

Capuchin Community Services

www.CapuchinCommunityServices.org



Volunteers Grow In Ministry

Serving decades with friars, they grow in love for the poor



▲ Alex Carlson, Priscilla Kucik and Greg Carlson pose in front of a picture of Capuchin Br. Booker Ashe in the Booker Ashe Room at the House of Peace site.

“Br. Booker Ashe looked me in the eyes and even though I didn’t really know him, I knew I’d help his ministry however I could,” Priscilla said. This brief encounter happened during the 1970’s. For many years Priscilla, who goes by “Pete” held toy, clothing and food drives from her home while she was working. “You know,” she said, “Mercy is defined as sympathy for others and taking action to help.”

“When I retired I began to come to the House of Peace site to volunteer. Since 2007 I volunteered each week, normally in the Capuchin Clothes Closet that Choua Vang manages,” she said. Pete is widowed and she volunteers with a friend, Greg Carlson and his son, Alex.

“I began serving each week at the House of Peace when I was just 12 years old,” Alex said. Now a freshman at UW-Milwaukee, Alex continues to serve weekly. “My dad and I greet people bringing clothing and housewares donations. Since we are both over 6’ tall we help out with the heavy lifting. I think my muscles know what to do the minute I walk in the door.”

Greg, Alex’s dad said, “I began to volunteer before the new building addition was built. We used to leave this building, cross a cold and icy parking lot and then work in an unheated garage.” Greg continued, “I remember staff, volunteers and guests freezing together while trying to distribute clothes or food bags. The new building is a real blessing to everyone!”

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St. Ben’s Meal Helps People Find Safety in Community

Guests share value of safe eating environment

Hearing that the guest eating across from her was going to be interviewed, Debbie said, “I want to be interviewed too!” A smile came across her careworn face as she prepared to share a part of her story. “I’ve been eating at St. Ben’s Meal for over 20 years. Outside I often think people are talking about me. And I really don’t like to be touched.”

Debbie explained, “I was mugged on the street but I know I am safe at St. Ben’s!” She smiled and continued, “I live downtown over a restaurant. I got sick some time ago and I have a colostomy bag now.” Debbie said, “I am having surgery to remove the bag soon, even if it hurts bad I am ready to live my life without it again.” Then she leaned forward and asked, “Could your readers pray for my recovery?” Hearing that many people would pray for her, Debbie smiled again with relief.

Willie Hobbs, also known as Mr. Willie, sat across from Debbie and waited to share his story. “I’ve been coming to St. Ben’s Meal for the last three months.” He explained that he heard from other guests that he could get food here. Mr. Willie said, “I live with my grandson. He loves fast food and I want to eat a real, balanced meal. I just stood in the line one night with my friends and I’ve been coming every night since.”

Mr. Willie uses an electric scooter to get around. “I live 5 blocks away in a 2-bedroom apartment. I get social security and



▲ Clay Brooks, CC Coleman & Willie Hobbs enjoy dinner together at the St. Ben’s Community Meal site.

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Save The Date!

April 1, 2017

Lenten Morning of Reflection

9:30 AM to 11:30 AM, St. Ben's Meal
1015 N 9th St, Milwaukee, 53233

Topic & Presenter to be announced
Call 414.374.8841, ext. 41 for details.

June 16, 2017

Capuchins' Run Walk for the Hungry

7:00 PM Polish Fest, Lakeshore
Festival Park & Summerfest Grounds

Run or walk to help feed the hungry.
Details to follow.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

House of Peace

Holiday Food Box & Toy Drives

- Help distribute food boxes to families for Thanksgiving or Christmas. Or serve as "Santa's Helper" in the Toy Closet. To sign up call: **Linda Barnes, 414.933.1300, ext. 1115.**

St. Ben's Community Meal

Professional Barbers Needed

- Barbers are needed to cut hair for homeless and poor individuals. Commit to a night per month. To learn more, call: **Brigid Anne Rush, Volunteer Coordinator at 414.933.1300, ext. 1123.**

HOW TO DONATE

To make a gift to our Capuchin ministry to the hungry & needy go to:

www.CapuchinCommunityServices.org

Or mail your gift to:

Capuchin Community Services
P.O. Box 5830
Milwaukee, WI 53205-5830

Capuchin Community Services is a ministry of the Capuchin Franciscan Province of St. Joseph. Unless otherwise directed, donations support the local ministry and the Province.

The Capuchin Franciscan Province of St. Joseph is a 501(c)(3) organization. Gift made to our ministries, Capuchin Community Services, St. Ben's Community Meal and/or the House of Peace, are tax deductible as allowable by law.

Roaming Ministry

by Br. Rob Roemer, OFM, Capuchin
Director

Celebrating A Community That Serves

By the time this gets into your hands, we will have just had our 46th anniversary of St. Ben's Community Meal and 48th anniversary of House of Peace. I almost said "celebrated", but it isn't a celebration in that neither place ever dreamt we would be in business this long. We thought when we started it would just be a few years at the most.

Yet it is a "celebration" in another sense. We would never have been able to stay in operation all these years and still go so strong today, if it weren't for the many who give generously to our two places. The fact that each day we have well over 40 volunteers either cooking, serving, packing food, sorting clothes and food, or helping at the doors is reason to celebrate. Many more who provide resources! It really is a "Community" effort and we would not be here and doing this work if it weren't for the wider community. Thus our name Capuchin

Capuchin Postulants Serve In Milwaukee



◀ Cee, a guest at the St. Ben's Community Meal site welcomes Br. Jose to the ministry.

▶ Helen Marks (L) thanks Br. Joseph (R) for his help in the clothing center at the House of Peace site. Her caseworker, Kelli Klopstein looks on.

In Latin the word *postulant* shares its root with the word meaning *to ask*. Br. Jose Vera along with Br. Joseph Lee asked to become friars and now they are serving their postulancy year in Milwaukee at Capuchin Community Services. "Each morning we have class on the life of St. Francis of Assisi," Br. Joseph explained. "Then we serve each weekday afternoon at either the House of Peace or St. Ben's Community Meal site."

Both young friars are learning much from their classes and their time in ministry. "I've learned how important it is to be patient with people," Br. Joseph said. "I see lots of people who are in distress and understand much better how my emotional state can affect them." Br.



▲ Br. Rob Roemer (R) receives a check from the Shopko Foundation at the House of Peace site. Gerri Sheets-Howard (L) joins Br. Rob in thanking Alan Nickel, Manager of the Racine Shopko for the gift which supports the Holiday Food Box Drive.

Community Services is so appropriate. It is the Capuchins who run it, but we could never serve so many without the Community part.

In this season of Thanksgiving, I give thanks for each and every one of you who make our works possible and who help us to care for the many coming to our doors. It is your goodness that allows us to help in ways many other agencies cannot.

I say a big THANK YOU and a Happy Thanksgiving and a Blessed Christmas to each of you and your loved ones!



Jose added, "It's given me a whole other take on our society. I was used to seeing a nice side of life but now see how some people suffer real rejection daily."

Br. Joseph said, "I am discerning whether I am called to be a friar by God. Once I know that then I'll discern whether I am called to be a priest or lay brother." Br. Joseph is from the Canadian province and will return there after his training is complete. Br. Jose said, "It has been a desire of my heart to become a priest. I did consider becoming a diocesan priest but found that I wanted something more radical and simple. The Capuchin way offers you the opportunity to live in poverty and I feel called to that."

Volunteers Grow in Ministry

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Pete remembered, “My superpower is shopping. I used to get new toys for 75%+ off. Before I could donate them to the House of Peace I would have to store them in my home as they didn’t have space. Now everything goes into “Santa’s Workshop” downstairs and it’s much easier to distribute.”

Both Pete and Greg are widowed and both said they were helped as much by their service as the guests. “The Capuchin friars were so understanding when my wife passed,” Greg said. “I really felt comforted by them.” He continued, “I so love Pope Francis. I think he’d give a cheer for the volunteers at Capuchin Community Services. He said that to be close to the poor is to be close to God. I am glad to be able to serve the poorest of us in Pope Francis’ tradition of compassion.”



◀ Guests wait in line outside St. Ben’s Community Meal for the Meal to begin.

Safety in Community

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a small pension so St. Ben’s really helps me to make my money stretch every month.” That evening Mr. Willie was sitting with two of his friends, CC Coleman and Clay Brooks. All three men are senior citizens living primarily on social security. CC had to leave but Clay said he’d like to talk as well.

“I’ve been coming for over a year,” Clay said. “I started like Willie, I heard about St. Ben’s from some friends. They were coming to eat here so I got in the car and came along.” He continued, “It’s a nice place to eat, safe with no commotion. I’ve become a regular because the food is so good.”

Clay confided, “I was in a group home for 4 years. When I got out I found a room in the neighborhood around St. Martin De Porres Parish. I was baptized Catholic so I go there now for services on Sundays.” He smiled and said, “You know this has all been an answer to a prayer. I feel very blessed!”

Blessings of Service

by Gerri Sheets-Howard, M.Div.
Administrative Director

Which Way Do I Go?

In my role as Administrative Director of Capuchin Community Services, I have the opportunity to work at both sites-St. Ben’s and House of Peace. While working at the meal program recently, I had the responsibility of being the hospitality director. One of the many tasks required of this role is to direct guests to a table to eat their meal.

These tasks reminded me of how life can be, not only for our guests, but for many of us as well. Some guests meet me in the center aisle of the meal hall and I direct them to a table; they smile and go where directed. Others may be totally oblivious to what is actually happening; walking right past me, locating their own table. Lastly, are the few who simply need a little assistance with their tray, or with getting their children seated and fed.



▲ (L to R) Gerri Sheets-Howard visits with regular diner Joniah and her family.

Who We Are

Capuchin Community Services is a ministry of **The Capuchin Franciscan Province of St. Joseph**, a religious community of friars inspired by St Francis of Assisi. Our friars live and work with those who are in need of help... the poor, the disenfranchised, and the needy.



Our Ministry Council

Capuchin Community Services is advised by a volunteer Ministry Council consisting of leaders in our community. Current Ministry Council members include:

- Diane Knight
- Julie Darneider
- Anthony Myers
- Chuck Cmeyla
- Felice Green
- Sara Zirbel
- Wendy Hermann
- Pam Meyer
- Duncan Shrout
- Fr Perry McDonald
- Gerri Sheets-Howard
- Br Rob Roemer (Provincial Council Liaison)
- Jeff Parrish

Life sometimes can treat us like the hospitality director. Some days we wake up and life greets us with a smile and directs us to a place of peace and comfort. There are times when we are faced with anxiety and troubles. We become so weighed down that we miss the signals of support and feel as though we must find our own way. Life often places individuals and organizations in our midst to be a blessing to us and to help us during our times of need.

Through your generous donations you are providing a place where guests can share a meal, participate in fellowship, or simply be in a place that they can be themselves without judgment. It is through your generosity, that guests may find themselves seated with someone who is able to give them hope and inspiration. Your donations provide a space in the meal hall for the “ministry of presence” to function at its best.

Menomonee Falls Churches Share In Ministry

Decades-long Collaboration Involves Hundreds

"We can serve over 400 people on our once-per-month night," Tom Pelt said. A member of St. Mary's Parish in Menomonee Falls, he explained, "We've been helping the Capuchins feed the hungry for decades. Since it takes a fair amount of food to serve that many people, all three Catholic parishes in town collaborate."

A gregarious man, Tom introduced Mae Walker with, "Let me introduce you to our Dessert Lady." Mae said she had been coming for "many decades" to serve. When asked about her nickname, Mae smiled. "My specialties are desserts. I make homemade brownies, zucchini bread, apple cake and more."

Tom said, "We have over 40 people who do the cooking,

deliver the food to church and normally another dozen come down to actually serve." One of those servers was Ed Schlumpf. Ed explained, "My wife and I have served with the Meal since 1972. We are members of St. James Parish and I serve with them. My wife cooks with our former parish, Good Shepherd of Menomonee Falls."

Ed continued, "I keep coming back because I have a desire to serve those less fortunate. I don't judge why people are here, I just know they are less fortunate than myself. My wife and children all have served or still serve each month. I especially like to visit with the guests. It's so crucial to spend time and talk to people here so this is more than a service project, it's a community!"



Church members help serve the hungry at St. Ben's Meal



Dove Notes

by Fr. Perry McDonald, OFM, Capuchin, Pastoral Director

By the time you read this I will have passed my 75th birthday. I will officially retire on December 31, 2016 and leave the position of pastoral director of Capuchin Community Services after seven years of ministering out of the House of Peace. When I decided to do this a number of months ago my predominate thought was of all the freedom I would be able to have. But now as the day gets closer, I am already missing the day to day opportunity of welcoming so many guests, laboring with the staff and volunteers, and expressing gratitude to the generous donors of these Capuchin ministries.

I will especially miss the regular interactions with the staff, the finest group of people I have ever met. I want to thank all of you for your involvement in the good works of the Capuchin Community Services. Without you, it could never be done. As St. Francis of Assisi often said as he greeted others, so I greet you: "Peace and all good to you."

Fr. Perry McDonald OFM Cap

Thank You Fr. Perry For Your Ministry Among Us

