

Warming Center News



From the Director . . .

Dear Friends:

Newsletters have been delayed for several reasons – the main one is that upon hearing in October that shelter funds were drastically cut, we put everything aside except getting everything in place for our shelter season and working on a plan to assure that we had the necessary funds to have a shelter this year and in the coming years. I am happy to say that when we reached out to you, the community, we saw results for which I would not have dared to hope. Thankfully, we were blessed with enough funds to see this shelter season through, and to gain some new allies who want to work with us to help us continue. It became apparent that a walk-in shelter for the men and women left on the streets is very important to Macomb County and beyond. To save money this year, we are mailing this by USPS and also by e-mail.

I want to personally thank all of you who helped the Warming Center so that our partner churches could continue feeding and sheltering our homeless guests this year. As I write this, on February 20, we already have nearly 500 guests served to date, and we are seeing in the high 80's and 90's each night! Even on the warm nights last week. No one wants to sleep on the streets even if the weather is bearable!

The good part is that we are continuing to help shelter guests become housed – a seemingly never-ending process, but rewarding because although we can only do a few at a time, we know it works; and with the increase in available employment, which we are seeing not only for veterans (of which we have, at last count, 29) but for non-vets as well.

One of the ways we raise funds, is with our annual Spring for the Homeless dinner each spring. This year we have lowered the cost of attending and the good thing about the SFTH is that it is great fun! Each year people leave laughing or excited from the great donated, professional entertainment. All the way out, I hear, "Are you going to have them back again next year?" Our answer and the "Blues Brother's" answer is Yes!

A flyer is enclosed as is a letter of ways you can help.

Some success stories:

Mr. N has been in the past, and is currently in our shelter and has been working with a Ray of Hope Center caseworker. He is a man with a condition that makes it very difficult for him to communicate effectively with his speech, and he has also suffered a stroke which causes him to lose his balance. He has been advised to apply for disability many times, but refuses because he is an independent person who wants to work. He has been hired a few times, but not kept on, because of his communication skills. One place he worked was a factory; a good job, but when the management became fearful that he might be hurt, he was let go. But he never gave up and last week, we gave him bus tickets to go for an interview which we are very hopeful about! He has discovered that his speech works well when, and only when, he speaks into a phone. He applied for a telephone communications job. We are praying he gets it because he can do this!

Mr. D. has been in our shelter for 1 - 1/2 years and is disabled and has finally been granted disability income. He is looking for an apartment. He comes in regularly to give updates on his advancements and to obtain the advocacy and support which is one of our staple services. He is expected to get his own apartment in the next few months, and we will help with transportation for "apartment hunting" and with lots of encouragement.

Mr. K. comes in regularly for encouragement and referrals for help. He does have a home for himself and his two children. He is a middle aged single dad with two special needs daughters. He is desperately looking for appropriate but affordable childcare, and to find work with an employer who will understand that he needs a part-time job. He is finding what many already know, that in some ways it is easier for a single mother than the more rare single dad. He comes in for his appointments after school with his lovely, well-behaved young ladies, both under 12 year old.

Today, Mark had a joint appointment with an agency that offers Permanent Supportive Housing, and our homeless guest of two years, Mr. R. Mr. R has a mental illness but through our efforts in working with a government certified housing agency, he will soon be placed in an apartment where he will have a social worker to look in on him and help him to live as independently as possible. Again, this placement will depend upon the government funds being available.



... I'm tired of being sick and tired ... People here are very kind and polite ... I hope someday to be able to give back ... God bless and thank you. '

I am attaching an article written by our very dear friend, Dan Pfaff, who died suddenly on August 1, 2014, from a very virulent, very rare disease. This was the last Warming Center shelter he ever coordinated. Dan was a friend to all of us working in human services, and few of us in this field have been the same since we lost him! Dan was a manager for the Warren Michigan Department of Health & Human Services. He often told groups that the Warming Center was his favorite shelter program because we left no one out. He studied at the seminary and planned to enter the priesthood, but eventually married and had 5 children. As you can tell by his words, he would have given some great homilies or sermons!

From "The Warming Center Report" written by Dan, published in St. Faustina Church Bulletin 3/2/14.

...The Warming Center operates from late November through April, one week at each Church. It is the last refuge for many of the homeless who are considered the hardest to serve; the only condition for admission is good behavior while they are with us. The recent count of the homeless in January found that there are 988 homeless in Macomb, including families living in motels. As of 2/16/14, 535 unique individuals, young and old, new folk and regulars, have used the Warming Center shelter so far this winter season. They all have very different stories, many involving disabilities (both physical and mental) and substance abuse (past and ongoing). Serving these folks is a challenge not only logistically, but also emotionally, because many are defensive, and interact with us with only superficial pleasantries or a forced sense of humor. So it was quite a notable event when they said thank you, again and again, with amazement, for the \$5 McDonald's coupons we gave out on the last day. It was even more remarkable that several guests obtained and signed a thank you card and insisted that it be presented to our volunteers. This had never happened in our previous 8 years--it was the first card we have ever received.

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see (Mark Twain). We glean some meaning from a familiar gospel passage, Luke 4:18, when Jesus enters the synagogue and reads a passage by Isaiah 61: **The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.** Luke altered the quoted passage from Isaiah by omitting "to heal the brokenhearted" and added instead (from Isaiah 58) "to let the oppressed go free." The homeless, of course, are not physical captives. But their oppression is real and the comparison is painfully close, not only because of their physical hardship, which is severe, but more so because of the social isolation and rejection they live with. What is equally true is that we too are set free. We the volunteers, we the helping community---we are set free from our routines and the confines of our daily lives when we are confronted by urgent demands and thrust into situations where we are off balance, yet challenged to respond. We grow, we give, we see. So Jesus says: **Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.**

So thank you for giving a warm place of refuge to the homeless to keep them safe for a week, and thank you for giving them food that has kept them fed for a week, and thank you for so generously sharing your friendship to ease the sting of rejection. By doing these things we, all of us, guests and community together, share a miraculous kindness that sets us free.

And thanks to Dan for leading the way so many times.



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