



The Father McKenna

C E N T E R I N C

MEETING NEEDS . . . RECLAIMING LIVES



Slow Miracles . . . Making a Difference

December 2017 Issue

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C E N T E R I N C

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Case Management - How the FMC Makes a Difference for the Men We Serve

Each day at the Father McKenna Center Cortez McDaniel, the Director of Services, meets with men who come to the Center for guidance, support and a new direction in their lives.

The men meet with Cortez to discuss how they can move forward in their lives. For one man it may be getting a referral to a health care provider for a physical. For another it is to get a connection to a job training program, so he can gain the skills needed to find a job in the current workforce.

Cortez invites each man to share his story - how he became homeless, and how he plans to end that homelessness, with support from the Father McKenna Center. The encounter is based on Cortez' "Better Life Pyramid" that serves as a step-by-step progression from hopelessness to a stable, productive life, by offering men a "road map" they can follow.

Often Cortez will meet with 15 - 20 men in a day, listening, offering sage advice and making referrals to other service providers in Washington, where the men can find the help they need to make the right next step to ending their homelessness.

So many men tell us, "I came to the Center because I heard about the food or other services, but when I met with Cortez I realized that this was a way for me to move forward in my life."

Recently a man who had lost his job when his employer closed the business told us, "I knew I could come back to the Center because you care and you offered me real solutions. I know I will get the help I need here."



My Better Life Pyramid



Building Blocks to the Life You Want:

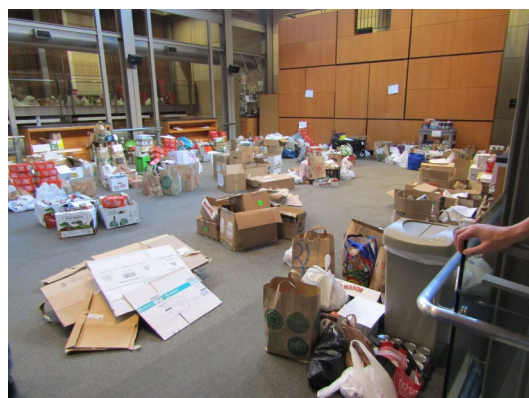
- (1) You must want it;
- (2) You can't do it alone;
- (3) You must build the blocks from bottom to top;
- (4) Once built, a block needs to be maintained.

C.M.

20,000 Cans! Gonzaga Canned Food Drive Supplies the FMC Food Pantry

Each year the National Honor Society at Gonzaga College High School sponsors a canned food drive that directly supports the efforts of the Father McKenna Center Food Pantry.

The drive is held during the week of the St. John's football game, and is a friendly competition with St. John's who holds a canned food drive to support another agency serving people in need.



In 2017 the Gonzaga community outdid themselves. Most years the Food Pantry sees an influx of 8,000 to 10,000 cans. But in 2017, when the

"dust had settled" the Men of Gonzaga had collected 20,868 food items for the Father McKenna Center to stock the larder! These cans will fill approximately 2,750 grocery bags - enough to serve our Patrons for six months!

The gift includes thousands of cans of soup, which is one of the most prized items in the Food Pantry. Our patrons really enjoy soup - it's a quick and easy meal

and in the colder months a good bowl of soup warms you from the inside!

In addition to the Gonzaga food drive, the Father McKenna Center is one of several recipients of the Georgetown Visitation food drive, which is held the week following Gonzaga's drive. From Visitation we collected about 2,000 cans of food.

A group of volunteers from Georgetown Prep began the task of sorting all the cans. And the work has been completed by men in the Hypothermia Program here at the Center.

For the foreseeable future, the Food Pantry is well stocked!



Father McKenna Center Wish List

The Father McKenna Center relies on the generous support of the community to provide our services to men who are 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 Baked Beans
- Maple Syrup (in 16 oz size or smaller)
- Jelly (in plastic containers)

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 Center.

Clothing

Our need is for men's casual clothing.

With cooler weather upon us, we need:

- Sweatshirts / Sweaters
- Winter Coats
- Socks (particularly white)

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

Save the Date

11th Annual Jigs & Reels

Sunday, February 24, 2018 4PM
Sheehy Theater @ Gonzaga

You are invited to this annual concert of Irish music presented by youth in the Bog Band and dancers from the Culkin School of Irish Dance and the Shannon Dunne Dancers.

The Boys of Eye Street (Gonzaga's choral group) and others are also scheduled to appear.

Free admission - Free will offering to support FMC

Volunteer Spotlight *Lucas Allen, Fulbright Scholar!*



“Coming to the Father McKenna Center is a highlight of my week. I am working as a social justice advocate all week, and this keeps me grounded and reminds me why I am committed to social justice,” reflected Lucas Allen.

Lucas is a 2016 graduate of Boston College who has been volunteering at the Center for a little more than a year. One

of his friends in college was Sam Hamilton, who served as a Jesuit Volunteer at the Center last year. Sam invited Lucas to come with him to the Center one day, and although Sam finished his year of service with us, Lucas has continued to come nearly every week!

In February we will say good bye to Lucas for a while – he has been awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to work in Araraquara, Brazil as a English language teacher and tutor. He also plans to do research into access to medicines and medical care, since Public Health is one of his passions. (His work is at the NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice here in DC as a healthcare fellow.)

“I really enjoy speaking with the men as they go through the breakfast line. They keep me and my work real, in perspective and I know that I can count on them to make me feel good about what I am doing. The men inspire me to keep fighting for justice on Capitol Hill!”

Guest Spotlight **Danny Dotson**

“The Father McKenna Center has offered me a new opportunity to restart my life.”

Danny Dotson is a man who has been struggling with drug and alcohol and a past that he is not all that proud of. But at the Father McKenna Center he has found a place where he is accepted for himself and can choose a new path.

“I have been imprisoned on more than one occasion, and I have not always done things the right way. But, now I am trying to make a

real change.” Danny and his life partner of 36+ years parted company last fall and he came to DC to get away from his past. He found himself homeless and fell into bad habits at the New York Avenue Shelter. Then a friend invited him to come to the Father McKenna Center. “Cortez explained that I can start anew here, and he invited me into the Hypothermia / Transition Program.”

Danny has found seasonal employment at a Macy’s store as a Sales Person and stock person. While it is not his “dream job” it offers a way back into the ranks of the employed. “My goal is to get back on my feet. To do that three things need to happen: I need to work on my sobriety, I need a full-time job and I want to find a place that I can call my own. Cortez and the program are a tremendous help to me because I am challenged everyday to be my best self.”



Thanksgiving Turkey Basket Program

For many years the Father McKenna Center has made a Thanksgiving turkey and basket of “fixins” available to hundreds of families.

This year, on Monday, November 20 and Tuesday, November 21 we distributed 250 –plus turkeys to families who participate in our Food Pantry program.

It is a fun, but exhausting week for the Center staff. We collect food from many different sources. Turkeys and the fixins are donated by Holy Trinity Parish families, the St. Bernadette School community in Silver Spring, and the Connelly School of the



Holy Child community. We also receive donations from a couple of businesses in the area.

It is a great time for volunteers to come to the Center and help with the distribution. Members of our Board of Directors serve as the lead distributors, interacting with our Food Pantry patrons. At left, Board Member Mike Onufrychuk shares a moment of gratitude with Ephraim and Christina Weir, regular participants in the Food Pantry here

at the Father McKenna Center.

It makes for a wonderful Thanksgiving for so many people!

From the desk of

Kimberly Cox, FMC President

This year, I am thinking about innkeepers. We are all familiar with the story of Jesus' birth and how it is portrayed in the Gospel of Luke.

Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem for the census. *While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for him in the inn. (Lk 2: 6-7)*

The innkeeper is not mentioned here, but we can imagine that, moved by the sight of Mary about to give birth, he did the best he could to provide a place to rest. Cattle were moved to another stall, fresh hay was pulled out. Jesus was born and together with Mary and Joseph, they began their new life as a family in the stable.

Like the innkeeper in the Christmas story, each winter at The Father McKenna Center we make room for men in our Hypothermia / Transition Program. Each night the dining rooms and the library are transformed in to sleeping areas for eighteen to twenty men, who, like the Holy Family, have a chance to begin a new life.

Just as Christ's birth carries the seeds of redemption and new life, the Hypothermia Transition Program is a chance for redemption – to make a transition from homelessness to a new life of stability, productivity and meaning.

Like the Magi who bring gifts to the newborn Jesus (Mt 2:11), families from the Gonzaga Mothers Club come each night with a delicious dinner to share with the men. This is an important part of the journey for the men who feel both honored and humbled by the outpouring of love from these families.

Joseph had angels to guide him in the early days with his new family (Mt 2:13-15). Here we have a case manager who is dedicated to support and guide the men in the program. This year's case manager is Mike Jones, who has overcome many struggles in his life and thus is very effective in accompanying men on their journey.

Just as Mary, Joseph and Jesus became a family in the stable, so the men in the program form a community of support. They help each other out in many different ways. Three years ago one of the men in the program got a job waiting tables at Denny's. He was such a good worker that he was able to recommend two other participants who got jobs there, and more importantly a new sense of self-worth.

Last year five of the men in the program began to attend an AA meeting together. They continue to remain connected in friendship, and support one another in their pursuit of sobriety.

For us at FMC making "room at the inn" is a sacred call. It is an honor to accompany these men on their journeys and to be part of their lives.

This part of the Christmas story – of hospitality and guidance, honor, community, and open hearts – continues here at FMC in our Hypothermia Transition Program, thanks to the many donors and families at Gonzaga who make it possible.

May you and yours find joy in opening your hearts this Christmas.

Kim



Cortez McDaniel: Omega Psi Phi's "Citizen of the Year"



On Saturday, November 11, 2017 the Washington chapters of Omega Psi Phi, a service fraternity of African-American men, honored Cortez McDaniel as "Citizen of the Year."

Walter Hill, a Gonzaga graduate and a Father McKenna Center Board member, as well as a leader in Omega Psi Phi, read the nomination. Cortez was cited for his "dedication to the men we serve and his daily example of overcoming your past to build a better future for yourself and others."

Cortez, at the invitation of Kenneth Brown, a Founders Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, spoke of his award as *Redemption*. "I am truly humbled to be honored by Omega Psi Phi - it means a lot to be chosen by such a great group of men. Thank you!"

Kim Cox said it well, "Cortez is imbued with the spirit of Horace McKenna and he gives of himself everyday on behalf of the men we serve."

Congratulations, Cortez!