

The Father McKenna

C E N T E R I N C



MEETING NEEDS . . . RECLAIMING LIVES

Slow Miracles . . . Making a Difference

December 2014 Issue of *Slow Miracles*, a newsletter from the Father McKenna Center to our donors and friends.

2014 - A Year of Challenges, A Year of Growth

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The Father McKenna
C E N T E R I N C

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Fr. Horace McKenna, SJ was a saint among us who cared deeply for the poor in the community. He served the poor, the homeless and the needy of Washington every day of his ministry at St. Aloysius Parish (1964-1982). He helped found three institutions that “feed the hungry, clothe the naked and house the stranger” (So Others Might Eat, Martha’s Table and Sursum Corda Cooperative).

In 1983 St. Aloysius Parish established the Father McKenna Center to carry on Fr. McKenna’s daily service of the poor.

Today a Men’s Day Shelter, a Hypothermia Program and a Food Pantry carry on that work of helping the poor and the hungry.

When the Archdiocese of Washington suppressed St. Aloysius Parish (in June 2012) the Father McKenna Center, with the support of Gonzaga College High School, chose to continue to “feed the hungry, clothe the naked and house the stranger.”

If 2013 was the new Father McKenna Center’s infancy, then 2014 was its adolescence! Lots of growing pains!

There has been some turnover of staff, the most significant was that Tom Howarth, President of the Center

since 2005 retired in June.

In October the Board of Directors announced the appointment of Kimberly Cox as the new President, to lead the Center into a new chapter of service and care for the poor.

Through it all the Center has been very busy, providing services for more homeless men and poor families than in the past. We have seen a 10% increase in the Day Shelter program and a 8% increase in the Food Pantry programs.

We rely 100% on support from the community who believe in our ministry - people like you who make a gift. Can we count on you this holiday season?

Service Comparison 2013 to 2014

	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014*</u>
Shelter Visits	22,061	24,590
Daily Avg.	86	96
Midday Meals	9,034	11,848
Showers	2,218	3,689
Pantry Visits	2,241	2,454
Pantry Families	251	390

*2014 numbers are projected for the entire year.

Hypothermia Program - A Place of Safety and Peace in a World of Chaos and Uncertainty

Homelessness is a chaotic experience for anyone, and the typical large shelter programs are unnerving to many who need a place to stay, especially on the cold nights of winter.

That's why the Father McKenna Center Hypothermia Program is such an important part of our ministry to the homeless of DC.

Each winter we provide 20 men a safe, secure place to stay each evening for five months. They have a chance to take a shower and eat a "home-cooked" meal (prepared with great love by the families of Gonzaga). Through the winter season they become a community of support for one another, encouraging each in his personal journey, whether he is working to maintain his sobriety, or looking for a job that will sustain him, or for a place to live that is not a shelter or on the streets.

Cortez McDaniel, the Center Services Manager at



the Father McKenna Center, reflected, "It is our goal to offer these men a real opportunity to reach for their personal goals— to strive to make of themselves a new man. When they leave on April 1 we want them moving toward ending homelessness for themselves."

In 2014-15 the Center hired four "guests" to serve as the team of coordinators for the Hypothermia Program. Audwin Wright, Ken Mitchell, Dana Johnson and Shinichiro Inaba work with the men each evening to ensure that all are served and that they are cooperating in the program.

The Hypothermia Program is largely underwritten by a grant from the William S. Abell Foundation, and many generous gifts from you, our donors, are what makes this program such a success for the men we serve. In 2013-14 eighteen men had very positive outcomes. This year we are shooting for 20 great stories to tell!

Correction: In the October newsletter we accidentally gave the wrong name for the volunteer who tutors our guests. She is Anna daCunha. We apologize for the mistake. Thank you, Anna!



Birthdays for the Homeless Update

The Father McKenna Center has received three generous gifts that will ensure that the men have memorable birthday celebrations throughout 2015.

We thank the following donors for making sure that the men have a memorable day:

*Patricia and Douglas Dolan
Mary and Patrick Dean
Dilia and Thomas Caballero*

Thank you!

Save the Date

*8th Annual Jigs, Reels and
Songs for the Homeless*

Sunday, February 22, 2015

Figge Theater at

Georgetown Prep, Rockville, MD

4:00 pm - 6:30 pm

Silent Auction

& Refreshments

Volunteer Spotlight

Sean Brown



“Each morning that I serve at the Father McKenna Center I feel that I am touching the spirit of Father McKenna and living out the gospel in my life,” commented Sean Brown, a regular morning volunteer.

Sean grew up in the area and attends morning Mass at St. Peter’s on Capitol Hill and often comes here to the Father McKenna Center to help serve coffee and pastries before going off to his “day job” as a Capitol Hill staff member.

“I wanted to be able to give back a little, and when I spoke with Fr. Riffle at St. Peter’s he mentioned the Father McKenna Center. It has been a good match.”

“I enjoy meeting and speaking with the men who come to the Father McKenna Center for help. Some have jobs, but need a little additional assistance to make ends meet. Some are in between jobs and need a little more help to bridge the gap. Others are unable to work and this is their lifeline. Anyone of us could find ourselves in a position where we are in need and it is wonderful to know that there are places like the McKenna Center, and the people who serve there, that are willing and able to answer God’s call and do just that.”

Guest Profile

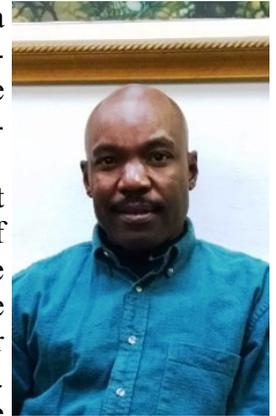
Charles Eatmon

“I finally decided it’s time to make a change in my life. Last year I was given a choice: drug rehab or jail. I chose rehab, just to avoid jail. This fall I am going into another rehab program, but with a difference. I want to change my life for the better.”

Charles Eatmon is a 46 year old DC native who has spent the past 30 years in and out of legal troubles associated with a drug habit. Now he wants something different in his life, and the Father McKenna Center is an important part of that process.

Charles has utilized services at the Center for about ten years, off and on. But there is a difference this time - he truly wants to make good choices for himself and for others who are part of his life. Now Charles is ready to give back to others, rather than just take from them.

“I don’t know what will happen, but I have great hope, and a faith in God that it will work out this time. And when my rehab is over I know I need to develop some skills to get and keep a good job. I have chosen a new way for me, and I want to give back to my family, particularly to my daughters, for whom I have been an absentee father.”



Thanksgiving & Christmas Basket Program

For families “living on the edge” the holidays can be a very difficult time. While many of us sit down to a Thanksgiving or Christmas feast, poor families may have nothing with which to celebrate the feast.

This year the Holy Trinity Parish in Georgetown, St. Bernadette School in Silver Spring, Connelly School of the Holy Child in Potomac and WC Smith Co. helped to provide nearly 300 Thanksgiving dinners for the families in our Food Pantry program. Each meal has a turkey and “fixins.” The families we serve are very grateful for these baskets that make their Thanksgiving celebration so much better.



At Christmas, with the support of our many donors (including you), we will provide a roast chicken or ham dinner to more than 100 families.

In addition, with the support of the Gonzaga Mothers’ Club and Holy Trinity’s Giving Tree program several families from our Pantry program will receive special Christmas packages of gifts to put under the tree for their children.

We tell you all of this as a way to say thank you to our donors and friends who help make possible a better celebration of the holidays for our families. We are grateful to you for making our work possible. Thank you!

From the desk of

Kimberly Cox, FMC President



Every year during the holiday season we take time to reflect on the many things for which we are grateful.

This year I am especially grateful to have been invited to become a part of the Father McKenna Center Family. In my few short weeks as the Center's new President, I have been both moved and impressed by the level

of care and concern for our guests. The committed staff and dedicated volunteers create an atmosphere where men who are seeking a path to a better life can find a place of stability, safety and support to move forward. In the last issue of this newsletter you got to meet the amazing team that provides this hope and care. It is an honor to work alongside each one of them.

It has been a particular blessing for me to learn more about our Founder and inspiration, Fr. Horace McKenna, SJ. Famous for his faith in Slow Miracles, he said, "Our Lord did his miracles instantaneously at a word, but his church, his brothers, his sisters, his fathers and mothers have to do their miracles slowly."

Here at The Father McKenna Center we recognize that a person doesn't become homeless overnight. A person's life unravels over a period of time, as he loses a job, or a place to live, maybe even his family and friends. Thus, we understand that it takes time to stitch that life back together. While he has to do the hard work of stitching his life back, we provide space and support to reclaim a life.

Among the many blessings here at the Father McKenna Center is support from the community. On the Friday before Thanksgiving, the Old Guard from Ft. Meyer marched the six miles from their base to The Father McKenna Center, each with a backpack full of clothes for our clothing closet.

They are pictured below waiting to enter the Center at 8:30 that morning. Twenty of the sixty soldiers who marched spent most of the morning with us, some working in the kitchen to prepare lunch, others sorting clothing, and meeting with our guests. It was moving to have this expression of support from these young men. It meant a lot to our guests to see this outpouring of support.

Sandwiched between Thanksgiving and Christmas is Advent -- one of my favorite seasons. It teaches me about patience and hope. This time of waiting for the miracle of God-becoming-human requires and strengthens my faith. As we enter the season of Advent, I am reminded of Father McKenna's faith in Slow Miracles. Slow Miracles also require patience and hope. During Advent, we light one candle each week and the light gradually gets brighter. This helps me remember to take one step at a time to move toward a goal.

In this issue, you get to meet Charles Eatmon, who has been bouncing in and out of the Father McKenna Center for a decade. As Charles himself admits, his path has been a long one, but he has always found someone at the Father McKenna Center who will support him, help him find resources, and push him with high expectations. Charles is on a path to a better life. It took hope, patience and faith -- all part of Advent and all the attributes of a Slow Miracle. I think Father McKenna is smiling.

