

## **UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL**

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**(Charter Board Member, 1972 - Corporate Attorney)**

You've packed the car, and you're heading for the Smoky Mountains. When you first approached, your distant view was an arrangement of mountains cloaked to their crests with evergreen trees and shrubs. If you were traveling on, the Smoky Mountains would be only a cluster of green mountains. But if you were to drive or walk on the trails in the mountains your view would no longer be that distant view. The long-standing vestiges of houses, barns, gardens, towns and grist mills would reveal that the Smokies were households affording shelter and fellowship for families.

You might look at St. Matthews Area Ministries that way. A distant view, perhaps your view, is that of a food pantry, or possibly an emergency assistance center. Like the Smokies, a closer look will reveal that this thirty-eight year old Community Ministry is surprisingly different from that distant view.

St MAM is committed to providing care and support to those who live marginally or who experience unexpected circumstances affecting their lives. Its Child Development Center provides developmental programs for infants and preschool children. It cares for families in crisis through seminars and workshops and counseling. It works with juveniles, first and second-time offenders, by providing psycho-education sessions and volunteer opportunities to fulfill their community service. It works with young mothers in need of infant/toddler resources and supplies, it provides medical equipment on a free loan basis, it serves seniors through Meals On Wheels, it nurtures and teaches and supports families (with children) experiencing divorce, it collects and distributes school supplies, it provides holiday food baskets at Thanksgiving and Christmas, it operates a Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster and the list goes on.

Most important, St. MAM ties us together (member churches and others alike) as a community. St. MAM is a very special ecumenical community facilitating ongoing opportunities to work alongside one another. St. MAM partners with local schools, businesses and organizations throughout the community to improve the lives of our citizens. In short, with Matthew in mind, St. MAM is committed to feeding the hungry, providing for the thirsty, clothing the needy, caring for the sick and uniting strangers. I am happy to say, "I am St. MAM." So are you.