



The Father McKenna

C E N T E R I N C



MEETING NEEDS . . . RECLAIMING LIVES

Slow Miracles . . . Making a Difference

June 2017 Issue

Inside this Issue

- Pg. 2 Notre Dame @ FMC
Pg. 3 Christine Gwinn
Pg. 3 Leon Williams
Pg. 3 FMC Clothing Closet
Pg. 4 Notes from Kim Cox
Pg. 4 Farewell Ali Sentmanat
and Sam Hamilton

The Father McKenna Center
19 Eye St NW, Washington DC 20001
202-842-1112
www.fathermckennacenter.org
CFC Charity # 32524

Like The Father McKenna
Center on Facebook!



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

Board of Directors

Gerry Nolan, Chair
Jerry O'Neill, Vice-Chair
Kevin Curtin, Treasurer
Lisa Ryan, Secretary
Rev. David Bava
Geoffrey Brown
Sr. Seton Cunneen, SND
William Douglass
Mary Forde
Gary Grandchamp
Walter Hill
Harry Kettmer
Rev. Gaspar LoBiondo, SJ
Maureen McCarty
Joyce Montemayer
Michael Onufrychuk
Rev. Stephen Planning, SJ
Peggy Still
Paul Warren
Fred Henry Zimmerman
Kelsey Zimmerman

Kimberly Cox
President

Teaching Minds and Hearts

FMC's College and Secondary School Immersion Program

Each year the Father McKenna Center welcomes nearly 150 college and secondary school students to live, work and reflect here at the Center.

It is a part of our core mission to help form the hearts and minds of young women and men - the future leaders of America. By introducing them to the human side of homelessness we are able to offer them a new perspective on those who struggle with homelessness. As one young man from Gonzaga said, "I learned to think very differently about the men I see almost every day. In many ways they are me, and I am changed by that realization."

Mary Lohitai, a student at Gannon University reflected, "Living and working here allows us to meet the human side of the homeless, a demographic that is often demonized."

The students serve alongside our staff, helping with meals, clothing day and other tasks at the Center. But the



Gannon students assist our Kitchen Manager, Aubrey Holmes, prepare breakfast.

real impact comes when they have time to sit down and converse with the men - there the students encounter the face of Christ and can never be the same for having experienced it.

Cody Feikles, another Gannon student who came to the Father McKenna Center after his freshman and senior years said, "[being] a loving presence to these men has impacted my soul. I pray that it has impacted them, too!"

Annual Cafritz Foundation Challenge Grant

As in recent years the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation has awarded the Father McKenna Center a \$30,000 grant. One-third of the grant (or \$10,000) is a challenge grant - that is they challenge our donors to support the Center during the months of June and July, and if we can raise \$10,000 the Cafritz Foundation will release the money to the Center.

So, each gift returned to the Center in June and July (up to \$10,000) will, for all intents and purposes, be doubled!

Please help us reach that goal by returning a gift today! Thank you!

A Partnership with Notre Dame Students

The Summer Service Learning Program is a signature program of the Center for Social Concerns at the University of Notre Dame.

For the past three summers the Father McKenna Center has been a placement for a student. Each of the students who joined us has made a mark on the Center.

Genevieve Crum (ND '15) was our first SSLP student and she jumped in and worked at helping us build a database of other service providers in the DC area.

In 2015 Meghan Cain (ND '18) brought her bubbly attitude to the Food Pantry and made so many of our patrons feel loved and cared for.

Colin McCarthy (ND '19) made his mark in the Computer Lab and helped stabilize a program that had not been as effective as it might have been.

This summer we have two "Golden Domers" who have chosen to assist us in our ministry to the poor and homeless of the neighborhoods surrounding the US Capitol. MacKenzie Thurman (ND '19) is from northern California and is a Political Science and Peace Studies major at Notre Dame. Tommy Clare (ND '20) is a 2016 gradu-



ate of Gonzaga who has chosen to continue his giving to the Father McKenna Center this summer. MacKenzie and Tommy are working with our full-time volunteers (Sam and Ali—see page 4) to work on various programs within the Center, especially the Food Pantry, Computer Lab and the Clothing Closet (see page 3).

We asked each of them "what do you want out of this experience?"

MacKenzie replied, "I hope to engage with a variety of people, and in those personal relationships learn empathy and true care for the marginalized in our community. I also hope to learn a lot about how a direct service organization functions and how it responds to the needs of those it serves."

Tommy responded, "One of my life goals is to combine computer science with social justice. My expectation is that this summer I will encounter people in need and I will learn through service more about how we are called to respond to their needs. Then my challenge will be to bring my computer science knowledge and skills to bear on this."

Help Us Provide Farm Fresh Produce to our Food Pantry Patrons



This summer FMC will need to purchase \$12,000 in farm fresh produce to continue a grant from the past. You can make a gift at www.fathermckennacenter.org. Just enter "Fresh Produce" in the *Type of*

Tribute field of the donation page. Thank you!

1st Annual FMC 5K Walk

Saturday, Sept 30 8:00 am

@ Gonzaga College High School

Entry Fee: \$30.00

Includes a T-Shirt and Breakfast

Please join us on Sept. 30!

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 Soups
Canned Baked Beans
Cereal Rice Pasta
Canned Tuna and Chicken
Maple Syrup (in 16 oz size or smaller)
Peanut Butter / 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 warmer weather upon us, we need:

- Casual slacks & jeans
- Polo shirts / shorts
- Light jackets
- Underwear (new, please)
- Socks (particularly white)
- Shoes • Shirts

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

Volunteer Spotlight

Christine Gwinn



“As a student you can get caught up in yourself. Studying is a very solitary activity. I wanted to get outside of myself. I’ve volunteered at SOME and DC Central Kitchen, but I literally walk by the Father McKenna Center twice each day as I walk to school, so I decided to

look into it.”

Christine Gwinn is a 2nd year law student at Georgetown University. Originally from “LA” (read Lower Alabama), she lives in NoMa, the new neighborhood that has sprouted in Northeast DC, in the blocks “north of Massachusetts Avenue.”

“I came to Georgetown Law because it has a strong public service program and the kind of lawyer I want to be is one who cares about people and the protection of their way of life. So, giving a little of myself each week at the Center is an important part of who I am.”

Christine comes on Thursday and helps serve breakfast and then assists in the kitchen until the Food Pantry opens at 10:45. “I know that some of my neighbors are patrons, and it helps me feel that I am giving back to those who live in my community. I have felt more connected because of the Father McKenna Center”

Guest Spotlight

Leon Williams

Leon is a recent “graduate” of the Father McKenna Center Hypothermia Program.

More than a decade ago he suffered a stroke, and a doctor told him he was “disabled.” Leon heard that he *couldn't work*, rather than what the doctor almost certainly meant “you need to choose your work carefully.”

In early 2016 Leon became homeless and he became a regular at the Father McKenna Center in the early fall. He was invited to enter into the Hypothermia Program, but he continued to “duck” Cortez’ admonitions to take charge of his life.

Then one evening, during a support group meeting Cortez challenged Leon. Cortez said, “Leon, you might be disabled but you are not ‘unable.’” For Leon the “light went on” and Cortez connected him to the DC Department of Employment Services, and they did an assessment and arranged for interviews. Leon has a new job and has a place to live. His attitude has changed completely. This spring Leon was a cast member in “Lost Boys” a one-act play developed by several of our guests under the direction of Ali Sentmanat. It was another major boost to Leon’s approach to life.



Clothing Program - A Service of Human Dignity

“Clothes make the man!” “A well turned-out man looks the part!”

For the homeless, who do not have a closet or chest of drawers to store changes of clothes, clothing is a real premium. The Father McKenna Center tries to help with this challenge.

On the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month the guests of the Father McKenna Center have the opportunity to “go shopping” for new clothes. Our “clothing store” includes a selection of gently-used clothing donated by hundreds of friends of the Center.

Each “shopping day” several dedicated volunteers come to the Center to help the men find the clothing they need. We offer jeans and slacks, polos, t-shirts and



dress shirts, jackets, new underwear, belts and shoes. In summer we offer shorts and other summer wear, while in winter we offer sweaters, sweat shirts, hats and gloves.

“Having the opportunity to acquire a change of clothes is important. It allows me to express a positive change in my life. A clean change of clothes reflects my inner self,” commented Robb Haye, one of our regular Clothing Closet patrons.

The clothing closet needs jeans, tennis shoes, shorts of all sizes and travel sized deodorant. Can you help?

For the past year Ali Sentmanat (see page 4) has coordinated the clothing distribution program. It runs very smoothly because she is so organized!

From the desk of **Kimberly Cox, FMC President**

God's Blessings

God's blessings are always filled with grace and arrive just when we need them. Beginning last August the McKenna Center received God's blessings in the form of our two full-time volunteers, Ali Sentmanat and Sam Hamilton. They have helped to transform the Center and improve our delivery of services.

Ali and Sam have become a remarkable team here at the Center, bringing energy and enthusiasm to everything they do. Sam, a recent graduate of Boston College, came to us from the Jesuit Volunteer Corps; Ali, a recent University of Dallas graduate, was assigned to the Center by the Franciscan Mission Service. As participants in faith-based intentional communities, each of them has brought a deep spirituality to their work here.

Both have remarkable gifts and made an impact on our services. "As Food Pantry Coordinator, Sam created a pleasant environment that is calm and enjoyable," noted Pat Kisicki, IVC Volunteer. "I love being in the Pantry." Sam got to know our Pantry Patrons well; he knew who would need a few extra minutes choosing their groceries, or who needed to hold on to the shopping cart to steady their balance. He focused on healthy food purchases and as a result, FMC received an 82% Wellness Partner recognition from the Food Bank.



"Ali was amazing – she is so organized!" said one of our IVC volunteers, Dolores Royston, "She truly created order out of chaos in the Clothing Closet." In addition to organizing the Clothing Closet, Ali imposed order on the guests' mail distribution, updating the database and putting practices in place to insure a smooth operation. Her creative gifts also blessed us this year. Ali directed a play, *Lost Boys*, written by and featuring guests in our Day Program, and worked on the design and color scheme for the Social Hall's face lift.

Each of them has touched our lives. Jim Joyce, another IVC volunteer said, "Ali and Sam were an inspiration to everyone – staff, volunteers and guests."

Ali and Sam – you were a blessing to us this year. We will miss you!! Please hold The Father McKenna Center close to your hearts. May God's Blessings always be with you.

Reflections from the "Ground Floor"

We asked Ali and Sam to reflect on their experiences.

From Ali Sentmanat: *Before working at the Father McKenna Center my exposure to the homeless was passing them on the street corner. I have learned a lot from my year here – most of all I have learned that I allowed myself to care about these men, and sometimes that meant being hurt by their struggles. I would get to know them and then bad things would happen. The Center is a place where it doesn't always smell good, where men lie, where someone may have a breakdown at any moment, where men who got back up on their feet and got a job have a relapse and start drinking or doing drugs again or get arrested or die from an overdose. Many things that happen here are completely unpredictable.*

Cortez McDaniel has taught me so much. From Cortez I will take away a commitment to always offer people another chance, in large measure because that is what Jesus did. I have learned to ALWAYS have hope. I will leave the Center with a real sense of having given of myself and made a difference in people's lives. The play I wrote and directed with the men (Lost Boys) was a highlight and I will never forget the closeness we developed.

From Sam Hamilton: This year has helped teach me a lot more about how a person is not the sum total of their "failures." We are all human beings who deserve to be treated with dignity and we are all certainly capable of great love. Over the course of the year I have reflected a lot on "failure" and how it is perceived. I think failure is subjectively viewed, first and foremost, in others. It is effortless to see the apparent failures of others, pick out their weaknesses, and say to ourselves that we are not like that. It can become our default mode of viewing other people. I believe there is a false sense of safety in viewing another person as failing, and seeing ourselves as separate from that. "That could never be me." "I work hard, they obviously don't." I think it's also easy to point to places where we believe others have failed us; the situations when a person didn't come through when we need them, or when our heroes turn out to have "feet of clay." In these moments, it's natural to only see the failures in the other person, and isolate ourselves further from their "failure." From this mindset it is difficult to change our surface-level view of others, and see them as the fallible human beings deserving of love that they are. Furthermore, it makes looking at our own shortcomings and failures shameful and difficult. It is painful to view these failures in ourselves with humility especially when we act as if it is something that only other people experience or are responsible for. To see a weakness you possess in another person can be humbling, but at the same time to see that same joy and life you possess amidst the weaknesses is incomparable.