



The Father McKenna

C E N T E R I N C



MEETING NEEDS . . . RECLAIMING LIVES

Slow Miracles . . . Making a Difference

March 2017 Issue

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CFC Charity # 32524

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C E N T E R I N C

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Helping Families Help Themselves - The FMC Food Pantry

Each day families from across Ward 6 in the District of Columbia come to the Father McKenna Center in search of supplemental groceries.

What they find is a warm welcome and an opportunity to shop in our "mini-grocery" to select what they want and need to provide for themselves.

Most low income families receive assistance in the form of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) [formerly Food Stamps], but the assistance funds run out long before a full month runs its course. So they come to the Father McKenna Center to receive additional groceries.

We offer a variety of nonperishable

foods (soups, beans, canned meat, canned vegetables, canned fruit, rice, pasta, breakfast cereal or pancake mix, peanut butter and jelly) and a few extras!

Among the extras are a half-gallon of milk, a dozen eggs, fresh produce, fresh artisan breads and a package of meat.

"I am very grateful to the Father McKenna Center for providing such a wonderful selection of foods. I rely on this food to get me by every month," commented Karnetter Hill, who lives in Southwest DC.

Kim Cox, FMC President reflected, "The Pantry is an important part of our ministry to the community. We are helping our neighbors care for themselves."



Empowering Healthy Choices—How You Can Help

For the past two summers the Father McKenna Center has been part of a special program at the Capital Area Food Bank that has enabled the Center to offer farm fresh produce to our Food Pantry patrons. FMC is ineligible to participate in 2017, but we want to offer farm fresh produce to our Food Pantry patrons,

We have estimated that it will take \$12,000 to purchase the produce at a local farm stand - but the Center does not have that as part of our budget for 2017.

Here's where you can come in. We need 24 generous donors to make a contribution of \$500 more than they donated to the Center in 2016 to underwrite this effort. To participate in this initiative, please contact Ned Hogan at the Center (202-842-1112 or nhogan@fathermckennacenter.org) to arrange for your gift.

We will be offering seasonal fresh produce so our patrons can make healthy meals at home!

Jhonny Daza - A Story of Reclaiming a Life

Jhonny Daza is a special man. He is willing to work hard, he is resilient and he has a smile that never leaves his face.

But life has not been easy for him.

He was recruited for an accounting job on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota from his home in Bolivia. After several years his boss moved his accounting practice, and Jhonny was out of work. He moved to Virginia and had a series of minimum wage jobs. He worked hard and eventually had an opportunity as a travel agent. When he went out on his own, it was harder to find profitable work, and he ended up losing his place to live.

From there he landed at the New York Avenue Shelter in DC. A Central American whom he befriended led him to SOME and then to the Father McKenna Center. Jhonny learned that FMC has a Hypothermia Program, and because he found the shelter too chaotic,



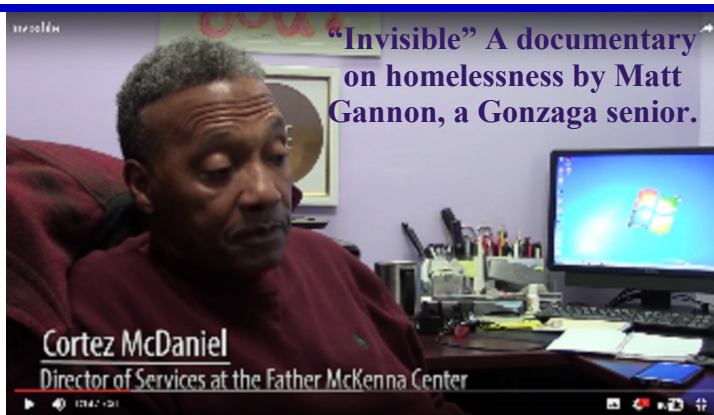
he applied to Cortez McDaniel, FMC's Director of Services to be a part of the Hypothermia Program. He was accepted.

In late November he was promoted to the Assistant position, in charge of the showers for the men in the Hypothermia Program, and in January he was promoted again to Hypothermia Monitor - the man who stays up all night making sure that the Center is safe and secure.

During December Jhonny took advantage of a computer literacy class offered by Byte Back at FMC to work on his computer skills, and in January he enrolled in an English class at Carlos Rosario. In short, he is working hard to improve himself and his readiness for work.

At the end of February Jhonny moved out of the Hypothermia Program into Emery House, a transitional housing program for homeless men with employment. He will be required to save toward a place to live and by late summer he should have a place of his own.

Jhonny has followed Cortez' advice all along the way and he has made tremendous progress.



Check out a video featuring the Father McKenna Center at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7BDQ2yeex8>

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
- Shorts / Polo Shirts
- 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

Save the Date
1st Annual FMC
FunRun/Walk

Saturday, Sept. 30, 2017
at Gonzaga HS

Volunteer Spotlight

Dan Kerns, Visi's Head of School and an FMC Barista!

Most Friday mornings you will find Dan Kerns serving coffee and pastries to the men who come to the Day Program at the Father McKenna Center.

It began two years ago when Dan met with FMC staff to discuss a partnership between Georgetown Visitation and the Center. "You know, I should give an example of service. Could I help in some capacity in an on-going way?"

Mr. Kern's youngest son, Danny, is a junior at Gonzaga, so on most Fridays Danny gets a ride to school from his dad who comes to the Center.

Recently, after having missed a couple of weeks because of work commitments at Visitation, Dan commented, "You know it is my loss that I don't get to come and spend an hour here. Being a part of this program is a highlight in my week and I want to be able to give back for the many blessings I have received in my life."

You, too, can join the volunteer crew at the Center—just call Ned Hogan at (202) 842-1112 to set up a time to come help out!



Guest Spotlight

Jeff Overton

In 1992 Jeff Overton survived eleven gun shot wounds, but for the past decade he has been homeless. He has relied on the Father McKenna Center over those years, and finally things are coming together for him.

For many years he has worked at general labor jobs that provide an income but not a career. He first lost his housing when he moved to Richmond to care for his ailing father. When he returned to DC his girlfriend and their daughter had moved on. Jeff got his name on the DC housing list - a list that often takes 8-10 years for your turn to secure housing come up.



For the past six months Jeff has been a regular at the Center. "Cortez has become my mentor, he offers such good guidance, but the most important thing is that Cortez offers 'tough love.' He always reminds me and others that we have to do the work, but that he is here to coach and guide us."

Soon Jeff will move into an SRO, and he has a new job with *Big Bus*, the sight-seeing double decker buses, as a tour guide and commentator. "It will mean that I can once again contribute to my daughter's care and support. She is a really wonderful young woman, and I want to help her!"

Jigs & Reels - A Tradition of Care

On Sunday, February 19, 2017 Sheehy Theater at Gonzaga came alive with the sounds, beat and pageantry of Irish music, songs and dance. Fifty youth performers from the Bog Band, the Culkin and Shannon Dunne Schools of Dance and the Eye Street Boys performed a two-hour concert on behalf of the Father McKenna Center.

Jigs & Reels & Songs for the Homeless is the creative work of Mitch Fanning and his contacts in the Irish music community in Montgomery County. Mitch has long admired Fr. Horace McKenna's work, and wants to give back.

Over the past decade the event has raised more than \$30,000 to support the work of the Center, all from free will offerings of the people who come and enjoy the concert. A special thanks to Mitch and his team who make this happen each February!



From the desk of

Kimberly Cox, FMC President

One of the favorite memories that people in our neighborhood have about Fr. McKenna is that he tried to make sure that no one went hungry. Mrs. Augustine Black remembered, "He would always have those Gonzaga kids knock on my door and give us some food. In fact, he didn't ask anybody; he just knocked and delivered until the food ran out."

We continue that loving care for our neighbors



today through our Food Pantry. This program is critical for our neighbors when 1 in 4 children and nearly 10% of seniors are food insecure. Hunger and poor nutrition have significant impacts on their lives.

Nearly 500 families rely on us in some fashion for food over the course of a year, and the food that we provide impacts 40,000 meals in our community! It

is with great pleasure that we have been able to welcome our new neighbors from the John and Jill Ker Conway Residence.

At least 60 of the units have been allocated to formerly homeless Veterans. In addition to food, the McKenna Center's Food Pantry provides a sense of community and a warm place of belonging.

I am particularly proud of the fact that we make healthy food items available in our 'mini-grocery store.' In fact, 83% of the items that the Father McKenna Center obtains from the Capital Area Food Bank are designated "Wellness Items" – that is, items that are lower in salt or sugar and higher in fiber. In addition, for the past two years the Center received a grant to provide fresh, organic produce from the Clagett Farm. What a difference this has made in the meals that our neighbors enjoy – corn, tomatoes, lettuce, turnips, sweet potatoes – all straight from the farm. Alas, we cannot reapply for the grant until next year, but we remain committed to finding and making these healthy items available. You can help! An additional gift designated for "Summer Produce" will make a world of difference.

Thank you for helping to lift up our neighbors by sharing the produce of God's beautiful earth.



Volunteerism is Alive and Well at FMC

In the 1830's after a year-long visit to the United States, Alexis de Tocqueville, a French aristocrat, wrote *Democracy in America*. De Tocqueville marveled at the creation of "associations" in America. He was writing about the unique American habit of working together to effect change on behalf of others.

The Father McKenna Center is graced by hundreds of volunteers who make a real difference for all those we serve. There are nearly 40 men and women who come once a week to spend an hour or more serving meals, helping in the Food Pantry or engaging the people we serve.



Pat and Don Kisicki, two of FMC's great volunteers!

In 2016 we were blessed by 14,960 hours of volunteer service. That's the equivalent of 7 full-time employees! We have two full-time volunteers (Sam Hamilton, a member of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and Ali Sentmanat, a Franciscan Service Corp volunteer), four Ignatian Volunteer Corps members (senior citizens who offer one or two days of service). In addition, eight universities, five high schools and parishes, alumni groups and others come for service during school breaks or the summer, and other groups come to help out on Saturdays.

We want to thank and salute all of the amazing women and men who volunteer here at the Center, offering their hearts and their hands in service to God's people.