



St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter

For Homeless Families

Hope has a home here...

How many of us have seen or have displayed the lawn sign: **Hate has no home here?** They seem to have popped up everywhere! I love the sign, the meaning, and the diversity of languages that proclaim this message.

We say: *Hope has a home here. Love has a home here. Gratitude has a home here.* We are so fortunate to be immersed in such loving kindness every day. This is just who we are. It is our faith-based, mission-driven commitment that produces the loving service we hope to give to all who come to us. It is what makes St Mary's so very special.

What does this look like? It looks like the 19 children who lived with us since our last newsletter. In just a quarter of a year we housed 12 families all of whom have amazing stories of strength and survival. During this same time we watched them graduate from homelessness to renting a room, finding an

apartment, moving to a transitional apartment or joining with others in a faith based community. We've welcomed children from 8 weeks old to 18 years old. Each story is unique but the basis of each is a story of hope, gratitude and strength.

What else does hope, love and gratitude look like? It looks like the "Play parents" who take the children for an hour of activity while their



Spring Blooms at the shelter

parents take time to make phone calls, gather information and prepare for the next day. It sounds like the pleading, hopeful child's voice calling, "Is there a play parent tonight?"

It looks like our staff giving of themselves day in and day out to go the extra mile to find resources, to spend a moment to ask "how is it

going?" , to lend a helping hand, to calm a crying child, to hug a frustrated parent.

It looks like a college student coming to learn and finding the experience so rewarding that she comes back and gives back. It looks like men installing a donated shower, organizing our documents, repairing a broken door. It sounds like voices consoling, complimenting, and rejoicing together.

We see **hope, love and gratitude** every day in the families coming with heavy hearts and great burdens, working so hard and struggling with issues and challenges beyond imagination, yet keeping alive a desire for success and a better life for their children. We see it every time our mothers and fathers go the extra mile – as scary as that mile may be. It is children laughing, sharing, playing and helping all of us to imagine a future beyond our expectations. It is a dream that keeps itself alive!

Yes, **hope, love and gratitude** reside here at St. Mary's.

—Sister Bernadette,
Executive Director



MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

Saint Mary's is soon to be 30 years old! Be sure to join us as we celebrate this remarkable occasion.

Where: RiverCrest Country Club

When: Friday, October 6, 2017

We promise amazing fun, food and fellowship! Details to follow!

Meet our families:

Starting over one hurdle at a time..

Koren came to St. Mary's with her son Vincent seeking to gain stability after many hurdles in her life.

The journey for Koren was not a bumpy road but a rapid decline. Koren worked as a dental assistant for 20 years. Koren began having problems with her back and was given pain medication. When the prescription ran out, she turned to harder street drugs to fill her addiction. As with many addictions, it became the center of her life. She attempted sobriety on her own but was not successful.

The first hurdle...Koren tried to put her life back together. She wanted to go back to work in her field as a dental assistant, but had difficulty obtaining a copy of her license. She had to explore many avenues to get a copy of her license and finally all her hard work paid off and she was able to apply for a position at a dental office.

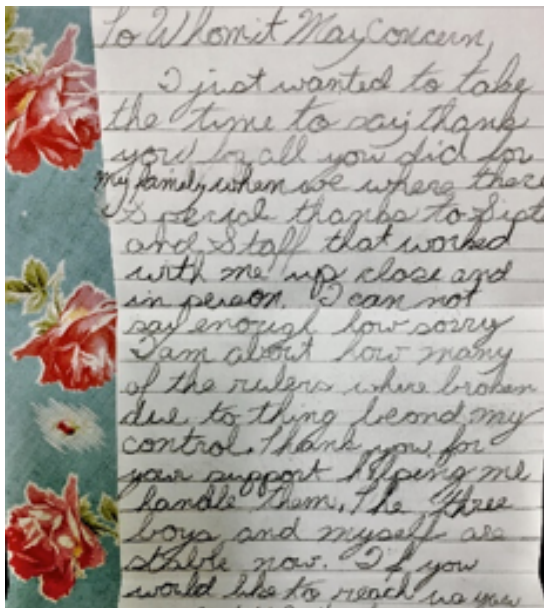
The next hurdle was getting daycare for her son and again she persevered and Vincent was enrolled prior to starting to work.

The most difficult hurdle...Koren's father passed away in the midst of her time here at St. Mary's. She returned to her family home for a brief time in order to assist her mother with the complicated tasks that her family now faced. At the same time she tried to keep moving forward with her plans to get her life in order.



Any of the above would be frustrating for anyone, but add the challenge of homelessness to the mix and this became almost unbearable. In her own words Koren states "St. Mary's was very supportive and I will always be grateful because the staff went above and beyond just 'doing a job', they showed compassion."

The update...We are happy to report that Koren has a full time job as a dental assistant, her son is in daycare and she is in the process of moving into her own apartment. We wish her all the best and hope her hurdles are few and far between.



A Special Letter...

Nothing makes us happier than receiving a special letter in our mailbox from one of our former residents telling us, "Three boys and I are stable now". Her words of encouragement show us that we are definitely on the right path in keeping our mission alive and providing a safe place for the journey home. Thanks so much, K.D.

In her words: I just wanted to take the time to say thank you for all you did for my family when we were there. Special thanks to Sister and the staff that worked with me up close and in person. I cannot say enough how sorry I am about how many of the rules were broken due to things beyond my control. Thank you for your support helping me handle them. The three boys and myself are stable now. If you would like to reach us.....

Volunteers Turn Each Day into a Gift



The selfless, devoted and purposeful act of giving is called 'Volunteering' and volunteers like Anna Louise Detweiler (left) remind us of these very facts each day at our home. Anna Louise has been volunteering at St Mary's shelter for over two decades. Her journey with the shelter is fascinating and inspiring. Anna Louise mentioned, **"I started volunteering with St Mary's shelter some 20+ years ago as night shift security to relieve the Franciscan Sisters who were running the shelter at that time."**

I admire the way St Mary's helps the parents to learn and grow in life besides helping them with housing. Their care for children always motivates me to continue with my service. I enjoy being their

'Play Lady' now," Anna Louise said. She always adds fun and creativity to her time with the children. Parents and children alike receive great support and encouragement from our evening Play Ladies and Men. The dedication of our volunteers from all walks of life strengthens our faith in the goodness of humankind and makes it possible for us to serve the families facing homelessness in their lives.



Elizabeth's Stewardship Day
painted our porches



Keith Gallagher and his family organizing
Spring Gardening Day



Ursinus College students make the playroom
more meaningful

Introducing Grace Brutsche

Grace, a sixth grade student at Holy Family School in Phoenixville decided to do a Help Drive for local non-profits serving those in need in her neighborhood. She typed up flyers, and labeled the drive "The Help Drive/Don't Do Good Do Great". She placed the flyers in neighbors' mailboxes and asked her mother to post on Facebook for her.

Grace wanted to help others during the season of Lent. She was sparked by her preparation for Confirmation. Grace visited us at St. Mary's accompanied by her friend. She was laden with gifts including new clothes, gift cards and toiletries for our families. All of us at St. Mary's are grateful to Grace for her beautiful spirit of giving and her care for our families. What a great day for all of us! Thanks, Grace!



Help us serve families in need

Your generous prayers and donations strengthen St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter's ability to continue to serve our resident families.

Check Donations can be mailed to-

St Mary's Franciscan Shelter for Homeless Families,
209 Emmett St
Phoenixville, PA 19460

Online Donation can be made through our website
www.stmarysfs.org



Snippets of Dinner Table conversation....

"I've been homeless for a whole year. My health is so poor but I was turned down for disability and my husband only makes \$10.00 an hour. He has other kids and has to pay child support. Thank God, I had these weeks to be safe, have food and a roof and be able to think. My boys need a mother and a place to live. What am I going to do?", said K.D. Former Resident.

"My Favorite thing at St Mary's is prayer before we eat dinner. My mom likes that I asked her if we all could all say prayers before we go to sleep at night", O.G. Former Resident, Age 9.

"St Mary's has really nice family feeling... and it is really clean. We all work together here so that we all can get back on our feet", S. S. Former Resident.

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS!

Friday October 6, 2017 Rivercrest Country Club