



St. Francis/St. Joseph Catholic Worker

HAPPY EASTER 2014

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Easter Blessings

The commemoration of the Resurrection of our Savior has always been regarded as the highest of holy days. On Easter we celebrate hope, forgiveness and redemption, those luminous gifts from God to humanity. These blessings shine daily at the Catholic Worker House where homeless men are presented with an opportunity, another chance, hope and temporal redemption. The House has provided emergency shelter, food and clothing for sixteen men at a time for over 25 years.

In addition to the core mission of emergency housing, the House has evolved into an integral safe haven in Over-the-Rhine



Happy Easter!

In the spirit of forgiveness and redemption, we hope that you consider a gift to support the Catholic Worker House and give a homeless a second chance. We operate frugally on a tight budget so even a small donation can give a homeless man that second chance.

We provide a hand up, not a handout. Please make your tax deductible check payable to SFSJ at:

SFSJ, PO Box 14274, Cincinnati, OH 45250-0274.

Or, donate online at catholicworkercincinnati.org

The guests, staff and volunteers thank you

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Ron Brown

By: Gabrielle Wray

Our harsh winter could not cool the passion and enthusiasm of Minnesota native, Ron Brown. The St. Francis-St. Joseph Catholic Worker House enjoys little turnover because of employees that are faithful to the organization and love their job. Ron Brown is the Staff Monitor at St. Francis-St. Joseph House and has worked here for almost six years.



Ron learned of the St. Francis-St. Joseph House from a friend who is also a former guest of the house. At that time, Ron was suffering and struggling with alcohol and drug addiction. Finally weary of the daily battle, Ron decided to ask for a bed so he could try a new way of living. Our late House Manager, Karl Fields, interviewed Ron and opened the door to recovery. After 60 days at the House, Ron moved into Charlie's 3/4 House in January of 2008. Finally free of addiction and independent, Ron secured a job at Rally's upon his move into Charlie's.

A little while later Ron started his job at SFSJ House where he has become a welcome fixture. Ron says that the house keeps him humble: "If you love your job, you never have to work a day in your life," said Ron. He views his work at the House as a lifelong calling and commitment. Ron is grateful for the SFSJ House and the opportunity to help unfortunate homeless men get back on their feet. Ron epitomizes our tough love mantra, "a hand up, not a hand out."

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MANAGER'S MESSAGE

"Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words."

I was reminded of this quote, which is often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, and the importance of its application cannot be understated. As staff it is our job, first and foremost, to lead by example. We understand the guests' problems and we relate to the frustrations and fears that they experience. We've been there. It is our responsibility to show them how we were able to persevere. Our own success in life says more than words ever could. Our message is if we can do it, then so can you.

This message applies to our volunteers too. Many speak about the virtue of charity, but the words have no weight if there is no action to back them up. Fortunately, we here at St. Francis/St. Joseph have no shortage of men and women who preach the Gospel everyday with corporeal and spiritual works. Some deliver food and clothing, others come here to cook. We have those who contribute financially and we have those who contribute their time. Your actions speak loud and clear. You show the guests that someone cares enough to give freely of themselves to help them through their struggles. You show them that they are loved.

The spirits of Father Mark and Karl Fields are alive and well within our walls. Through our collective efforts we carry on their legacy with the understanding that faith without works is dead. So let us continue to work for the men who walk through our door.

Thank you and God bless.
John Clark, House Manager

VOLUNTEER HERO: Carolyn West,

by Gabrielle Wray

Carolyn West, a board Trustee for the St. Francis - St. Joseph Catholic Worker House has always loved helping people get back on their feet. Whether it is stopping by the house to give the guys a "hello" or fostering children until they are old enough and well enough to grow on their own, Carolyn is there.



As a volunteer prior to joining the Board about five years ago, Carolyn enjoyed making dinners, serving soup kitchen and planning holiday parties for the House. She says that the Board meets about every three months so they can be briefed on guests' progress, evaluate staff needs, budget for maintenance, and generally plan the next big happening for the House.

In the years when Carolyn owned a Walnut Hills fruit & vegetable store, she always had a "free sack" for a needy family. Carolyn befriended the kids who frequented McMillan Avenue shops, paying them for odd jobs instead of watching them try to shoplift. Laughingly, Carolyn recalls "inviting the corner men to contribute" as she raised funds

for the annual trip she organized to Kings Island for the local kids.

Not only is Carolyn a grass roots organizer, but she is also a foster parent. Over the past 18 years, Carolyn and Robert, her husband, have fostered 32 children and teenagers. At the moment, she has one foster child; he is the youngest that she has ever taken care of. Usually, the Wests foster children between the ages of 14 and 18-years-old.

When asked if she thinks taking care of so many different children gets easier over time, Carolyn said, "It's always a surprise because you have so many different personalities." And apparently, Carolyn is good at doing this: the walls of her home are covered with commendations from both Hamilton County and Pressley Ridge, the private foster care agency she works with.

Just like the Catholic Worker House, Carolyn's favorite part of being a foster parent is when she knows that taking care of the child has been successful when they leave her home.

GUEST STORIES

Ralph Roberts

Ralph resided at the House this past summer and, at age 49, his life has been transformed. He was an inmate at Lucasville during the 1993 riot and has spent much of his life incarcerated. "With nine felonies, my opportunities have been



limited; the doors have been shut." Ralph calls the Catholic Worker House "a blessed place" that gave him renewed hope. "We come here for change. They have the contacts and resources to help people like me get back on their feet." Ralph is a Cincinnati native, grew up in Avondale and graduated from Hughes before joining the Marines. He is a big man and quite serious about his new life. He understands that his freedom comes with responsibility. Ralph works two jobs to make ends meet, Chicago Gyros in Clifton and The Wine Guy in Hyde Park. He has renewed relationships with his son and nine year old grandson. "It's a good feeling to pay my bills and be clean and sober." He has even bought a house in Elmwood Place. Ralph continues to work on his spiritual growth and serves as Deacon at the aptly named New Life Christian Church. He occasionally cooks Sunday dinner at the Catholic Worker House: "I have to give back," Ralph says. We wish Ralph all the best on his journey. He represents the possibilities when someone is given a second chance. Once on the path of destruction, Ralph now is a positive and happy contributor to society.

Carl McGee

It's been six years since Carl stayed at the Catholic Worker House, but he remembers it well: "I had to start over and this was the place." Carl is a high achiever and articulate, an unlikely prospect for homelessness. He grew up in Kennedy Heights, graduated from Woodward High and went to Duke University on a football scholarship. Drafted by the Browns, Carl played pro ball with the San Diego Chargers and the USFL. He coached at the University of Minnesota and the Vikings. He then landed a career job at 3M in Chicago where he worked for fifteen years. His life appeared to be a series of interesting and successful experiences with a bright future.

However, Carl became ill and lost his job. He returned to Cincinnati to seek employment and went through all of his savings. Having worn out his welcome with family, he found himself on the streets in 2008. "I've done a lot things, had money, but wasn't happy with who I was; I had to hit bottom to change." "I started reading the Bible in a crack house and it rekindled my spiritual hunger." Carl joined and continues to work with Global Wineskins Ministries, discovering that service to others is the road to fulfillment. "When I started focusing on helping others, things got better. I like who I am now."



Carl credits House staffer Ron Brown for helping him stick with his recovery in 2008. "Ron is my hero." No athlete, no executive, no politician. Our own Ron is the hero. Carl states "if you are tired of that lifestyle, the Catholic Worker House is the place to start." Now, Carl has his own apartment in Clifton, some savings and is training to become a school bus driver. At 57, he remains humble and circumspect: "I am a developing Christian."

Best wishes to Carl on his road to recovery!

Robert Moore

Robert looks pretty good considering his circumstance. His last chemotherapy was



two weeks ago, he has a pacemaker and two stents. He is 65 and has tried to stop drinking for decades. In 2008, Robert was staying at Charlie's ¾ House, a sober shelter, when he decided that the Curve Bar across the street looked better. He had a couple of beers, ventured to Kentucky and robbed a bank. Sobriety lost and back to jail.

Robert spent the spring of 2013 at the Catholic Worker House following an overdose. "I got tired, worn out. Seven times in the penitentiary the past 30 years." He has now been sober over one year and doesn't look too far into the future: "I go day to day. I get up and pray. If I woke up, God must have a plan for me." Robert demonstrates that the simple tools of recovery and sobriety can mean the difference between doom and hope.

Now, Robert lives and works at Charlie's as staff supervisor, helping fellow alcoholics to recovery. He no longer patronizes Curves or Kentucky banks. Robert exemplifies the eternal hope extended by the Catholic Worker House. It's never too late for a second chance.

Lee Bays

Lee's journey sounds like a Franz Kafka short story. He was accused of an assault he did not commit, lacked bail money and spent nine months in the Hamilton County Justice Center because of trial delays. Finally, he was acquitted. Having nowhere to live upon release, a Justice Center chaplain steered Lee to the Catholic Worker House. He exclaims "this place is awesome!" Lee spent 60 days at the House this past fall.

Lee continues, "I thought I just needed a place to sleep and shower, but I discovered that I also needed the structure, the forced savings and the time for self-examination." Lee is only 33, handsome, clean cut and soft spoken. He grew up in Oakley and graduated from Princeton HS. Certainly, he never imagined requiring a homeless shelter. Unlike some of us, Lee is not afflicted with addiction issues. However, he still enjoyed the mandatory House AA meetings. "The non-judgmental,



tal, inclusive atmosphere has made me more open minded." Lee acknowledges. Lee gives back to the House by volunteering for the Tuesday and Thursday soup kitchens that are vital to the OTR community.

Lee now has his own place in the West End and works at the Tap House Grille. He is studying Audio Visual Production at Cincinnati State University. His girlfriend, Kayla, will be in Bali with Doctors Without Borders until next fall. Lee has used the House resources as a springboard to a bright future. Thanks for giving back, Lee, and we extend our condolences for the loss of your mother in November.

An Interview with Meridith Owensby, Co-Director of St. Lydia's House Gabrielle Wray

St. Lydia's House is an organization in Norwood that houses up to ten women and children. These women and children are in need of a place to sleep and food to eat while making major transitions in their lives. This home was founded by Co-Directors Meridith Owensby and Mary Ellen Mitchell who met in college while serving food to the homeless at Open Door Community in Atlanta.

Although there are other Catholic Worker Houses in Cincinnati, there are still women and women with children that need housing. After being a part of Grace Place in Cincinnati, Meridith and Mary Ellen wanted to open up another house to fill that community need. "We had more to offer to speak for a woman's experiences" said Meridith when asked why she wanted to build a house specifically for women.

Upon opening in April, St. Lydia's House will be equipped to serve ten people. Women with or without children who need housing will be welcome. While there are no measured expectations, the women are strongly encouraged to be "working toward goals for themselves", said Meridith. The house is located in Norwood near schools, a YMCA, and many job opportunities. Another plus; the neighbors

are all on board with the house being in the neighborhood. Meridith exclaimed that all the details on the house and the location of the house were so perfect that she and Mary Ellen could not pass it up. The house is still being renovated on but is scheduled for opening in April of 2014. St. Lydia's House is looking for volunteers to finish up last-minute details and also to help out with meals and child-care after the house opens.

Short-term goals like "A good crew of trained and reliable volunteers who love community" is what Meridith seeks at the moment. She explains that although the primary aim is to help women to transition out of the house while remaining in a relationship with the community, Meridith and Mary Ellen are hopeful to learn the needs of the women to establish relevant long-term goals.

If you wish to help please visit the website at stlydiashouse.org or call (513) 549-7752.



Charlie's 3/4 House: An interview with John Clark

by Gabrielle Wray



Charlie's 3/4 House is a non-profit organization that houses alcoholic men in recovery, allowing them to build a foundation for long-term independent living. Along with providing a safe and sober environment it provides structure, which is a vital component for men in the early stages of sobriety.

Although Charlie's 3/4 House and St. Francis/St. Joseph are not directly affiliated, we do work closely together. In 2013, 19 guests of SFSJ House moved successfully to Charlie's, which is more than twice the amount that moved to any other transitional home. This is in large part due to staff's preference to sending them there. After all, they know it well.

John Clark, St. Francis/St. Joseph's House Manager, lived there from October of 2010 to November of 2012. His credentials as a resident manager at Charlie's are what convinced Karl Fields to hire him in the spring of 2011. That, and the fact that Charlie's alumnus have a great track record as staff members here. Karl had once said in regards to hiring employees, "Charlie's has been good to us". John, Ron, Robert, Keith and John M. are proof of that.

There are many requirements to stay at Charlie's 3/4 House. First and foremost, the men

have to remain sober. Charlie's enforces a zero tolerance drug/alcohol policy just like we do; its purpose is to protect the other residents. They are also required to work and pay rent, attend six AA meetings every week, keep their rooms clean and perform community service. The purpose of this is to instill discipline and help the men become self-sufficient. The goal is for them to move on to a better life and to become productive members of their community.

Charlie's, founded in 1979, is able to do this because of experience and stability, something that many other sober houses cannot provide. With the sudden rise of "for-profit" transitional housing, experience and stability are at a premium. Some are run by an ever-changing roster of house managers whose sobriety can be counted in months. James Nortker, Charlie's director since 2003, has been sober for more than thirty years. Residents may come and go, but Charlie's leadership remains.

It is our goal to help the men here at St. Francis/St. Joseph move on to better things, and for the men who are homeless as a result of drug/alcohol addiction, Charlie's provides an environment conducive to real change.

Message from the Board of Trustees

After well over 40 days and 40 nights of gloomy winter, everyone at the House is eager for the signs of revival and hope that springtime and Easter will inevitably provide. The Catholic Worker House is blessed with vigorous and generous volunteers, a passionate staff and supportive board. We thank all of you who do a part in the magical transformation from homelessness to hope.

For the year 2013, 337 homeless men found hospitality at the House. Of the 280 who stayed and attempted recovery, 108 succeeded to

a job, savings, and permanent housing. That's over 38% and the first time the century mark has been attained. Nice work by everyone, especially our staff led by John Clark and Ron Brown.

The Board welcomes any and all suggestions, criticism and, of course, assistance.

**Happy Easter and
thanks for your kind support!**

.....St Francis-St Joseph Catholic Worker
Board of Trustees
Brennan Hill, Chairman



The St. Francis-St. Joseph Catholic Worker House vigilantly protects its independence and freedom from politics or distracting influences in order to focus on the mission of helping the homeless and poor.

The House receives no government or diocesan funding and operates with simplicity and frugality.

If you wish to help us continue the good work, please send your tax deductible donation to: SFSJ, PO Box 14274, Cincinnati, OH 45250-0274.

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