



The Father McKenna

C E N T E R • I N C

Slow Miracles . . . Making a Difference

March 2019 Issue

Inside this Issue

Pg. 2 - Renovation Plan
Pg. 3 - Volunteer Spotlight
Pg. 3 - Guest Spotlight
Pg. 3 - Jigs & Reels 2019
Pg. 4 - President's Notes
Pg. 4 - Hard Hat Tours

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 or follow us on Insta-
gram



Board of Directors

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

Gerry Nolan, Chair
Kevin Curtin, Treasurer
Mary Forde, Secretary
Steve Backes
Rev. David Bava
Geoffrey Brown
William Douglass
Gary Grandchamp
Walter Hill
Harry Kettner
Rev. Gaspar LoBiondo, SJ
Lauren Malone
Maureen McCarty
Joyce Montemayor
Jerry O'Neill
Michael Onufrychuk
Rev. Stephen Planning, SJ
Lisa Ryan
Peggy Still
Paul Warren
Fred Henry Zimmerman
Kelsey Zimmerman
Kimberly Cox
President

FMC Undergoing Major Renovations

Starting on February 1 programs at The Father McKenna Center began to share space with construction workers to completely renovate the former Lower Church.

After several years of planning, the Board of Directors of the Center, in collaboration with the leadership of Gonzaga College High School, has engaged Corbett Construction as the General Contractor to undertake these renovations.



The "new and improved" Father McKenna Center will have upgraded bathrooms, an expanded dining room, a refreshed Food Pantry, a new "meeting room/classroom" for small group sessions and reconfigured office space. In addition, we are raising funds to support program enhancements, including hiring another Case Manager to assist the men we are working with.

To make all this possible, the Center is in the midst of the \$4.5M **Slow Miracles Campaign**. We have pledges and gifts of more than \$3.5M, and there are still many people to ask for support!

Kim Cox, President of the Center, reflected, "I am really excited that we can make changes to the Center that will increase how effective we can be for the men and families we serve each day. I am humbled by how so many friends and supporters have stepped forward to help us make our vision a reality. It is clear that our 'saint,' Horace McKenna SJ, is interceding for us!"

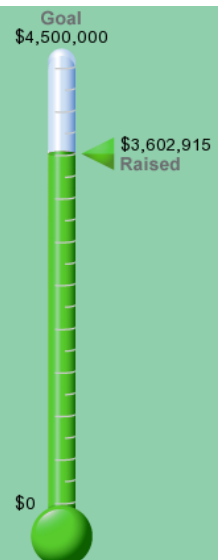
How You Can Help Make this Vision a Reality

Nearly everyone on our lists received a request from us to share in the Capital Campaign in the past couple of weeks. We hope that you can make a special gift to support the **Slow Miracles Campaign**.

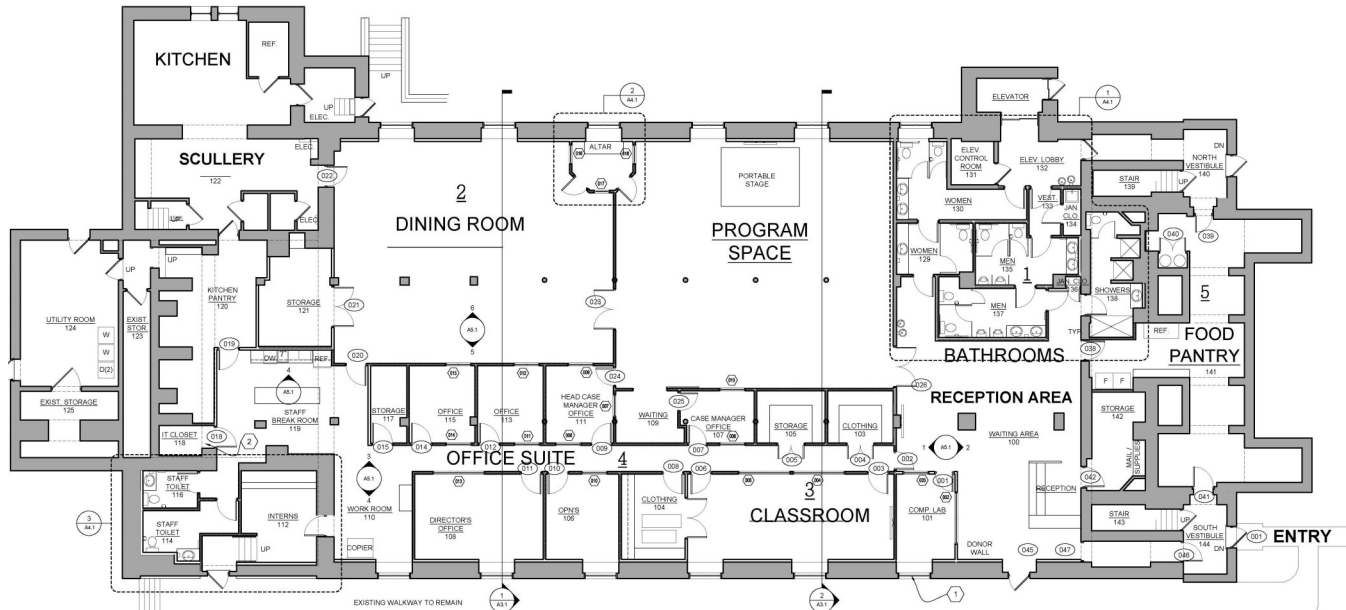
Every gift of \$1,000 or more will be acknowledge on our Donor Wall in the "new and improved" Father McKenna Center!

We have already received more than 80 gifts and we would love to add you to "the wall!"

To make your gift today, mark the enclosed reply card, for the **Slow Miracles Campaign**.



The Plans for a “New” Father McKenna Center



The key elements of the renovation plans for The Father McKenna Center are:

1. The new bathrooms, which will serve both the Father McKenna Center and St. Aloysius Church (north side closest to North Capitol St)
2. A new dining room, to seat 84 men (left room of the two large spaces on the north side of the building)
3. A new classroom/meeting room (large space along the south wall)
4. A suite of offices for staff and team (double row on the south side of the Lower Church)

5. Refurbished and air-conditioned Food Pantry (space closest to North Capitol St that is underneath the steps to St. Aloysius Church)

These changes will be built in phases, so that the Center will remain open throughout the renovations.

Save the Date 3rd Annual Walk for McKenna



Saturday, September 14, 2019

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 (28 oz. or smaller)
- Maple Syrup (in 16 oz. size or smaller)
- Canned Chicken or Tuna (12 oz 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 warmer weather coming soon we need:

- Shorts, T-Shirts, Polos
- Light jackets
- New boxers / boxer-briefs
- Socks (particularly white)

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

Volunteer Spotlight

Stone Ridge Students

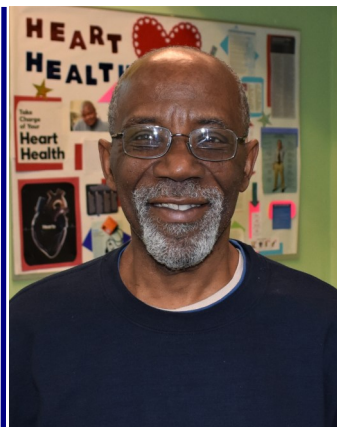
For many years students from Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart have come to The Father McKenna Center to serve alongside our team. On alternate Wednesdays throughout the year Stone Ridge sets aside the day for Social Action. For The Father McKenna Center this has meant five or six seniors come to the Center to help in the kitchen and Food Pantry, and to serve the Midday Meal to the men in the Day Program.

“Stone Ridge students love going to Father McKenna Center because it allows them the opportunity to hear the stories of people with different life circumstances than theirs. Their experiences at the center deepen their sense of empathy,” reflected Lauren Brownlee, the director of the Social Action program.

“We really appreciate the opportunity to get to know the men and families we are serving. It puts a real face on the problems we read about in school,” the girls agreed as they prepared to serve Midday Meal.



2019 Stone Ridge Volunteers (l-r) Lucie Q.; Cynthia Y.; Flannery L.; Dr. Katharina Matro; Fran C.; Lauren C.; and Inez A.



Sometimes bad things happen to good people!

Thomas Thompkins is one of those people. Thomas is 66 years old and has been homeless for nearly four years. After

Thomas Thompkins

a lifetime trying to do the right things his family turned against him over the family home (and money). Thomas had spent ten years caring for his aging mother, but his siblings forced a wedge between mother and son and had him evicted from the family home.

Thomas was homeless. For more than two years he generally relied on a shelter nearby, but grew tired of the food, so he tried the Father McKenna Center. “At first I didn’t listen to what Cortez was ‘selling’ but after a few weeks I realized he really was speaking to me. And I began to pay attention.”

Guest Spotlight

“In the fall Cortez came to me to invite me to apply for the Hypothermia / Transition Program. At first I declined because I thought there were lots of restrictions. Man, am I glad Cortez didn’t give up on me. The Gonzaga moms’ food is great, and I have found some friends in the program. But most of all I have been able to regroup myself and I am ready to move on. I am going to move in with my fiancée. Other parts of my life are coming together, as well! I am ready for the next phase of my life.”

Jigs & Reels - Irish Music and Dance

“Open the Door Slowly” sung by Connie McKenna, a relative of Fr. Horace McKenna, opened the 12th Annual Jigs and Reels for the Homeless Concert on Sunday, February 24, 2019.

This wonderful tradition that now spans 12 years brings adult and teen-aged Irish Music and Dance troupes together to help raise funds for The Father McKenna Center.

Alice McDermott, a local best-selling author, began the concert in 2007 with Mitch Fanning, who is the leader of *The Bog Band*, a ensemble of teen fiddlers and other instrumental musicians. Some of the youth have grown up and moved on, but new performers take their seats or fill their shoes!

The year’s concert featured *Lilt*, an instrumental duet of Nina Eck and Keith Carr. Nina plays flute and tin whistle and Keith strums both guitar and banjo. They provided accompaniment for *Culkin Live*, a troupe of champion dancers and instructors from the Culkin School of Traditional Irish Dance.

The 2nd half of the show featured this year’s edition of *The Bog Band* and dancers from the Culkin School and the District Academy of Irish Dance.

Everyone commented on how wonderfully the youth performed—and we raised funds needed for the Center!





From the desk of Kimberly Cox, President

Building on Our Foundation

It has been a very exciting month and a half since the renovations began at the Center!

The vision that has driven this process grows out of our belief that every person is made in the image and likeness of God and therefore deserves dignity and respect. Thus, the ***Slow Miracles Campaign*** is designed to create spaces that reflect compassion and respect from their very physical framework. The Center has made do for far too long with spaces that were not designed for our work. As Cortez McDaniel, the Director of Services observed, “when you come into a place that is shabby and unkempt and not in order, your expectations for making progress are low. The more orderly, clean and beautiful the place is, the more optimistic a person becomes about changing his life.”

When I have had the chance to talk with the men in the Day Program about the renovations, I frame it as a metaphor for their own journeys to stability and a better life. In both cases, it starts with a vision – a vision of what a better life could be or how space could better reflect our values. Next you need a well thought out plan. For our renovations, we have a set of blue prints developed by our architect, Stoiber + Associates. For men in the program, we have the “**My Better Life Pyramid**,” developed by Cortez McDaniel. In addition to a plan, experts are needed to guide you in the execution of the plan. Patience and persistence are characteristics that are needed for success in both cases, because we can expect a setback or two on the path to renovations or rebuilding a life. Finally, in both cases it is great to have friends and supporters cheering you on. We have been blessed with generous supporters and an engaged Board of Directors who make this possible.

We are in the thick of the renovations now. Our commitment to mission demands that we stay open and continue to provide services, so the renovations are being phased. Remaining open during renovations is strongly supported by staff, although everyone knows there would be many adjustments along the way. We also recognize that we are asking a lot of the people who count on us for services. The renovations will disturb greatly the Center’s practice of providing a place of Safety, Stability and Support for men who face the chaos of homelessness. We are doing everything in our power to keep the renovations from becoming too much of a distraction.

Six weeks into the process I am grateful for the flexibility of our Day Program guests and Food Pantry patrons as we face new challenges each day. Staff has responded with amazing grace. Our guests have been entering by a different door than usual, the Hypothermia program has been significantly impacted, as have the Gonzaga families who serve their dinner each evening. And our valued volunteers continue to shine with their love for our guests and patrons.

The life and work of Father McKenna is truly our foundation. For Horace, to live was to love and he saw the joy of God in every person he met. I believe the renewed Father McKenna Center will be a powerful support to continue our saint’s life work.

Hard Hat Tours Available



You can tour the construction site to see what is happening.

Pre-arranged tours -
Thursday, April 25 @
12:15 pm, 2:15 pm or 5:30 pm

Monday, May, 13 @ 12:15 pm, 2:15 pm or 5:30 pm

Individual Tours - Contact
Ned Hogan at
nhogan@fathermckennacenter.org

to arrange for a personalized tour of the construction.