

Transforming the world through reverence

GOOD NEWS

St. Ben's Community Meal

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A MINISTRY OF THE CAPUCHIN PROVINCE OF ST. JOSEPH

Families Depend On St. Ben's Community Meal

November, 2014

Both Food and Fellowship Draw Those In Need

“The food at St. Ben's is really good,” Addie Oyetan said, as she prepared to have dinner with her 4-year-old grandson, Yusuf. “Some people may not think that it would be, but it is.”

Addie smiled and added, “I love the fresh food. They serve many of the vegetables and fruits I grow in my own garden. In fact, I learned to like zucchini eating here.” She adds, “I have incorporated what I have learned about nutrition at home.”

“I've been bringing Yusuf here since he was born,” Addie said. “I have eight adult children and am alone now. However, I care for my daughter who has MS.”

Addie continued, “I've been eating at St. Ben's for over 40 years. It helps to stretch the food budget and I like to see my friends. St. Ben's Community Meal is just that, a real community and I enjoy seeing everyone.” Just then Larry Ampe, Volunteer Coordinator stopped by the table to say hello.

“The friars, staff and volunteers are all wonderful and make us feel very welcomed.” Addie shared, “I could

bring my daughter here as the hall has wheelchair access. However, she prefers to eat at home, so when I eat here I extend the meals she can have at home.”



▲ Larry Ampe (standing) greets Addie and Yusuf, her grandson.



◀ Myja and her children Muhammad and Sirrii enjoy dinner while a long line of guests go through the line with their trays.

A few nights later Myja Johnson, another of Addie's daughters stopped by with her children for dinner. Like her mother, Myja said she came to St. Ben's Community Meal as much for the community as the meal. “I like

meeting new people and it does help me to make our food last longer.”

Eating with her that evening were two of her children, Muhammad, age 11 and Sirrii, age 7. Muhammad said, “I love the desserts, tonight we are having cupcakes.” Sirrii added, “I love the cucumbers in my salad.” Obviously, Sirrii shared her grandmother's love of everything fresh from the garden. Myja said, “After this I take the kids home, give them baths and then it will be bedtime,” ... and she smiled.



Roaming St. Ben's

A Different Experience of Homelessness

by Capuchin Br. Rob Roemer, Co-Director

If you have ever been approached by a homeless person on the streets of Milwaukee, you might notice that, for the most part, they seem to be clothed with appropriate dress for the season. Many are resourceful enough to find ways to keep themselves clean. We are fortunate to have caring people and agencies where the homeless can receive some of the basic needs. The homeless still lack a lot of necessary help, but people here are willing to help.

I celebrated my 25th year of ministry as a friar earlier this year. I decided to visit the Capuchin Franciscan shrines in Europe on my Jubilee trip. While in Italy, I was very aware of the homeless, as they were all over the streets begging, without using words. They sat on the ground with a cup in front of them. The homeless there were missing limbs, and often had bad rashes on their skin.

I couldn't help but think about St. Francis of Assisi, and his care of the lepers. These people in Italy are today's lepers. Their damaged skin, missing limbs, and worn look, told me they didn't have the same compassion from the people. It was obvious that these individuals have fallen through the cracks for receiving help.

I know we have a lot of work to do before we can end homelessness around Milwaukee, but it is also obvious to me that we are fortunate to have many people willing to reach out and help. I am grateful that you share our commitment as Capuchins to caring for the homeless with compassion. I remembered our donors, volunteers, staff and supporters with gratitude at the grave of our founder, St. Francis of Assisi.



Front Door Volunteers



▲ Guest John E. Gentry (seated-front) receives eyeglasses from volunteer Chuck Cmeyla (seated-back). Shari Eagan, (standing-left) answers a question for new volunteer Chris Rog.

Chris is a postulant and studying to become a Capuchin Franciscan. All postulants spend time serving at various ministries while they complete their studies.



▲ Guest Thomas Edward Carter (right) thanks volunteer Carla DuPont (left) for her help. Thomas came in to seek help getting his ID updated as he had recently moved. Carla serves on Wednesday's as a front door volunteer and also handles the GED program. Under her guidance guests seeking high school diploma's can go back to school.

St. Ben's Community Meal Ministry Council

Members:

Chuck Cmeyla

Wendy Hermann

Mike Kelley

Pam Meyer

Duncan Shrout

Sara Zirbel

Director:

Br. Rob Roemer,
O.F.M., Capuchin

St. Ben's Community Meal is a 501(c)(3) ministry of the Capuchin Province of St. Joseph. All donations are tax deductible as allowable by law.

St. Ben's Community Meal Services

- Community Meal
- Justice Orientation & Urban Plunges.
- Capuchin Apartments
- Front Door Ministry

To make a gift to support St. Ben's Community Meal go to:

www.stbenscommunitymeal.org/ways-to-help/gifts-donations

You can also use the enclosed envelope to make your gift via the mail.

Social Networking



Facebook.com/ StBensCommunityMeal



Twitter.com/StBensMeal



YouTube.com/ StBensCommunityMeal

Volunteers Minister At St. Ben's Community Meal

Over 9,000 people help the Capuchins feed the homeless & hungry

“Volunteers are the lifeblood of our ministry,” said Br. Rob Roemer. There are three primary groups who help the Capuchins care for the needs of the hungry and homeless.” He continued:

- **“Front Door Volunteers** – Each afternoon, these volunteers staff the front office from 1 PM to 4 PM. During that time, they distribute eyeglasses, give out hygiene supply bags, help people apply for ID’s, hand out bus tickets for medical appointments, oversee the shower line and help guests find other resources.
- **Sponsor Group Volunteers** – These volunteers come to St. Ben’s Meal once each month to serve the dinner. Most are associated with a church, school, business or group that cooks the meal back at their own facility. Then they bring the fully cooked meal to St. Ben’s by 4:30 PM so they can serve at 5:00 PM.
- **Floor Volunteers** – Six days, per week, people arrive to help with the meal. These volunteers pour coffee and milk, give each guest hand sanitizer as they arrive, get meal trays for the disabled and very young and share a welcome with everyone dining.”

Sponsor Group Volunteers

St. Gregory the Great Parish has supported the meal as a sponsor since the day it opened. Marge Fischer is the volunteer coordinator of the group. “We bring parishioners from Greenfield, Franklin, West Allis and Milwaukee to serve each month,” Marge said. “Our typical menu is Salisbury Steak, mashed potatoes, home-made gravy, veggies and home-made desserts.”

Marge explained the cooking process, “We cook the meals in the church kitchen at St. Gregory’s. We have about a dozen regular volunteers who help make the meal. Then, the desserts are cooked by parishioners at home and brought in while we are making the hot food. A different group of 12 then comes down to help set up and serve the food.” Marge added, “The friars are such good men, they lead by example. I also love their calendar. All of my adult children enjoy receiving a calendar at Christmas.”

“This ministry is so special to so many people that it isn’t hard to find people willing to come down here to help. Over two dozen volunteers are directly involved in preparing the meal from St. Greg’s and dozens more bake at home.”

Anatomy of the Start of a Meal



▲
Floor volunteers get trays for the disabled and young children. Then the other guests get in line.

▲
St. Gregory the Great Parish volunteers serve the meal cooked by fellow church members.

▲
Dean Lex, Kitchen Manager oversees the meal with the sponsor group’s coordinator, Marge Fischer.

Floor Volunteers



◀ *Conner Gwin (left) greets Br. Rob (right). Conner is a student studying at Marquette University. He leads the Midnight Run Service Group on Friday evenings.*

▶ *Br. Rob welcomes Owen Gaffney as he prepares to pour milk for the guests. Owen and his wife Jody serve several times per month.*





▲ Hundreds of volunteers gathered to enjoy food and fellowship at the 2013 celebration.

Annual Volunteer Luncheon To Be Held This Month!

Hundreds to Gather to Celebrate Volunteer Ministries

As Br. Rob says on page 3, “Volunteers are the lifeblood of our ministry.” All volunteers are invited to join us to celebrate another year of caring for the hungry.

Saturday

November 15, 2014

**St. Alphonsus Catholic Church
6000 W Loomis Rd
Greendale, WI**

To RSVP:

Online: www.stbenscommunitymeal.org/RSVP

Phone: (414) 271-0135, ext. 15 Br. Rob Roemer

Email: roem@thecapuchins.org

11:30 AM

Doors Open

12:00 PM

Buffet catered by Bunzel’s

1:00 PM

Program

1:30 PM

Luncheon Concludes

St. Ben’s Community Meal News & Notes

Memorial Service for Homeless Allows Family & Friends to Remember



▲ Patty Monty lights a candle in memory of her friend Teresa Riley.

Each year St. Ben’s Community Meal hosts a memorial service for those it serves who have died in the last 12 months. The service in the Church, listed 45 individuals who had passed away and several more were mentioned by those in the congregation.

Sitting quietly in the church above St. Ben’s meal hall, Teresa Riley remembered her friend, Patti Monty. “She was so kind and caring,” Teresa said. “I was going through medical tests for a possible cancer and I was very scared. Patti reassured me that it would be all right... And it was!” Teresa was one of dozens of friends and family members of the homeless who had gathered to remember.

New Kitchen Manager Joins St. Ben’s Community Meal Staff



▲ Dean Lex (left), new Kitchen Manager receives a donation of a case of bratwurst from volunteer Larry Jensen.

Dean joined St. Ben’s after Br. Dave left to accept a new assignment from the Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order. Larry Ampe, formerly the Kitchen Manager moved into the Volunteer Coordinator position that Br. Dave had handled.

Dean’s new position is actually a return to an old position. In the 1970’s after graduating from college, Dean worked as St. Ben’s Meal’s Kitchen Manager. He left for a career in industry and volunteered weekly for over 30 years. When the opportunity opened Dean immediately applied. Welcome Back, Dean!

