



Rochester Catholic Worker

Our email address has changed to: st.joes@frontier.com

Rochester, New York — winter 2013/2014

Changes for the Better at the Catholic Worker Food Program in Haiti:



2012



2013

Thanks to generous special donations last Christmas season, the Bread and Fishes (Pen ak Pwason) Food Program for the elderly and disabled in Borgne, Haiti moved from rickety benches in Somane Augustama's back yard to new tables and chairs in a rented building. They also received Pen ak Pwason T-shirts with the cooking pot logo on the front.

When I visited in June with five Rochester Institute of Technology students and my colleague Professor Brian Thorn, we were received with laughter and dancing. Then we all sat down to a dinner of boiled breadfruit with okra and kreyol sauce. It is true, as Somane--the visionary behind the program--always tells me emphatically, that once they start eating, they start sweating profusely because it has been so long since they last had a meal.

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Dorothy Day House, located across from St Joe's is approaching its first Anniversary.....

To be considered for a room at Day House, you would have a lot of competition. But you also know few to no landlords would accept you in their building - you've tried. Even if you had the money, your police record would be prohibitive. Some nights you sleep in the Civic Center garage on hard, cold concrete. If you're lucky, a friend who has a place, may let you stay a night on his floor or in a hallway. You get good at sleeping sitting up and practice that at the library or in our chairs during portions of the day.

Large segments of time are spent walking on your soaked, cracked feet. You eat one meal a day and your health continues deteriorating. When you're desperate, you call 911 for an ambulance. You remember the last time the Hospital Emergency Room let you out at 2:00am, with not even a bus pass. A night or two in jail starts looking pretty good under these circumstances.

But then you find out that Day House will take you: A clean, warm, furnished studio apartment, just for you. The story doesn't end there. It's not heaven; but it's "on the stairway to...". Eight citizens have been given a fair chance so far ... with your help. Stay tuned. We'll highlight one of them in our next issue.

Haiti *(continued from p. 1)*

Although the T-shirts may seem like a frivolous expense, for people who live on the margins of the community, they are a symbol of belonging. Participation in community groups such as church choirs, Scouts, and women's groups is an important part of daily life in a place that doesn't have television or internet. However, membership in groups generally requires some small contribution of funds for uniforms or participation in events, leaving out the poorest people. Having the new T-shirts not only provides respectable clothing, but identifies our folks as part of something bigger than themselves—true members of the community.



I am really impressed by the program's continued commitment to supporting local farmers. When our friend Rosie decided to plant rice in her fields, Somane made an agreement up front with her to purchase the harvest. Local rice is hard to find due to subsidized and imported rice from the US flooding the market and driving down prices, but people love it. Most Haitian rice farmers have gone out of business and local food is sadly often more expensive than imported food. The food program also commonly serves locally grown corn meal, root vegetables and breadfruit.

Tom Malthaner and I raised some money for the program by participating in the Assissi Center's Walk for Peace in early June, which provided food funding through November. Every time I visit the people in the program they ask me if we can add another day of food to the program, and I tell them to keep sending up their prayers. "Bondye kapab" -- God can do anything. There is also a request from Somane to paint the inside of the building. It doesn't take a lot of funds to keep the program running, but it is a constant commitment.

Still, St. Joe's and all the donors keep sending the money on faith--without being able to see firsthand the appreciation in the eyes of the people or hear the prayers that are coming quietly back to them. I wish I could take you all to Haiti so that you could see the faces of the fifty people whose lives you touch twice a week, sweaty from eating, calling you Godmother and Godfather, and smiling from ear to ear.

Who will cry at your funeral? - Mike Hazel

Recently I went to a wake for one of our guests. Her name was Kim.

She loved to ride horses and had won many ribbons. She was also a prostitute on and off, and was the most loyal friend one could ever want. She used drugs and she sometimes used people, but she loved and was loved by many more. Those details are all sort of beside the point, and in so being, are it.



I had visited her in the hospital about a week before she died; she looked rough. She was sequestered in the behavioral hygiene ward, locked in a zippered tent every night so she couldn't escape. As a result, she had to lie in her own excrement each night until an orderly would let her out to change the bed each morning. She suffered greatly, and it was heartbreaking.

I drove some folks to the wake. One of the guests I took lives across the street in Dorothy Day House. His name is John. He used to live on a couple of pallets down by the Amtrak station, where he and Kim would often sleep next to each other to keep warm. John was very drunk when we took him to the funeral home.

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House Comings and Goings - Mike Hazel

Late summer and fall have seen some significant changes in the community membership at St. Joe's. **John** joined us in July, and we were glad to have him. He left in September to take a teaching position at a university in Oman, and he has been missed. August saw **Brooke** return to school in Vermont after a meaningful summer with us. **José** has been a steady presence with us for a year and a half, but will soon be leaving to continue work with homeless persons in Philadelphia.

November will bring **Bobby's** departure to the Los Angeles Catholic Worker, after nearly two years with the live-in community here. His first grandchild was born September 25th, and he is called to be closer to his family in California; we wish him all the best as he follows his path. September also saw **Hazel** return to the community after a few months with friends and family. He plans to stay until Christmas. **Jim** is still with us, but is exploring the possibility of joining in the work of the Alliance, Ohio Catholic Worker. We wish him luck as he discerns what's next. Former community member **Eli** visited in mid-October with his wife - several community members enjoyed the chance to catch up.

We have openings for live-in workers – if you or someone you know is a kind and flexible person with an interest in standing alongside our marginalized brothers and sisters, please contact us at cathwork@frontiernet.net.

September witnessed the arrival and installation of a commercial gas dryer in our basement, which has already proven a big help in managing our volume of laundry. At the beginning of the month, the house hosted our annual **Labor Day Picnic**, which was a great success. From late July through early October, the house offered beds to many guests through our **Summer Shelter program** – many thanks go to **Hubert** for coordinating.

October also saw the final **Bike Workshop** put on by R Community Bikes. These weekly repair clinics have always been a godsend to the neighborhood, offering a chance for our guests and neighbors to get what is often their only means of transit up and running. They will resume again in April – if you have a bike to donate in the meantime, please contact them at (585)234-2008.



The house was also closed for a week in mid-October, for our semi-annual cleaning and maintenance in preparation for the opening of our annual **Winter Emergency Shelter**. This was an opportunity for our workers to take a much-needed rest, and for our house to receive some good old fashioned TLC that it so sorely needs from time to time. Shelter will run from October to April, offering a safe, warm and caring place for 14 men and women each night. If you are interested in exploring volunteering for the shelter, contact Hazel at (913)558-5194.

St. Joe's continues to foster a rich and varied spiritual life within the community. Sunday mornings bring the mass of St. Romero's Church, led by **Rev. Chava** each week at 11am. **Roundtable discussions** are held the first Monday of each month at 5:30pm, and have recently included the spiritual grounding of the Catholic Worker as well as personal reflections of Dorothy Day, the movement's foundress. The **Tuesday Ecumenical Services** continue to offer a unique and reflective sharing of worship for our community and guests each week at 5pm. Please feel free to join us for any or all of these – we would love to have you! Check our website for schedules and other opportunities to get involved: www.saintjoeshouse.org

St Romero's update - Rev. Chava Redonnet

Last month, I picked up Mike Swan at St. Joe's and we headed out to the last Migrant Mass of the season. It's been a short season, but a good one, as for the first time people are travelling to be there. People came from Brockport, Spencerport, Medina and Albion to share Mass, dinner and a blessing of the cars before folks head south.

It was a beautiful, joyful evening. The baby who was born last spring is now seven months old. Passed from one set of arms to another, he thrusts his little body in the direction of the person he wants to hold him next, confident of his welcome. I am sad to see him go – he will be walking by the time they come back – but happy that he will spend the winter in the midst of so much love. I will be getting pictures of him, believe it or not, on facebook! That is also the way I keep in touch with the mother and son who were deported to Mexico this summer.

We crowded into the living room for Mass, enjoying the fact that we were inside on this rainy night. After communion we blessed the cars. As it was raining we stood on the porch, held out our hands and prayed for safety – from accidents, from *la migra*, from problems along the way. Even a simple flat tire could turn into a trip to detention. May they travel in peace.

We returned to the living room, to anoint one of the men who has been having health problems. Not knowing what other problems people might be dealing with, I said that anyone who wanted the sacrament was welcome to it. One by one, beginning with the eldest, they came forward. As I made the sign of the cross on forehead after forehead, I felt the need for God, the reaching out for reassurance and hope that brought each person to receive the sacrament of the sick.

Now they are off to Florida, but the work continues. Tomorrow I will take a man to Geneva to visit the Mexican Consulate there. Our biweekly trips to Buffalo continue for the foreseeable future. There are court dates, doctor visits – and Christmas! We will continue as a community even while so many are gone. And I hope the dream of a house – Oscar Romero House of Hospitality – will become a reality. We are waiting to see which way **immigration reform** goes. May it pass, and soon. **Write, email, call your congressperson** and please tell them we need immigration reform with a clear path to citizenship and keeping families together! Your voice matters.

Who will cry at your funeral? *(continued from p. 2)*

He needed help getting out of the van, and tripped and cut himself on the front step of the house. He struggled to a chair and sat down while someone got him a band-aid.

I sat behind him, and closed my eyes to pray for Kim's family. I heard folks moving around and speaking softly, and eventually opened my eyes. Kim's younger sister was helping John onto the kneeler before the casket, and he literally fell onto his knees in tears. As he wept over her body, her sister comforted him with all her might. Right then, right there, I saw the raw and ragged edge of a person, and there was nothing for me to hide behind.

I cried like I haven't ever cried in my life.

Kim had given me a packet of pumpkin seeds, and I had planted a few before I left for the summer. As fate would have it, there was a seedling when I arrived back. I told her about it, and that I would bring it to her so she could nurture it in her hospital room. She was very glad about this. Tom went to see her on a Monday morning. I saw him later that day and he mentioned that she wasn't looking good. I thought about visiting that afternoon, but for whatever reason didn't. Instead I planned to go the next afternoon and to bring her the pumpkin plant then.

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In Gratitude

As we enter the holiday time of our year, our heads and hearts are filled with images and feelings of hospitality. We hope to spend time with family and friends sharing meals, sharing warm homes, sharing conversations, sharing gifts, and sharing our love.

We, at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, want to pause to express our profound gratitude to all those in our large extended family: our benefactors, our volunteers, our guests, our workers. We know that each of you contributes immeasurably to our ability to create hospitality and warmth both physically and spiritually.

You make it possible for us to serve a hot meal every day. You make it possible for us to provide shelter and refuge. You make it possible for us to offer clothing, socks and shoes. All the many personal connections and supports individuals seek when they enter this House come through you.

Jesus showed us many times what is shared miraculously multiplies and ultimately returns to nourish the giver. We hope that what you share with us; your time, your treasure, your prayers, or your company, returns to you many times over. We are very grateful for you. Enjoy a Blessed Christmas season.



Saint Joe's Needs more Socks! They are the most asked for item in the House.

The Sock project, "**Walking In Their Shoes**", is a way to help the needy in Rochester get through their day with clean comfortable socks on their blessed feet.

Put yourself in their shoes. Imagine starting your day with no socks or a dirty old pair. Socks are not a high priority for our guests, especially if you have little or no funds, no job and no home:

- Our goal is to be able to give away up to 150 pairs of socks per month.

- **And is based on getting 25 people to give \$10 a month.** (any number of months you can contribute would be helpful as we get this project off the ground)

Any Q's contact Linda at: ***lindacondon1@hotmail.com***

CALENDAR

Nov 22	Last day to order pies
Nov 24	Foot & Hair clinic
Nov 28	Thanksgiving dinner, Noon
Nov 29	Closed, no meal served
Dec 01	Begin next 10 week bread program
Dec 11	ROC the Day, community wide giving
Dec 25	Christmas dinner & gifts
Dec 26	Closed, no meal served
Jan 19	Foot & Hair clinic
Mar 30	Foot & Hair clinic

22nd ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOOT & HAIR CLINIC - Debbie Sigrist

It's hard to believe this is the 22nd year of the *Foot & Hair Clinic* at St. Joseph's House. In 1991 I read an article in my nursing journal titled, "A Problem Homeless Patients May Not Mention." The photos alone made me know that we needed to do something to address the needs of our guests. Poor hygiene, disease, ill-fitting shoes, filthy socks all create foot problems. We address blisters, corns, infected toenails and a host of other minor ailments. However, our main focus has always been *Comfort & Connection*.

We pulled together a host of volunteers who had one thing in common ~ a desire to comfort the feet of the homeless. We have a podiatrist, nurse practitioners, nurses, teenagers, teachers, counselors and an array of others who just want to provide simple comfort care. How do we go about this at St. Joseph's?

On three Sundays in the winter months, we set up 12 "stations" in the dining area. The guest sits on a chair, the volunteer on a stool and between them is a basin of warm sudsy water with softening oils. After soaking the feet, the guest receives a gentle foot massage, all while talking with one another. Some volunteers prefer to do direct hands-on foot care, including some high school students.

Other young volunteers are busy running clean and dirty water back and forth, replacing towels or distributing a new pair of socks and a bag of toiletries to the guest. Our Podiatrist and Nurses are busy trimming toenails, scaling calluses, or bandaging a small wound. We do an average of 40-50 pair of feet in our two-hour timeframe. Mostly we hear laughter and good conversation in our busy setting. Meanwhile in the living area, there are 4-5 hair cutters giving excellent haircuts to more than 50 guests! Our volunteers extend from age 12-82!

We are very grateful to all our volunteers. If you are interested, contact me (235-6162) and we can discuss how you might be a part of our work. Below are the 2013-2014 dates; running from 1pm-3pm Sundays at St. Joseph's House.

November 14 ♥ January 19 ♥ March 30

Who will cry at your funeral? *(continued from p. 4)*

I never got the chance. She died at 10 the next morning.

It is for these sorts of missed entries in the book of souls that I mourned. Kim's death showed me this. How many times have I seen a John or a Kim and assumed something less than charitable about them? How many times has that ragged edge peeked out, only to be stuffed away by pride's painful discomfort? How many times has my heart hardened in defense when faced with the wounds of another that call out my own?

A question kept occurring to me: who will cry at my funeral? It may seem self-centered to wonder at someone else's, but this wasn't about me - it was about others - as a reckoning of all the times I've had opportunity but failed in kindness. It's been said that you can't take it with you when you die. But you can leave it behind. So I watched John weep, and I wept along with him, in penance for the times I had left something less than merciful with someone.

Who will cry at your funeral, and at whose will you have cried? When your heart stops, whose marks will it bear? When Kim died, something of myself died along with her, and I feel deeply fortunate to bear her marks in mine.



Tom Malthaner & Kim

Bread and Gratitude

We are asked – commanded, actually – to love one another. No small task, that. Bread baking and gratitude fit well together in striving to love. We are fed, we feed, and we give thanks.

Here at **BREAD FOR ALL**, St. Joe's bakery, we give thanks for all the blessings that come to us: energetic volunteers; trainees who want to work; St. Joe's for providing stipends for the trainees; wonderful subscribers who purchase our great breads; churches that help us with weekly bread distribution.

We are excited to again offer Thanksgiving pies—and back by great demand—this year we will offer both SWEET POTATO and PUMPKIN PIES!!!

PUMPKIN and SWEET POTATO PIES! Orders will be taken until Friday, November 22, 5 pm. \$10 a pie – and \$8 for our BREAD FOR ALL subscribers (current subscribers and new subscribers)! Pies are fresh-baked, with hand-rolled, all-butter crusts and the finest ingredients.

To order your pie – call the bakery: **775-9135**

Our next 10-week bread subscription begins the week of Sunday, December 1. Whole Wheat, and White, large and small loaves. and variety loaves *raisin-cinnamon, focaccia, and potato!* \$4 a loaf for our 1 ½ pound whole wheat – a delicious, organic loaf you will really enjoy. Give us a call: **775-9135**



The **Free Store** (take what you need share what you have) is up and running in the **South Wedge Mission, at 125 Caroline St.** After a summer of planning and donation collection, it is open the **1st and 3rd Saturday's** of each month. It works closely with Pastor Matthew Nickoloff and wife, Leah.

Jasmin Reggier who went through our Bread training program has compassionately shepherded her idea of making available used items in good condition- FREE. She cares about families, and realizes that many neighbors haven't cash or credit for items that others no longer need or use; things that are clean, lightly worn and operational- - - dignity in full measure.

Of course, it can't exist without monetary donations. It does have some overhead, and she has plans to expand as demand has already exceeded expectations. Make checks payable to St. Josephs House of Hospitality (memo: Free Store). Call Jasmin(**353-8882**) to learn when you can drop off donated items in workable shape.

St. Joseph's House of Hospitality Rochester Catholic Worker Community

*Some of us live in houses; some of us live on the street; some of us have a room of our own, or a bed and a place to keep; some of us have a cot or piece of a couch or patch of floor to return to each night; some hold special positions of power and roles with specific responsibilities, some do whatever they can. Our aim is to try each day to **"build a new society in the shell of the old"** as we practice the various works of mercy and labor with whatever resources, physical as well as spiritual, that we have been given at the time.*

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House Needs:

Prayers
Butter
Laundry Soap Powder
Men's Underwear (32–44)

Sugar
Boots/Sneakers
Jeans
Jelly/Jam

BLEACH
Toilet Paper
Coffee/Mugs
Single Sheets

Hoodies
39-gal. Trash Bags
Razors
BATH TOWELS

Athletic Socks
Pillows
Large Jackets
Gloves/Hats

ROC the Day:

Communitywide Day of Giving

The 3rd annual Community-wide Day of Giving is **December 11**.

If you chose to participate this year, please consider St. Joseph's House of Hospitality.

To participate you go online to:
roctheday.org

We will be listed under **Human Services/ Shelters & homeless service**.
Thank you.

Celebrants for

5:00 p.m. Tuesday Ecumenical Service

We suggest that you call the House in case the service time or celebrant has been changed.

11-12	Rev. Matthew Nivkoleff	1-07	Mike Boucher
11-19	Sr. Grace Miller, House of Mercy	1-14	Rev. Matthew Nivkoleff
11-26	Cathy Mryzka	1-21	Fr. Larry Tracy
12-03	Donna Eckert, Bethany House	1-28	Fr. Paul English
12-10	Rev. Lawrence Hargrave	2-04	Rev. Michelle Avant
12-17	Deacon Bill Coffey	2-11	Rev. Chava Redonnet
12-24	Minister Joann Kaiser		
12-31	Minister Mae Lee		