



# The Father McKenna

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## C E N T E R • I N C

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### *Slow Miracles . . . Making a Difference*

June 2018 Issue

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CFC Charity # 32524

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## The Mission and Work of The Father McKenna Center

### **The Mission of the Father McKenna Center:**

To accompany and care for families struggling with poverty and men facing homelessness by providing food, shelter, clothing and services to support their journey toward stability, productivity, meaning and hope, building upon the good works, ideals and values of Father Horace McKenna, S.J.

### **Living the Mission:**

All work at the Father McKenna Center begins with Fr. Horace McKenna, SJ and his deep love for the poor. The staff and volunteers seek to emulate Fr. McKenna's compassion and his desire to care for God's people.

### **What we do for men experiencing homelessness:**

The cornerstone of our work is the Better Life Pyramid (see page 3) and the efforts to help these men end their homelessness. We have Case Managers who work with the men to identify resources they need to move toward stability, productivity and meaning. As they move through the pyramid we offer meals and other services that sustain the men, to empower them to move forward with their individual strategies to end homelessness. We end homelessness "one man at a time."

### **What we do for families facing hunger:**

Our Food Pantry provides quality, healthy foods to supplement what these families can purchase with SNAP or limited personal funds.

## The Father McKenna Center Staff



Front: Christine Melekian; Cortez McDaniel; Kim Cox; Ned Hogan. Back: Jhonny Daza; Russell Byrd; Stephanie Caban; Brian Graham; Austin Smith (Jesuit Volunteer).

# Case Management - The Core of What We Do

Every man who comes to the Father McKenna Center has a story to tell. And each man has a unique path that brought him to the Center. Our goal is that he will have a path from here to stability, productivity and meaning in his life.

The key component of our work is Case Management. Each man is asked to meet with Cortez McDaniel, the Director of Services, and each man is encouraged to 'own' the realities that led him to have to rely on our support and guidance. When each man is able to see his struggle as his own responsibility, he can make real progress.

Cortez reflected, "My role is to listen to the men, and work with them to try to determine what they need. I start by interviewing them to get to know them. Often the responses I get are guarded or even misleading, because they men don't yet trust me. I tell them that I will always be honest and 'straight' with them, and after a while most of them come to know that I am good to my word. They begin to open up and when they do they are ready for my assistance in getting them to the resources that they need. My job is to be their "coach" as they move forward. They are often caught in the midst of their journey, while I can see the road ahead and can help them find the right path."

The Father McKenna Center sees its role in the work with men experiencing homelessness as a "triage



center." Each day Cortez and his team meet with the men in the Day Program to identify what services a man might need. After assessing each man's specific needs Cortez and his team work to provide referrals and placements with the direct service providers that are best suited to each man's needs.

Often it takes weeks and months for a man to learn to trust Cortez and his team enough to 'bare his soul' and come to the point where he is ready to ask for help. But, when each man is ready, Cortez is prepared to offer his guidance and support. Cortez often reminds the men that while he has been 'down this road' himself and with others over many years, each man must walk the path himself and 'do the hard work.' Cortez' and the Case Manager's role is to be a *life coach* who can offer guidance and support.

"It is really rewarding to learn from the men that they have achieved their goals. I know that my work is a part of their success, but I want them to see that it is their hard work that results in a job, a place to live, renewed relationships or a life without drugs or alcohol," Cortez concluded.

## ***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](http://www.fathermckennacenter.org)

### **Food Items**

- Canned Baked Beans
- Maple Syrup (in 18 oz size or smaller)
- Jelly (in plastic containers 16 oz or smaller)

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:

- Light jackets
- Men's shorts and shirts
- Socks (particularly white) or new underwear

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

## **Save the Date 2nd Annual Walk for McKenna Saturday, September 15, 2018 Gonzaga HS Campus**

**What:** A 5K walk to support the Father McKenna Center

**When:** Saturday, September 15 at 8:30 am

**Where:** Gonzaga College High School

**Parking available in Gonzaga's Parking structure**

**Why:** To gather friends of the Center to raise funds for the Food Pantry and Hypothermia Program.

**Who:** *All are welcome!*

**What you will receive** - a T-shirt, breakfast after the walk, and a great feeling from supporting our work with people who are marginalized and in need.

Come join us - Registration opens at 8:00 am!

**To register:** visit [www.fathermckennacenter.org](http://www.fathermckennacenter.org)

# The Food Pantry Team: *Austin and His Friends*

When you worry about having enough food it is a relief to be greeted by the Food Pantry team at The Father McKenna Center with such genuine care.

"I feel great when the people here are so welcoming. It feels good to be remembered from my last visit and for Austin to show interest in me and my family," commented Novella Stevens.

Austin is Austin Smith, a Jesuit Volunteer, who has led the Food Pantry since August. He has deferred a job with a "Big 4 accounting firm" to spend a year serving people in need. Austin has done a superb job of keeping the Food Pantry fully stocked and organized. The way that

Austin has had the greatest impact has been his leadership of the many volunteers who serve in the Pantry.



Austin Smith with three volunteers, Margaret Clare, Bill Jones and Ed Shumaker.

Each day we have different volunteers who serve in the Pantry, and on Thursday and Friday students from Gonzaga help out. So nearly every day Austin has to train volunteers who have not served in the Pantry previously. Each day the Pantry welcomes an average of 15-18 families, and each patron feels that they have been well cared for when they leave!

Austin and his 'merry band' of volunteers help the people who count on our Food Pantry to find the food they need, served with a little "McKenna love!"

## The Better Life Pyramid and How We Use It

### My Better Life Pyramid



Everyone needs a plan. It is especially true for those who struggle with homelessness.

After many years of working with men who are in the midst of homelessness, Cortez McDaniel has developed a plan for men who struggle with homelessness. While it is not perfect for every man, the Better Life Pyramid is appropriate for most of the men who count on the Father McKenna Center for support as they struggle to overcome homelessness.

The Pyramid begins when a man is able to be totally honest with himself and the Case Managers. That honesty allows him to see how he has participated in the underlying causes of his homelessness. And it allows him to see that he cannot overcome homelessness on his own. He is ready to ask for help.

Many of the men who come to the Center arrive without a government-issued ID card, and without an ID card there are many services that a man struggling with homelessness cannot take advantage of, including government assistance, Medicaid, and mental healthcare. Our Case Management team works with the men to secure that ID card. The next step is to get a physical and mental health assessment, which can indicate next steps to full health and happiness.

For some people the steps of the Pyramid may seem obvious. However, for a man struggling with homelessness life is chaotic and such clarity is often not possible. Therefore, having a "roadmap" to 'A Better Life' is very valuable. Brian Graham commented, "The Pyramid is a wonderful guide. As I listened to Cortez I came to realize that the Pyramid was a path for me to follow. I have worked to follow Cortez' advice, and I am now making great strides fulfilling my dreams."



From the desk of

## Kimberly Cox, FMC President

### Talk the Talk, Walk the Walk

The Father McKenna Center is a place of “Slow Miracles.” Father McKenna left us with many words of wisdom and inspiration, like “Our Lord did miracles instantaneously at a word, but his Church, his brothers, his sisters his fathers and mothers have to do their miracles slowly.” Patience and persistence on the part of our guests and the case management team can lead to a life that is stable, productive, meaningful and hopeful.

The Case Management team accompanies guests on this journey via a process that we call ‘The Better Life Pyramid.’ When a man reaches the top of the Pyramid, we believe he is ready for an independent, self-supporting life. On occasion, the stars align, and we have the privilege of bringing on “graduates” from our program as staff members. It is powerful for our guests to see someone who is successful, professional and has overcome the same obstacles they face.

Kitchen Manager, **Russell Byrd**, credits The Father McKenna Center for changing his life. He finds the atmosphere here to be supportive of his sobriety. “It is good for me to be around sober and professional people. When I look at the men, I can remember where I came from. When I see a guy ‘graduate,’ it lifts me up.” I asked Russell whether being a ‘graduate’ himself has any impact on his work. He said, “I have the perspective and the empathy to really appreciate their struggle. I think I am in a unique position to encourage our guests.”



Kim Cox with Russell, Jhonny and Brian.

feeling,” he told me. “I understand the struggle. This makes my heart more compassionate.” Jhonny grew up in Bolivia and has been able to help the case managers with translating. “It feels very good to help the men who speak only Spanish. I help translate and provide details about how we work.”

**Brian Graham** is the newest and youngest member of our staff. He stood out to Cortez with his dedication to following The Better Life Pyramid and has begun learning the trade of Case Management from Cortez. Brian looks forward to learning more from Cortez and

**Jhonny Daza** came to The Father McKenna Center with a background in Economics. He became homeless after his contract was completed. He moved to DC and learned about the Center, finding it to be a place of safety, stability and support. He very carefully followed Cortez McDaniel, Director of Services, and the Better Life Pyramid. When an opening for a Janitor at the Center opened up, Jhonny jumped at it. He has responsibility for keeping the entire Center neat and clean and excels at this.

“Because I was homeless, I understand what the men are

then putting his life experiences into service. “I have experienced homelessness first hand. I can relate to how they are feeling. I know the Better Life Pyramid works. If anyone tells you that it doesn’t work, they haven’t really tried. I know. It works.”

We are doubly blessed when the men who complete our program can join the staff and put their “real-world” experiences at the service of people in need.

## A Planned Gift that Really Makes a Difference



In late March The Father McKenna Center received a telephone call from a broker with Charles Schwab Investments. The broker informed us that a loyal donor, who passed away in 2017, had named The Father McKenna Center as the beneficiary of an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) that was managed by Charles Schwab. The gift is the single largest gift of this kind ever received by The Father McKenna Center. This gift will make a difference for the men who are homeless and the low-income families we serve for a very long time!

“It is my hope that a gift like this will have a permanent impact on the Father McKenna Center. We will use it like an endowment, that will help us continue to serve the women and men who rely on us each day,” stated Kim Cox, President of The Father McKenna Center.

Are you passionate about a nonprofit organization? Have you considered including that nonprofit in your estate plans? It is a way to make a real difference, and it is easy to do! Your attorney or financial advisor can assist you. Ned Hogan,

Director of Development here at The Father McKenna Center, has done it, and he encourages you to consider it as an option for you!