

St Mary's

Franciscan Shelter for Homeless Families

"Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible."

--Saint Francis of Assisi

Director's Report

Here Comes Spring! Ready or Not!

What a winter it has been! We seem to have had a little bit of everything; snow, rain, fog, warm days and cold days. Thank God we weathered the winter of 2015-16 well here at St. Mary's.

Our greatest gifts no matter what season we are in, are the guests who share our home. During the blizzard we had a full house – 17 people living in very close quarters. It may be a miracle of sorts, but all went well. Staff went the extra mile, with afternoon hot soup and evening popcorn. The dayroom became the all-day and evening room. Parents provided some outdoors activities for their children and those who had to work, trudged on their way through the snow. We learned about work ethics such as going to great extremes to keep a good attendance record at jobs that pay little more **than** minimum wage. The spirit and courage of our families is to be admired.

Since our last newsletter we've housed



7 families (8 adults and 11 children).

The good news is we have a full house with lots of activity, noise and voices of children at play (or arguing, crying, laughing.) The bad news is that we have a waiting list of 8 or more families who are homeless and seeking shelter. We wish we could stretch our building walls to allow the persons on our waiting list an opportunity to take this first step toward safe housing. We live in a time where housing our homeless brothers and sisters is a challenge and a distress. How we can do more is our constant refrain.

At all times our 5 rooms are filled. We do run a tight ship with one family discharging, room scrubbed and

sanitized and readied for the next family. With residents having about 8 weeks with us, they have a lot to do to find affordable housing, jobs and save all the money they can to take the next steps. We can only do this with your help. How can we say thank you? How can we let you know that your time, your thoughtfulness, your support, the dinners donated, the needs list items dropped at our door, the monies in the mail are never taken for granted. We are very humbled and grateful for all that you do.

As we reflect on the seasons that we move in and out of, we realize that they are like our lives here. We say hello, settle in, adjust to each other's ways, and then move on to whatever newness is there for us. As the winter becomes the spring, we say goodbye to the wonderful friends who rode out the storms and sunshine of winter with us and hello to those who will be our families as the gardens and flowers bloom. To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. Our thanks and prayers are with all of you as we pray for peace, happiness, lots of sunshine, laughter and fun in the season ahead. God bless all of us!!

--Sr. Bernadette

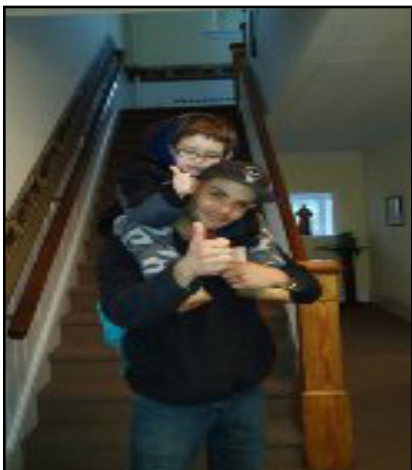
Resident Highlight...

Ray and his son Ray (JuJu), as he is called by his Dad came to St. Mary's in November. Ray's primary concern was to take care of his son. We were delighted to welcome this single father who from our first meeting was a loving, caring parent who put his son above all else.

For example during his time here JuJu had to have dental surgery, which he handled with ease. Dad however had a difficult time, due to his son being in discomfort. Ray was warm and nurturing to his son all through his healing process. JuJu being the little trooper he is, returned to school in two days. He kept telling staff "I'm good. My mouth doesn't hurt".

Ray engaged the staff with his humor, his kindness and willingness to help in any way possible. During the blizzard he was first one out to shovel, and snow blow our sidewalks. When the melting began, he would salt the sidewalks to keep them clear for our residents and neighbors.

Ray found work as a detailer in a local garage. Although he had plenty of cars



Ray and Ray Jr. (JuJu)

to work on, his gregarious personality kept bringing on more business. He would bring home photos of the cars he completed and shared them with the staff. St. Joseph University was among his favorites customers. He was very proud to work on the cars of this school with a Basketball reputation!

Ray greeted everyone warmly with "hola, como esta Senorita" (hello, how are you?). His pleasant personality and humorous disposition was enjoyed by all around him. Upon leaving he said "Adios,y cuidense!" Goodbye and take care. We wish him all the best on his journey and hope his life is full of many blessings. He has joined family members in Dallas, TX and called to report he and JuJu are doing well and are very happy.

Volunteer Corner

St. Mary's Shelter to have many amazing volunteers and some have been with us for just a few weeks, others volunteer 1 or 2 days a year, and then there is the Wednesday night dinner team of Kathe Spohn, Carole Styer and Lois Ashworth.



Kathe Spohn enjoying the best part of dinner help

Combined they have been volunteering for St. Mary's for more than 50 years! It all started back when the shelter opened it's doors. It was just after the passing of Kathe and Carole's sister Susan that Kathe wanted to donate money to the shelter in honor of their sister's amazing life. So in addition to her donation, Kathe ended up being recruited to work EVERY Wednesday evening. Along the

way, she recruited the assistance of her sister Carole and her former teaching colleague Lois, as well as many others along the way. In addition to helping serve Wednesday dinners Kathe was also responsible for organizing and staging our once famous Valentine's Brunch, once St Mary's biggest fundraiser.

While you can find Kathe still here every Wednesday evening along with a combination of either Lois and/or Carole, they are also dedicated to many other non-profits in and around the area on a regular basis. Their dedication to their community and to the cause of ending homelessness is a constant reminder that we are not alone in this fight. Thank you ladies for your continued support !



Lois Ashworth drives from Delaware every other Wednesday to help St. Mary's



Carole Styer makes the best coffee! Residents voted her best coffee maker!

St Mary's Response to Homelessness

Being one of the wealthiest counties in the state has not shielded Chester County from the issue of homelessness. At any given moment nearly 700 people in the area are without a home.

During the past 6 months, St Mary's house 30 adults and 46 children, for a total of 3371 nights of housing provided. And we have at all times have a significant waiting list.

A single parent with two children working full-time, year-round in Pennsylvania.... still falls \$4,000 below the federal poverty line.

A new family (mother and 3 children) is just beginning the journey to house her young family. Most of her earnings – 30 plus hours as a home health aide – are needed to cover child care.

Families earning minimum wage cannot afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market value.

St. Mary's is presently seeking housing for a family of 4. One parent is working long hours late at night to accrue the funds needed to house his family. They have been turned down many times due to lack of sufficient funds. They remain hopeful!

Unfortunately, many mothers who do find work are only one crisis away from losing that job. One broken car, one sick kid, one court date can upend the fragile system they'd created for themselves.

A family of 3 is seeking employment in any position available in order to assist in rehousing her family. Her partner is in a rehab in Philadelphia but plans to join her. He is working in construction. Although he works wherever and whenever he can, his wages are not dependable for procuring housing.

Help us do more!

Make a gift online through Network for Good! Visit our webpage www.stmarysfs.org and you will find the direct link to our Network for Good connection.

Please remember to designate your gift for

Saint Mary's Franciscan Shelter

Phoenixville, PA 19460

United Way: Our United Way Number is: 9208

Matching Gifts: Many employers will match a donation made to a non-profit by their employees, retirees and spouses. Some will even make a donation to match volunteer hours. Check with your Human Resources office to find out if your company participates in a matching gifts program. They will connect you to us.

Contact St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter @ stmarysfs@verizon.net or call us at 610-933-3097 if you have any questions.





Last Month's birthday celebrations!



Can You Help?

We are so grateful to you for helping us in many, many ways. Please consider the following things that our resident's need a this time: Laundry Detergent, Cereal, Juice Boxes, Body Wash & Gift Cards: Dollar Tree, Home Depot, Staples & Kmart

If you are local, we welcome you to visit the shelter with any donations. If you live out of town and wish to help, please consider sending a gift card or a donation earmarked for a certain product. We will be happy to purchase the product in your name. Thank you for your loving support of our homeless families.

**New and Exciting
Website
Coming SOON!**

To Donate and/or Contact:
St Mary's Franciscan Shelter
209 Emmett St
Phoenixville, PA 19406

stmarysfs@verizon.net www.stmarysfs.org



Mission-St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter

Guided by the Gospel and the spirits of Francis and Clare of Assisi, we provide temporary shelter for homeless families. We create a community environment which fosters the dignity of each person, and we perpetually seek innovative ways to help families move toward independence.



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Phoenixville, PA 19460

Trenz Pruca
4321 First Street
Anytown, State ZIP