



# St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter

*For Homeless Families*

## Yes, Saint Mary's, there really is a Santa Clause....

Saint Mary's has been blessed with so many gifts over the years. As the excitement grows here at 209 Emmett Street, we remember a gift we received long ago, a gift that just keeps on giving. Here is a true Christmas Story.

It was Christmas Eve, 1987, and Saint Mary's Shelter for Homeless Families was very new to Phoenixville. The homeless families living with us were just settling down for the evening. There was a knock at the door and a jolly man and woman in red surprised the children. To their delight, Santa came laden with toys and gifts...A Christmas miracle.

Year after year, Santa and Mrs. Claus kept coming and surprising the children. Then, one year, Santa had another idea, he would go to outside sites – shops, Gateway pharmacy, beer distributors, Sears, car dealerships - anywhere Santa and Mrs. Claus could visit children and gain some donations that would be sent to Saint Mary's. Each year the sites increased and so did the donations to Saint Mary's.



Our Santa was an amazing, generous, kind and loving man who never stopped coming up with new ideas. Close to the turn of the century, he began the Santa House in Phoenixville and, yes, the donations all came to St. Mary's. In the course of the years, we believe that our Santa donated over \$30,000 to the shelter. His loving care for others always leaves us speechless.

This year our Santa will be with us in a great big new way. He will be showering us with gifts and blessings from his Santa Chair in heaven! When we look up in the sky this year and see the sleigh and reindeer, we can be sure that it will be laden with the gift of peace, love, joy, generosity and laughter! Yes, St. Mary's, there really is a Santa Claus. **RIP Tom Mitchell! Welcome to a new life Santa Claus!!**

*Kathy Mitchell, our thanks to you for always being there and so graciously caring for your husband, our Santa Claus... such a lifetime of dedication to us and to so many others.*



**THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH!**

Our Inaugural **Stay-at-Home-Benefit** was a huge success. Thank you for joining your home with our home is such a generous, caring way!

## Almost Home...

Marie\* and her two children arrived at St. Mary's after experiencing some financial and housing difficulties. Their housing was no longer available and she and her children were forced to leave. Marie was shaken by this event but did not let it affect her resolve to become independent. She and her children came to St. Mary's and have been adjusting to life at our home quite beautifully. Her son, David\* is still in school in his home district and her daughter, Elaine\*, will be attending a HeadStart program in Phoenixville soon!

From day one, Marie has hit the ground running and has been immensely motivated to push forward and take her family to their next phase and hopefully obtain new housing by the end of their time at St. Mary's. She has already met with Anthony Zayas (Connect Points) for a housing needs assessment and has been focusing on her job search. Marie has updated her resume with the help of AnneMarie Barr with Open Hearth and has been steadily searching for a new position. Marie has also been able to obtain subsidized after-school childcare for her children which will be tremendously helpful to her as she continues her job search and when she starts working again. Marie attributes her motivation to succeed to her children and her faith and has said that these things "keep me going".

Marie's daughter recently celebrated her 5th birthday at St. Mary's and everyone was invited to join in having some delicious cake and singing Happy Birthday to the birthday girl!



Elaine\* enjoying her birthday celebration!

PS: As we go to press, Marie has a job, and has been granted a Rapid Re-housing voucher! Keep Marie and her family in prayer as she gets closer and closer to the finish line!!

### **UPDATE: St.Mary's is now safe and sound!!**

Rejoice with us as we celebrate the completion of our new kitchen and family room.

They bring great delight to our staff, residents and all who visit! We are surely blessed and safe and we look forward to the new year!! Many thanks to all who made this possible.

Please visit, we love to share the beauty!





## Giving and then giving some more.....

St Mary's shelter's volunteers are the heart and soul of our program. Volunteers bring their positivity and brighten up the days of our residents. They share the worries of the parents, give sincere ear to listen and lighten the days of children in the house. They are part of our bigger family who go above and beyond the calling of service. One such longstanding friend is Keith Gallagher and his wonderful family. Keith is a friend who looks out for us in all seasons. His family worked very hard over three years to landscape a beautiful front and side garden for the shelter. Each year his family organizes garden days for the shelter. One can often see our residents enjoying the fresh air or playing with their children around the garden in a perfect weather day. Our residents often talk about the delicious meals that Keith and his family cooks one Sunday of every month. Keith is an amazing partner for children in the playroom. Hence, he never fails his third Wednesday playroom session at the shelter. He amazes us every time with his kindness and generosity. When we asked Keith what motivates him to stay so regularly connected with the shelter, he said,



Keith enjoying playroom hour

*"St. Mary's has been a part of my life and the lives of my family for many years. Their mission, the time spent with the mom's & kids, with Sr. Bernadette & her team, and other volunteers is both a grace and a blessing. At St Mary's I have learned that when you give, whether it be of time, talent, or treasure, you receive back more, 10, 20, 100-fold more."* A simple 'Thank you' will not be enough for what he and his wonderful family do for the shelter. Volunteers like Keith and his family are the strong foundation of our service for those we serve and will reach out in future.

## Another Saint Mary's Tradition ....

Christmas is all about family, friends, remembering, reuniting, sharing and giving. If we wrap all these up and put a big beautiful bow on the box, we would have the greatest gift of all...our Adopt a Family Program. Each year we contact the families who have lived at St. Mary's during the past year and invite them to share with us and our

wonderful donors. The families send their Santa Claus lists to the shelter, we call on the Santa's in our Adopt a Family program and just like that the wishes come true. Gifts are delivered to the shelter and the families return to share with us their success and challenges, to run upstairs and visit their room, and "remember when..." with us. It is a great season and a wonderful way to both celebrate Christmas and reunite with our former residents. This year there will be 20 families who will be cared for in this way. Great thanks to Kate Garges, our Director of Resident Services, who has been the untiring Santa for this program for many years. Thank you to all who served as gift givers.



Blessed with Gifts for our families



**In commenting on Christmas and surely  
meaningful year round, Mother Theresa  
reminds us...**

"It is Christmas every time you let God love others  
through you.

Yes, it is Christmas every time you smile at your  
brother or sister

and offer him/her your hand." - Mother Theresa

***To all of our friends and families***

***everywhere: Christmas Greetings and best***

***wishes for a new year of happiness in a***

***world of Peace***



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

209 Emmett St  
Phoenixville, PA

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

## **A New Year is coming... Are you seeking a challenge?**

Are you looking for a meaningful, dedicated ministry that will address your commitment to serving the homeless and use your skills as an Administrative Assistant / Social Media manager? St. Mary's has an exciting part-time opening just waiting for you. If not you, please help us to spread the word!

St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter in Phoenixville is seeking a creative, outgoing, organized person to serve as administrative assistant as well as manage our social media including Facebook, webpage, and electronic messaging. This is a part-time position (24 hours a week) with some flexibility. For further information and a copy of the job description, please call Sister Bernadette at 610-933-3097 or email [SMFS@stmarysfs.org](mailto:SMFS@stmarysfs.org).

