
Larson, Dorothy
Larson, LeRoy & Jorene
Lemon, Ruth
Ligtenberg, Ed & Rose
Limmer, Hope & Harold
McEaney, Msgr. John
Meinjohans, Arden & Norma
Myers, Charlene
Nesselhuf, Ed & Diane
Nordstrom, Roger
Olson, Ruth
Powers, Michael C.
Richards, Ronald & Dorothy
Ronning, Doreen & Melvin
Rucker, Lila
Smith, Connie
Thompson, Keith & Gloria
Tieszen, Jeanne J.
Uhre, Florence
Warner, Harold & Carol



Organizations

America Inst. of Certified Public Accountants
Argus Leader - Lend A Hand
Best Business Products
Church Women United of Madison
First Baptist Church
John & Francis Beck Trust
Savo Lutheran WELCA
Sioux Falls Council of Auxiliaries
First English Lutheran WELCA
First Presbyterian Church
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church
Grace Lutheran Church-Sisseton
Grace Lutheran Church Women-Watertown

Huron Church Women United
North Preston Lutheran Church
Our Saviors Lutheran Church - Patience Circle
South Dakota Synod
St. James Lutheran Church Women of ELCA
St. Paul WELCA-Clark
Wilmot Lutheran ELCW

Grants

Sioux Falls Community Foundation
Sun Enterprises
Wal-Mart Foundation

In-Kind by Individuals

Eunice Sweeney
Gordon & Joyce Harris
Helen McGuire
Ms. Gail Carlson
Robertta Callahan
Sharon Zylstra



In-Kind by Organization

Best Business
Key Products, Inc.
Brandon Lutheran women
Grace Lutheran Church
Hannah Circle
Holy Cross ALCW
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
Rachel Circle
S.F. Quilter's Guild
St. Vincent De Paul
Sunshine Pals Extension
Unityville Home Maker
Venture Club of Sioux Falls

Memorials

Given by Iseminger, Leroy & Orpha



Believe,
even though you feel alone.

Believe,
even though you hear no song.

Believe,
even though you feel no touch.

Believe,
because you can
see all around
you the work of
their hands.



~ Wish List ~

Kitchen Items

Fresh vegetables & fruits
Individually wrapped snacks
Juice & cold drinks
Hamburger
Sharp knives
Napkins

Housewares

Laundry Detergent
First Aid Kits
Cleaning products

Children's Connection

Play dishes
Polaroid camera & film
School glue
Children's scissors

Office Needs

Postage Stamps
Colored copy paper
Toner for Canon NP2120 copier
Ink for HP 812C printer
Computer address labels
Calculator

Gift Certificates

House one family (\$30)
Grocery stores
Walmart
Office Max
Phone cards
Taxi Cabs
Gas Station

Special Needs

Small fire extinguisher
Ice Melt
Tape Measure

Furnishings

Dehumidifier
Picnic table
Potty chairs

Your gifts help to provide a dignified, comfortable place for our guests. Thank you for your generosity. If you would rather we buy the item, please mail a check to Family Connection, designated for "Wish List" item of your choice.

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In August, I was asked by the WELCA of West Nidaros Church to speak as a result of Pastor Iseminger's recommendation. This was the first time I spoke publicly about our dream for these families. Sandy Leonard and I went to the meeting, and, after I spoke, I met Fran Borchardt, President of the SD WELCA (South Dakota Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church).

Fran shared how we may be able to get a grant from the new ministries fund of the WELCA. Fran helped me get that application and I wrote the grant. Our mission closely resembled the focus of the SD WELCA, which was a ministry to women and children in poverty. I shall never forget the joy and awe at how God puts people and opportunities together to make His purpose happen if we are willing to go where He calls. Another "God-incidence" was the fact that the Bible passage which was the focus for the SD WELCA was also the one we chose months before to under gird our ministry at Family Connection, Hebrews 13:2.

At this same time we began meeting at Our Savior's Lutheran. The membership began to expand further. Pastor Don Lehman joined our group. We began to talk about developing bylaws and exploring how we might become incorporated in the state and raise funds. The name for the project was decided to be **Family Connection**. We now had something by which we could identify ourselves and the name spoke of what we were about, a connection for families to help them stay connected.

In September, the meeting centered on the mission and focus of the work for the group. There were differences of opinion about those we would serve. After consultation with the 12 people there including new members Vicki Kelly, former South Dakota State Penitentiary Warden Herm Solem, Judy Regan, Kim Milbrandt, and Mark Sanderson, David Harnish, and Bernie Hall. Our mission to the mothers, children and families with an incarcerated loved one providing safe, temporary shelter was reinforced.

With the help of Mike Billion, Family Connection became incorporated in the state on November 7, 1994. The first Board of Directors were: Ann Marie Rossing, Board Chair, Rev. Leroy Iseminger, Sandy Leonard, Linda Mellegard, Bernie Hall, Herman Solem, Rev. Roger Fredrikson, Rev. Dennis Thum and David Harnish.

Later in that month the Argus Leader reporter, Carson Walker, wrote an article about the hospitality house dream, and we received responses from a number of interested individuals. That article brought our first donations as well from the now deceased Venetta Niedringhaus and Dr. Lucy Fryxell. John Gehm, a professor in the Criminal Justice Program at USD contacted me and expressed his interest in helping work with this project, as did Phyllis Fromelt. These two individuals along with many others became an integral part of this ministry for a number of years.

I shall never forget a meeting we had that following December at Our Savior's where we had among "the faithful" Monsignor John McEneaney, Fran Borchardt, and the late Art McDonald. That conference room was full and what a thrill that was as we made a decision on our logo and goal, "**helping to keep families together while they are apart**". I am fortunate to have designed that figure of a husband (behind bars), wife, and child in a mother's arms. The group came together with a common interest and personal spiritual commitment to serve others who "are among the least of these". I marveled that night at the way that God brought those people to help. It was amazing to make a call to Bishop Dudley and he encouraged me to call Monsignor McEneaney who served as priest in the prison. It seemed that God helped us to find the right people for this ministry at just the right time. Little doors opened into other doors that helped us open others. I knew this project was not mine, but His and He was making this dream a reality.

We developed our first brochure with the help of Jesse Thompson and Kim Milbrandt. We were becoming a real entity at this point, it was breathtaking as each facet of the project unfolded.

Watch for more! Next Installment: 1995



Heavenly ears hear you and rush to touch you with love.



My Tax Deductible Gift:

Name: _____

Address: _____
Street City State Zip

Gift Enclosed: \$ _____ I will pledge: \$ _____

Please return this pledge card or place your donation in the envelope provided.

Thank you!

If there is an error in your mailing label or if you know of someone who would like our newsletter, please let us know!

Please check the appropriate boxes for more information:

- I would like information about the Angel Program
- I would like a speaker for our group or service club
- I would like to tour the house
- I am interested in sharing my talents with Family Connection



Family Connection

PO Box 100
Sioux Falls, SD 57101

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Sioux Falls, SD
Permit No. 7605

“Keeping families together while they are apart.”



“Do not forget to entertain
strangers for by so doing,
many have entertained angels
unawares” Hebrews 13:2

Check Us Out on the Internet!
www.augie.edu/related/FamilyConnection

***Note new web page address! ***

Our e-mail Address is:
familyconnect@hotmail.com



Happy Easter! Happy Spring!

from
Family Connection
“Keeping families together while they are apart”



The Human Race will be held Saturday, July 19th at Falls Park. See you there!