



Slow Miracles . . . Making a Difference

December 2015 Issue

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FMC Hypothermia Program Working Toward Stability and Productivity

When you are homeless, life is full of "what next" questions and challenges: "Where will I find the next meal or a warm place to stay or a little bit of cash to get by?" These are all challenges for the homeless. During the months of November to March the Father McKenna Center takes special steps to assist 15 - 20 men answer those questions.

The Hypothermia Program at the Father McKenna Center, designed by Cortez McDaniel, Center Services Manager, is a concerted effort to move the participants to the next step on their way to rebuilding their lives. Men are selected to participate based on their readiness to take the right steps in their lives, whether it might be to find employment, to secure a permanent place to live, to reconnect with their families or to chose to enter into treatment for drug or alcohol abuse, or mental illness.

This year we have initiated two new features. Each week Cortez leads a Life Skills Development meeting with the men to work on social, medical, recovery and employment issues. Dennis Dee, a Case Manager at FMC is working with the men five nights a week to keep them focused on their goals for the program.

Each night the men arrive around 6 pm, have an opportunity for a shower, then share a great meal prepared by Gonzaga Mothers Club members and served by their families.

In 2014-15 we had 33 men who participated in the program. Of them 73% reached one or more of their goals from their experience. We anticipate similar, or even better, results this year.



How You Can Help

The cost to operate the Hypothermia Program is about \$350 per night (or \$17 per man per night).

Your gift of \$350 will ensure 15 - 20 men a warm, safe and secure place to stay for one night. A gift of \$1,000 will cover three nights.

Gonzaga—A School with a BIG Heart!

Pope Francis has been teaching us, in word and in action, to care for the least of God's children. A major part of his message during his pastoral visit to the US was that we are called, individually and as a community, to reach out to those most in need.

Gonzaga, as an institution and as a community, has for a long time responded to the poorest and most needy among us. The Father McKenna Center is an important partner in their efforts.

When the Archdiocese of Washington determined that St. Aloysius Parish would close, Gonzaga wanted to help ensure the continued work of the Father McKenna Center. Gonzaga offered the Center the use of the lower church with a rent of \$1 per year (the space and utilities are valued at nearly \$400,000 a year.)

Gonzaga's support for the Father McKenna Center goes much further than that. Students serve in our Food Pantry and Midday Meal program by giving up their lunch period on two days a week. Each November the National Honor Society leads a canned food drive that supports the Food Pantry at the Center. In 2015 the Men of Gonzaga collected nearly 9,300 cans that will help feed more than 250 families this winter.

One of the most important connections between Gonzaga and the Center is the work of the Gonzaga Mothers Club to support the Hypothermia Program at the Father McKenna Center. Gonzaga Mothers Club through their members provide dinner each evening for the 20 men in



Gonzaga students serve the Midday Meal at the Center each Thursday and Friday during the school year.

our Hypothermia Program, and then the families come and serve the meal. After serving the men, the families serve themselves dinner and sit down with the guests in the Program. It is a true gift of love - to cook, serve and share a meal with strangers. The Mothers Club also provides new pillows and blankets each year.

Fr. Horace McKenna often said, "the test of our faithfulness to God is how we treat the poor." The Gonzaga community really does show its faithfulness to God and to the Ignatian call to be "Men and Women for Others" by their support of the Father McKenna Center.

The Center offers a sincere "Thank You" to the generations of Gonzaga students and families who help us serve the people who rely on the Center each day.

Father McKenna Center Wish List

The Father McKenna Center relies on the generous support of the community to provide our services to the homeless and very low income families who seek our assistance. Below is a partial list of items you can donate to assist us. For more information, please visit our website:

www.fathermckennacenter.org

Food Items

Canned Fruit
Canned Vegetables
Cereal Rice Pasta
Canned Tomatoes / Sauce
Canned Tuna and Chicken
Meal Packets
(e.g. Hamburger Helper)
Canned Soups

To make a donation, please call FMC (202-842-1112) to alert us that you are coming. We will assist you to bring your contribution into the

Clothing

Our primary need is for men's casual clothing.

With cooler weather upon us, we need:

- Casual slacks & jeans
- Shirts
- Sweatshirts / Sweaters
- Winter Coats
- Underwear (new, please)
- Socks (particularly white)
- Shoes

If you have suits and sports coats to donate, please call Strive DC at 202-484-1264

Monthly McKenna Mass

Who: *Friends of the Father McKenna Center*

What: A Monthly Home Mass

When: 2nd Thursday of the Month, 2 PM

Where: Home of James and Janet Walsh
5025 Yorktown Blvd, Arlington, VA

Why: To support the works of
The Father McKenna Center

Attendees make a free will offering for our work.

Please join us!

Please call Janet at (703) 534-3152 if you can join us.



Jordan Colbert (age 8 - now a Gonzaga Sophomore) assists his dad, Stephen Colbert, on Flags-In Day (the Friday before Memorial Day). Stephen and Jordan have both volunteered at FMC.

Volunteer Spotlight

Steven Colbert

Steven Colbert learned about service during his 24-year tour in the US Army. For ten of those years he was a member of the Old Guard, the Army's most visible unit. They serve at ceremonies throughout the DC area, and are the honor guard at funerals at Arlington Cemetery.

Steven serves breakfast each Tuesday morning at the Father McKenna Center, serving as an example to the men and offering to listen and coach the men in their desire to reach stability and productivity.

"The men didn't become homeless overnight, and it will take some time to get them back to where they want to be, but the Father McKenna Center team has a heart for service that will offer the men a road to rebuilding their lives," Steven recently reflected.

Guest Spotlight

Stephen Nelson

"The Father McKenna Center has helped me to bring my life together, again." That's what Stephen Nelson recently said of his experience at the Center. "They welcomed me as a man who was in need, and they worked with me to figure out how I could achieve my goals."

Stephen came to DC from Santa Cruz, CA, where for the past 17 years he has volunteered and worked at the Homeless Services Center in Santa Cruz. He had been honored several times for more than 20,000 hours of volunteer efforts on behalf of the homeless. Now he relies on the Father McKenna Center for help.

Stephen has been committed to the issues around homelessness for more than 40 years—in 1976 he marched with Mitch Snyder and Dick Gregory in the March for the Homeless here in Washington, DC.

"The Father McKenna Center has offered to me, and to all the men who come here, a path to self-respect and to improve our lives each day. I am thankful every day that I came here six months ago," Nelson said.



Food Pantry Provides 275 Thanksgiving Dinners

President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national day of "Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens," to be celebrated on the last Thursday in November. It has become the "American holiday," a day to celebrate the bounty of the earth and to remember with gratitude the many blessings we share as a nation.

For many people Thanksgiving memories consist of sitting around the table with family and friends sharing a meal of turkey, potatoes, vegetables and desserts.

Unfortunately, too many families in the neighbor-



hoods surrounding the US Capitol cannot share in this tradition without the gift of a "Thanksgiving basket" from the Father McKenna Center or other church or civic organization.

On Monday and Tuesday of Thanksgiving week the Father McKenna Center gave 275 families the turkey and "fixins" for a Thanksgiving Day meal. We had

many partners in doing this: Holy Trinity Church in Georgetown, St. Bernadette School in Silver Spring, Connolly School of the Holy Child in Potomac and WC Smith, a local developer.

From the desk of

Kimberly Cox, FMC President

Patience, Hope & Joy – The Meaning of the Season

Here we are again in the season of Advent – a season that teaches us patience, hope and contains the promise of joy. I find it hard to believe that I have now been at the helm of The Father McKenna Center for a year. I have learned so much during this first year from our guests, volunteers and the dedicated staff – lessons that align with Advent and that I want to share with you.



Patience: “Tennessee” practically tackled me when he came in for coffee one morning. He wanted to tell me that he had an appointment at 10 am to go into an Addiction Prevention and Recovery Program. “I want to thank you so much,” he said. “I have been coming here for eight months and you all put so much into my head and so much into my heart, that I am ready to beat my addiction and start a new life.” Eight months seemed like a long time to me, but I am learning to be patient and wait for Slow Miracles.

Hope: Claire has been coming to our food pantry for two years. Last spring she told me about her daughter who is doing really well in school at Grinnell College in Iowa. Naturally, this caught my attention because Grinnell College is about an hour from my hometown. Claire’s daughter is a Gate’s Foundation Millennium Scholar studying Pre-Med. Last month Claire told me that her daughter had been accepted into Medical School. She always believed her daughter could have a better life – that is the essence of hope.

Joy: We helped Abdullhi get his green card status renewed so that he could work. This was a great joy for him. Within two weeks he came to tell me that he had been hired at the new Giant up by American University. He was looking forward to the possibility of overtime when the store goes to a 24-Hr opening; if not, he told me: “I am going to find another part time job. I just want to work.” Abdullhi showed me how to find joy in simple things.

These three simple lessons have taught me much. I am so grateful for the gifts of prayers, time, talent and talent that make these Slow Miracles possible.

Wishing you and yours a blessed holiday **Kim**

The Old Guard and the FMC

For the third year in a row members of the Army’s ceremonial command, “The Old Guard,” marched from Fort Myer to the Father McKenna Center, bearing gifts for those who are homeless or in need of food assistance through the Food Pantry.



Stephen Colbert (see Volunteer Spotlight on pg. 3) addresses the Old Guard company who carried nearly one ton of clothing to the Center. Mr. Colbert, a Gonzaga dad, served for 10 years in the Old Guard, and is a regular volunteer at FMC.

Coordinated by the Chaplain’s Office at Fort Myer, under the able leadership of Sgt. Stephen Harris, the company collects clothing or food stuffs (depending on the needs of the Center) and then marches with the items in their backpacks.

The men leave Fort Myer before sunrise and typically visit one of the memorials on the mall prior to arriving at FMC in time to help serve breakfast and sort what they have brought for us to use.

A hearty “Thank You” to the men and women of the US Army’s Old Guard!

