



ST. JOSEPH HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY
FROM the PORCH
 Christmas 2013 Newsletter

St. Joseph House of Hospitality
 A program of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Pittsburgh

“One Year Is in the Books.”

By Tom Kneier, Administrator

I recently finished my first year as the Administrator of St. Joseph House of Hospitality. So naturally I took some time to reflect on this. Did I meet my goals? Was it a productive year? What kind of impact had I had, if any?



I thought about what had changed, and started to make my mental checklist. Monthly house meetings, weekly staff meetings, an updated brochure, new program outcomes, new in-house support groups, increased security coverage, an air-conditioned dining room...but then I stopped cold (not because of the a/c). My first year really wasn't about what had changed at St. Joe's. It was how St. Joe's had changed me.

First there's the impact of the porch. When I get out of my car and walk towards the front entrance, I'm inevitably greeted by two, three or more of the guys sitting on the porch—in every kind of weather. I get smiles and welcomes and questions about how my weekend was or how my son is doing (he is a 16-year-old with Down Syndrome and loves to come and visit them). That's a game changer to start your day! Men who have faced life in shelters and on the streets, or who have battled addictions or mental health disorders for years get *me* started off on the right foot just by their attitude!

Then there's the whole surrender thing. When you're responsible for a residential facility that houses 60 men 24/7/365, it's hard not to think about it even when you're not there. (My wife will attest to this). It took me a good while to stop thinking the worst every time I got a call from St. Joe's at home. (My wife will also attest to this). But I'm getting better at surrendering things to God (my wife...never mind). My most effective prayer in those moments is to picture myself in the ocean. I stop trying to fight the waves to stay on the surface where I'm in control, and allow myself to slip underwater where everything is



quiet and peaceful and I give God control.

One more change. It's about brothers. I never had any. Four wonderful younger sisters, but no brothers. Now I have 60. That's more than a change. It's a transformation of a whole population. I don't work with “the homeless.” I work with 60 men that I know by name and whom I count as brothers. Guess that's what it means to be the Body of Christ.

That's a little bit about “Year One.” Can't wait till next year.



Did You Know That...

- 36% of our current residents are veterans, and 42% identify their religion as Catholic?
- Contributions from donors constituted 47% of our annual income last year?
- St. Joseph House of Hospitality is the only SRO (Single Room Occupancy) year-round residential program for formerly homeless men over the age of 50 in all of Allegheny County (and quite possibly all of Southwestern Pennsylvania)?
- St. Joe's receives weekly contributions of prepared foods, pastries, and coffee from Chipotle, Starbucks, and The Cheesecake Factory?



Spotlight on a Resident

By Sr. Mary Nolan, SC

“Bible Study Tops Education”

Looking at Edmund’s 6’3” frame you would think to yourself, “Wonder where he played basketball?” Ask him and he will tell you, “The CYO (Catholic Youth Organization) in Lawrenceville.” As guard and forward on a championship team, Edmund is quick to say that aside from that honor, he learned discipline. He also played right field on a sandlot softball team and dreamed “*Areba!*” as a great fan of Roberto Clemente.

Selected for Carlow College’s Upward Bound Program, Edmund was sent to the Toronto, Canada’s center. The summer program was structured to provide participants with the necessary study habits to get into college, but Edmund got sidetracked with other things that year.

A maze of life experiences followed. He learned welding and worked at it for a few years. But the drug scene beckoned and the \$20,000 his father left him when he died soon wafted away in smoke. A drug-induced stroke did not reduce his craving for drugs, and soon he turned to burglary as a source of income! Subsequently, that earned Edmund two 2-year jail terms.

And then God took over in the person of a woman who volunteered to lead Bible Study classes for the prisoners. All Edmund’s previous education became insignificant when he discovered...the Gospel way of life! He now volunteers in the kitchen at St. Joe’s and is a peer mentor to new residents.



Merry Christmas, Merry Mitzvah!

Like many people of the Christian faith tradition who will celebrate Christmas on December 25, the men of St. Joseph’s will also take part in holiday festivities on that day. After some of the residents return from church services in the morning, all members of the house will gather in the dining hall for an afternoon dinner, an array of desserts, and the eagerly anticipated opening of the gifts.

Returning to serve the men on Christmas Day will be several volunteers with the Jewish Federation Volunteer Center who will participate in Mitzvah Day. Mitzvah Day is “good deeds day” for members of the Jewish community. Its purpose is to connect volunteers with meaningful volunteer experiences. Their efforts are guided by the teachings of the Torah including: *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), *zedakah* (justice), *chesed* (kindness), and *k’lal Yisrael* (peoplehood).

Mitzvah Day can be conducted on any day of the year, but for the last 13 years, the Jewish Federation locally has designated December 25. “It’s not our holiday,” said Jessie Svec, program associate for the Volunteer Center. “So on this day, our volunteers provide assistance to organizations who are running lean on staff because they want to be home with their families on Christmas.”



Preparation for Mitzvah Day begins in August when Jessie and her team send out letters to more than 150 organizations asking the simple question; “Do you need help on Christmas Day?”

She said that last Christmas the Volunteer Center connected more than 700 volunteers with 60 different service opportunities that included 6 volunteers from 2 families who served food, cleaned the dining room and socialized with the residents of St. Joseph’s.

Rhea Marinstein volunteered with her husband and two teenage children. She described the experience as wonderful and said that the residents were very grateful that they were there to help. “The residents were all very welcoming to my family, receiving us with appreciation and kindness. It was very apparent that they were happy to spend Christmas somewhere where they felt there were people who really wanted to make their experience memorable.”

While the Marinstein family won’t be able to participate in Mitzvah Day this year due to a prior commitment, they look forward to coming back and spending time with the men next Christmas. Rhea said, “We volunteered on Mitzvah Day because we recognize the importance in giving back to our community, especially to those who are not as fortunate as we are. If something as simple as preparing a meal can improve the experience of others, then why not take the time to do it?”

We agree, Rhea, and thanks to all of the Mitzvah volunteers!



Photo Gallery

A Really “Cool” Donation

St. Joe’s received a deeply appreciated upgrade this summer when a commercial grade air-conditioning unit was installed in the dining room and doubled as a cooling station for the men outside of meal times.

Through the generosity of the lead donor, the **Hauber Family Foundation**, and the donations of **Tudi Mechanical** and **Mother of Sorrows Parish in Murrysville**, our residents were able to get respite from the summer heat and humidity, as the resident rooms are not air-conditioned. This was a special blessing to those with emphysema, asthma, and other breathing difficulties.



St. Joe’s Bikers

A number of men from St. Joe’s formed a Bike Club this summer, using bicycles that were donated, rented, borrowed, or purchased used. There were monthly trips from May through September ranging from 13 to 19 miles each. Some of the bikers are pictured here on the Three Rivers Heritage Trail. There is already talk of a day trip next summer along the Great Allegheny Passage.



Jazzed About Veggies!

On October 5, St. Joe’s sponsored an event on its grounds for the Hill District community to celebrate the harvest season for Community Garden sites in Pittsburgh. Funded by Mayor Ravenstahl’s **Green Up Pittsburgh Program** and **servePGH Initiative**, the event was called “Jazzed About Veggies” and included a jazz band from Duquesne University, a guest chef demonstration, and lots of veggie hors d’oeuvres!



The food was so good, people kept asking who we had used to cater the event, but it was our very own kitchen staff, (L-R)



Maggie Corrado, Rona Page, and Lonnie Jackson. Menu items included: zucchini muffins, butternut squash soup, broccoli cornbread, watermelon salsa, grilled veggies, zucchini cheesecake, and much more.



Poverty Simulation: Living on a Fixed Income

On October 30, John, Harry, Glen and Walt, four men from St. Joseph House of Hospitality, were invited to participate in a poverty simulation at the Wyndham Hotel in downtown Pittsburgh. Sponsored by **Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS)** for the employees of Gateway Health Plan, the exercise was to give the employees a simulated firsthand experience of trying to live on a limited fixed income during a four-week period. John and Harry, pictured here at the table, acted as bank tellers, and Glen and Walt as quick-cash attendants.



You Can Help With Needed Donations!

There are many ways you can help support the mission of St. Joseph House of Hospitality. One is by donating one or more of the following items:

New mattresses (or financial donations designated for mattress replacement). This tends to be an ongoing need in order to provide adequate bedding for our 60 residents.

Digital converter boxes for old televisions. Since residents do not have access to cable services, they need to have a converter box if they bring, or we provide, a small television for their rooms.

Dressers. Small dressers are needed to provide fully furnished rooms for the residents.

Area rugs. A variety of sizes could be used for resident rooms and common areas.

Bath towels, hand towels, washcloths. New or gently used items are a perennial need.

Extra-large shirts, pants, jeans, shoes. We continue to look for hard-to-find extra large clothes sizes 3X and 4X, and shoes sizes 12,13, and 14.

New or used books. Specifically fiction: Suspense, Mystery, Fantasy, and Science Fiction.

If you or someone you know can help with any of these requests, please contact our Operations Manager, Erik Germesin, at 412-471-0666 x212, or egerme@ccpgh.org.

THANK YOU!



A Holiday Recipe from St. Joe's Kitchen

MOCK CRAB BALLS

2 cups peeled grated zucchini
1 cup seasoned Italian bread crumbs
2 tablespoons mayonnaise
1 teaspoon Old Bay seasoning
1 beaten egg

Mix peeled grated zucchini, seasoned Italian bread crumbs, mayonnaise, Old Bay seasoning, and beaten egg. Form into small balls. Deep fry until brown.

Enjoy!



The residents, staff and volunteers at St. Joe's thank you for your support throughout the year and wish you a...

Blessed
Christmas



Remembering St. Joe's When You Make Your Estate Plans

As those of you who read this publication are well aware, the work at St. Joe's is vital to our community, a necessity for those men who would otherwise be neglected and forgotten. Our work can only continue with the generous support from donors like you.

A popular and successful means of giving is to remember St. Joe's in your will. It can be as simple as including the following language: "I give to St. Joseph House of Hospitality the sum of \$_____ to be used for the work and mission of St. Joseph House of Hospitality whose address is 1635 Bedford Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15219."

To learn more about other giving options, please contact Administrator Tom Kneier at 412-471-0666 x227.



Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, rooted in the Gospel and social teachings of the Church, is the primary social service agency of the Diocese. Our mission is to serve with excellence, professionalism, integrity and compassion, the human needs of individuals and families, regardless of their religious affiliation, and to provide leadership in mobilizing the resources of parishes and the wider community in addressing these needs.

Susan Rauscher
Executive Director

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