



St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter

For Homeless Families

A Journey of Three Generations—

Barbie Kepler started volunteering with St Mary's Franciscan Shelter during our inception days in 1988 through an ad in her church bulletin. She is mother of Jodi Bergman and grandmother of two wonderful young girls Kyra and Emma. Barbie involved Jodi with the shelter when Jodi was a high school student. Barbie beautifully narrated her volunteering experience in her email.

"We would go over one afternoon a week and put away donated groceries, etc., in the basement. This evolved into Wednesday dinner hours after Jodi graduated from high school, and I did this for MANY years...so many I don't really know how many".

Over the years, Barbie wore many hats as volunteer and donor that includes being part of an annual breakfast fundraiser, dinner volunteering, and playing a very important role as Brunch coordinator in the 1990's.

Jodi followed in the footsteps of her mother in giving and caring for the homeless. She continues until today as a playgroup volunteer and just like her mother, she introduced her wonderful daughters to the shelter. Jodi said, "What I like most about the shelter is that it helps families who have fallen upon hard times by giving them a hand up, not a handout. The shelter gets them out there looking for jobs and/or housing since there is a predetermined amount of time that they can stay at the shelter. I also like that the kids have the opportunity to take a break from their parents by going to the playroom - all families need their own space sometimes!"



Three Generations of Keplers

Volunteers like Barbie, Jodi, Kyra and Emma make our service for the families going through homelessness meaningful. We at St Mary's shelter are truly blessed to have this incredible family of three generation as our volunteers. **A bond of three generations of volunteers from the same family with St Mary's Franciscan Shelter blossomed with a simple yet generous bulletin advertisement.** We are blessed to have our community partners who make our programs stronger and help us to serve the families in need. 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



CONGRATULATIONS TO SAINT MARY'S FRANCISCAN SHELTER

Saint Mary's just celebrated 30 years of sheltering the homeless families in the Phoenixville area. God bless you with great graces for the next 30 years!

Happy 30th Birthday Saint Mary's!

Tucked away on a remote, side street on the outskirts of Phoenixville sits a very special home. A non-descript home that has provided safe and temporary shelter for vulnerable homeless families since 1987. The home, like homeless families, is in the shadows of other homes and hidden from those outside its immediate walls. We simply do not think of entire families as being homeless.

However, that thought entered the minds and hearts of two Sisters of Saint Francis who saw this concern and decided to seek a solution. Saint Francis told us, "Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible." And that is how it all began!

Since 1987, St. Mary's has:

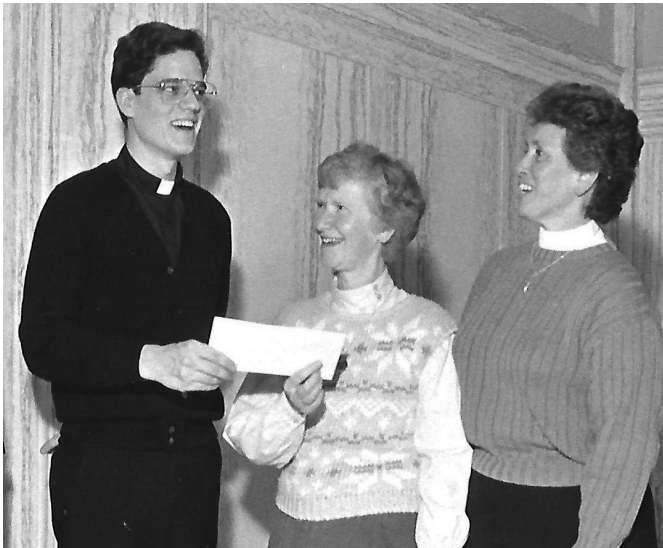
- Housed over 640 families as Shelter Guests;
- Provided more than 120,000 nights of temporary emergency housing to families, individuals, children
- Served in excess of 345,000 meals to Shelter Guests; and
- Annually cared for 25% of the homeless families in Chester County.



This may be "doing the impossible" but in fact it is just the beginning. St. Mary's continues to grow and thrive in the midst of so many loving and dedicated volunteers, donors, staff persons, local churches and non-profits. We delight in knowing the kindnesses that come our way each and every day. We know how very blessed we are and we do not take this for granted.

Saint Mary's was born from the love, courage, good humor and collaboration of so many faithful people in the Phoenixville community. Today, St. Mary's continues and dare we say thrives with these same graces and collaborators. We remember each of the families all 641 of them, finding shelter under the roof at 209 Emmett Street! An amazing feat thanks to all of you!

Happy Birthday Saint Mary's Franciscan Shelter and Happy birthday to all who make our home worthy of its name, St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter!!



Left: Photo of Sisters Patrice & Margaret receiving first donation 1987

Right: Photo of S. Bernadette receiving latest donation from Denny's Derby 2017





Resident Highlight: Divon and his family

GREAT NEWS- Now we have a homeless family with a son beginning college. During his time at St. Mary's his applications were accepted by five well known colleges and he got into the one he always wanted to! As famous writer Paulo Coelho stated, "When you want something; all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it." This family while living at the shelter worked very hard to get back on their feet. The combined effort of the Sisters of Saint Francis, Neumann University, Your Way Home (Montgomery County) and St Mary's Franciscan Shelter brought the good news for the family. Not only were his fees covered in order for him to attend Neumann University, he was offered a work study program that would use his talents and assist him to succeed once he was living on campus. As they left St. Mary's for the apartment they were able to rent, Davin's Mom sent us the following message: *"I thank the staff at St. Mary's for welcoming my family when all other doors were closed. I've learned to be humble and mostly to believe and have faith when things seem the darkest. I had no one and then I found all of you. IT MEANS EVERYTHING."*

Saint Mary's honors our Life Time Volunteers

Introducing some of the volunteers who have been with us for most of our 30 years. They came to us as general helpers, overnight security, dinner helpers, cooks, committee organizers, Valentine Brunch teams and household helpers. Today they are members of the Board of Directors, Pizza delivery person, Play parent, Fundraisers, and Dinner Assistants. To each of them and the many others who have been with us for most of these 30 years, GOD BLESS YOU!

Your perseverance and kindness has been a beautiful gift to our homeless families.



Can you help us serve families in need?

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

At this time we have the following needs:

HOUSEKEEPING:

1. Thursday: 9:00 - 12:00 Assist staff to wash, dry and fold bed linens and towels.
2. We also need a helper for cleaning the dining room after morning meal on Friday mornings from 10 until noon.

If you enjoy helping others and are looking for a way to make a difference, call Nilanjana at 610-933-3097



Ed Bursich volunteering with lawn care. Thanks Ed.

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St. Mary's
Franciscan Shelter
For Homeless Families

209 Emmett St
Phoenixville, PA 19460

Check Donations can
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Shelter for Homeless
Families

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www.stmarysfs.org

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