



# St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter

*For Homeless Families*

## Do you hear what I hear?

With Christmas right around the corner, we are hearing so many sounds of holiday giving and holiday happiness. It is a great time to enjoy the blessings of family and friends, warm homes and special celebrations. Family traditions are so important for all us at this wonderful time.

Somedays I wonder what our homeless families, so many with young children, are experiencing as they struggle to find the joy, happiness and comfort of the holiday season. I know they long for a place called home. We cannot change their story but we can make our home a comfortable, warm, welcoming place for them to feel safe and at home this Christmas. We can give them a sense of family as these days unfold.

Yes, friends, there really is a Santa Clause. He comes to 209 Emmett Street every day. One day he comes as a team from Siemens who quietly arrive, decorate the house and surprise our families. Imagine the fun and surprise when they come home to a house filled with lights, Christmas trees and Santa, of course. He comes in new coats for the children, special desserts, new toys and new books in our playroom.

Just like kids everywhere, our children are making their lists and checking them twice... new socks, books, a jacket, a shirt or two, basketball, action figures, matchbox cars and playing cards. Our adopt-a-family program takes over and the gifts arrive in time for Christmas. Yes, there really is a Santa Claus.

It won't be long until a kind benefactor brings the outdoors inside. A live tree will be set up and the families will decorate it together - "like we are a real family."

The gifts arrive, the food is prepared, the tree is decorated and the children are smiling. Once again it is Christmas at St. Mary's. **Merry Christmas and much gratitude from our home to yours!!**

—Sister Bernadette, Executive Director



## Thank you from St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter

With your generous support we continue to celebrate our 30 years of serving the homeless families of Phoenixville. We look forward to the next 30 years of blessings

## Congratulations to Nilanjana: Graduate of Leadership Academy

Our Staff, Nilanjana Chowdhury successfully completed this year's Leadership program offered by the well-known Phoenixville Community Health Foundation (PCHF) in November 2017. As a part of the program, Nilanjana had to undertake a project and she chose to work on bringing a nature's place to the backyard of St Mary's shelter. Nilanjana will use the award money from the Leadership program towards the development of the garden for the residents in the shelter.

We believe the garden will be a perfect tribute to the long-served school building and provide a healthier environment to our families living in the shelter during the most trying time of their lives. The nature's corner will not only add value to the neighborhood, it would also provide for families in the shelter a place to relax and reflect after a stressful day. Resident children can have a place to channel their positive energy around in the greenery and away from the busy roads. The coming spring will bring new life, new hope and new opportunities for everyone- staff, volunteers, donors and of course for those whom we serve. Like our Facebook page [@SMFShomelessfamilies](#) to stay updated on the progress of the garden.



## Philanthropy is alive and well!



Peter Glennon III, a student at Pope John Paul High School, wanted to do something for St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter for Homeless Families. Not only did he give half of his earnings from his summer job, he reached out to others and raised \$6,450 to purchase much needed computers and desks for the families to use at the Shelter. Pictured from L to R: Peter, Sister Bernadette Dougherty, Executive Director, members of a family who reside at the Shelter and Kate Garges, Staff Member. Thank you, Peter, for your generous and loving gift to the families who have found a safe haven at St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter.

## 30th Anniversary News and Notes

During the past 6 months St. Mary's has housed 15 families-18 adults and 37 children. Our average length of stay remains 7.2 weeks. As we go to press, we are housing 13 children... most are under 6 years of age. It is a busy, noisy house but filled with hopes and dreams.



## They'll be Home for Christmas

A recent resident at St. Mary's overcame many obstacles to ensure stable housing and a promising future for herself and her two young children. Anna\*, a single mother of two children under the age of six, was evicted from her home of several years after falling behind on rent and not being able to keep up with bills after her work hours were cut. Not knowing where else to turn, Anna put her things in storage and sought help from St. Mary's. Over the course of eight weeks, and with the continued support of the staff at the shelter, Anna was able to find a better-paying job, began to receive mental health support, secure funds to aid in the moving process, and attain a local apartment with her budget. After leaving St. Mary's Shelter, Anna and her children will be able to remain in the community that they call home but with a stronger support system and a brighter future ahead. \*Name changed for privacy.



## NEW BORN IN THE HOUSE!!!

About three weeks ago when a new family came to the shelter we realized that the mother was due with her third daughter within two weeks. We prepared ourselves and educated our staff on duty with all necessary information to help the expected mother in every possible way. The mother delivered a beautiful baby on November 18 in the hospital as planned. We're all ready and welcomed the Thanksgiving Baby home to St. Mary's last Monday. Both Mother and new born are doing well and going for their scheduled follow-ups with the doctors. Your generous donations help us to provide the comfort of home to all our residents. Thank you for your continuous support. [#NewBabyintheHouse](#) [#HomelessFamilyShelter](#) [#Phoenixville](#) [#Philadelphia](#)



# Needs List/Wish List

We Need Your help!

We are always grateful for your support and kindnesses to us. We only hope that we are adequately thanking you. We do not take your thoughtfulness for granted!

Sometimes we have specific needs and use this newsletter to communicate this to you. This time we ask that you consider St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter when

you make your Christmas donations. These monies support our families during the winter months. Another way to help us is to forward your workplace donations to St. Mary's.

These funds are a very significant and necessary part of our budget. We are thankful to each of you who consider us in this way.

**Please remember us. Our United Way Donor Option # is 9208.**



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**St. Mary's**  
Franciscan Shelter  
For Homeless Families

209 Emmett St  
Phoenixville, PA 19460

Check Donations can  
be made to:

St Mary's Franciscan  
Shelter for Homeless  
Families

Online Donation can  
be made through our  
website

[www.stmarysfs.org](http://www.stmarysfs.org)

UNITED WAY

Donor Option #9208

## Our friends the Eagle Scouts

Michael Granito, a local high school student, chose Saint Mary's as a place where he would put his time, talent and skill into a major project for his Eagle Scout Award. We are so grateful for the many hours of hard work, the great team, lively, cooperative spirit and a professional attitude that Michael brought to this project. We are happy to say that our very much compromised school basement empty and unused for a couple decades is now turned into a clean, breathable space for a future meeting room and staff office. It is quite amazing to see the difference that this skilled team provided. Congratulations Michael on a job well done!

