



# The Father McKenna

## C E N T E R • I N C



## Slow Miracles . . . Making a Difference

September 2020 Issue

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[www.fathermckennacenter.org](http://www.fathermckennacenter.org)  
CFC Charity # 32524

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

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### The Father McKenna Center Team - Selfless, Dedicated and Committed

Working at a nonprofit organization is not a path to fame, power or wealth. Working at a mission-focused nonprofit, like The Father McKenna Center, takes a special sort of person. The Father McKenna Center is lucky to have truly selfless, dedicated and committed individuals from top to bottom!

Dr. Kimberly Cox is completing her sixth year as President of the Center, and she works diligently to push herself and the FMC team to perform to their highest level. She challenges each of her colleagues to see our guests in the Day Program for Men Experiencing Homelessness and our Food Pantry patrons as a child of God who is to be respected and treated with love and care.

Dr. Cox's vision for the Center led to the **Slow Miracles Campaign** that raised \$4,640,000 to underwrite major renovations of the lower level of St. Aloysius Church. The Center now has appropriately sized facilities - a dining room that will seat 75, a program space that can seat 100, a classroom/meeting space for small groups, ample bathrooms and newly constructed showers and appropriate work spaces for staff and volunteers.

It is also Dr. Cox's vision that calls the Center to commit our resources to serve our neighbors who need assistance. In response to the COVID pandemic the Center launched a Community Food Hub and a Grab n' Go lunch program. And it is her support of the program team that has led to *The McKenna Men Initiative*, a program to support men who have recently achieved their goal of housing, but need continued support to succeed as men who live independently.



Community Food Hub

Grab 'n Go Lunch program



James Jones, one of the first McKenna Men, with Cortez McDaniel

**4th Annual Walk4McKenna**  
**Saturday, September 19, 2020**

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

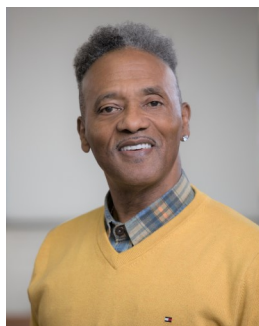
**An All-Virtual Fundraiser!**

# Meet the McKenna Center Team

The Father McKenna Center is blessed to have a team of dedicated and talented people who work each day to guide our guests and patrons to a better life.

## **Cortez McDaniel, Director of Services**

Cortez is the personification of Fr. Horace McKenna SJ. He is compassionate and yet he is known for his "tough love" for the men he serves each day. Cortez has been a leader at the Center for more than 10 years, and he makes a difference every day. He is the buyer of most of the food and supplies that we purchase at Restaurant Depot, BJ's, Costco or Sam's Club. Cortez is tireless when it comes to the Center and the men we are called to serve. Cortez is married and has children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and is the lead caregiver for his brother and sister-in-law. Those who knew Fr. McKenna know that he was always in motion. That's just another way that Cortez "channels" the saintly "Priest to the Poor!"



## **Christine Melekian, Director of Operations**

Christine has been associated with the Center since 2014. She oversees the facility, human resources, IT and bookkeeping. While her role is predominantly behind the scenes, she has been asked, from time to time, to help with direct service. She brings a spe-



cial care to her work because she lives in the neighborhood!

## **Ned Hogan, Director of Development**

Ned is responsible for the fundraising and communications efforts at the Center. He also served as the Volunteer Coordinator for several years. He joined the FMC staff in January 2014.



## **Nayeli Garcia, Volunteer Coordinator**

Nayeli came to The Father McKenna Center in August 2018 as a Franciscan Mission Service volunteer. She was charged with running the Clothing Closet and did a super job. As she neared the completion of her year of service she was hired to take over our robust volunteer program, and everyone agrees that she has done an outstanding job. Nayeli is a graduate of Neumann



University in Aston, PA. She grew up in York, PA.

**Michael Broughton, Assistant Case Manager** Like Nayeli, Michael first came to us through the Franciscan Mission Service. He has been Cortez's assistant over the past year and has learned quickly from his mentor how we can best help the men. Originally from Westchester County, NY, his family now lives in Rochester and he attended St. Bonaventure University.



## **An FMC Holiday Tradition Lessons & Carols**



**Saturday,  
December 19, 2020  
7:00 PM  
In St. Aloysius Church**

**Featuring a choir of men from The Father McKenna Center programs under the direction of Rev. Philip Ganir, SJ**

**A Reception will follow in The Father McKenna Center.**

## ***Father McKenna Center Wish List***

The Father McKenna Center relies on the generous support of the community.

For more information, please visit our website:

[www.fathermckennacenter.org](http://www.fathermckennacenter.org)

### **Food Items**

- Canned Baked Beans (18 oz. or smaller)
- Maple Syrup (16 oz. 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 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 202-793-2141

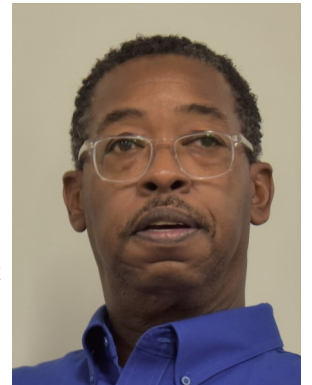


# Meet the McKenna Center Team

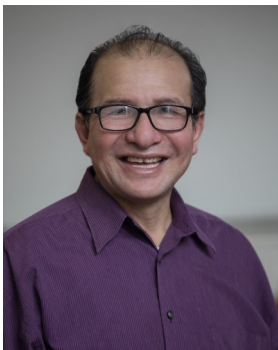
**Russell Byrd, Kitchen Manager** For the past three years Russell has been preparing meals and managing a kitchen that serves 60+ breakfasts and around 40 midday meals. His specialties are cheesy eggs and pancakes for breakfast and he makes a mean meatloaf or spaghetti and “gravy.” Russell first came to the Center as one of the men in the program. Through hard work and a willingness to accept the support and help of Cortez McDaniel and others, Russell has been sober for 5 years and is a great example of a “McKenna Man.”



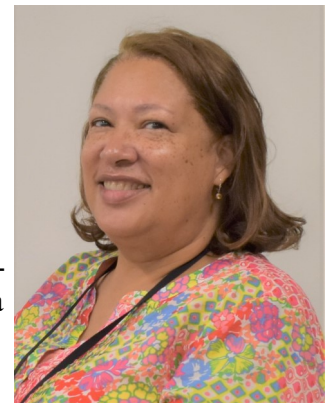
**Danny Dotson – Program Assistant** Danny is the quintessential “McKenna Man.” He was homeless, a victim of drug addiction and seemingly without hope. Through hard work to change his heart he rebuilt himself from the inside out. Today he is a vital part of the Day Program, serving as the “sergeant at arms” and as an extension of Cortez, when Cortez cannot be everywhere at the same moment! Danny first came to the Center in 2017, and in some ways has never left. We are graced by his hard work and willingness to do what is needed every day!



**Jhonny Daza, Facilities Coordinator** Jhonny’s official job description is “Janitor.” But to call Jhonny a janitor is truly inadequate. He is our Bolivian sunshine. Originally from Bolivia, Jhonny has worked in the US since 2002. He is always in motion - cleaning or organizing things at the Center. He has training in accounting, but in 2013 a job he held in the Midwest was discontinued, and he moved to DC. He was homeless. He came to the Center for assistance, and has made himself irreplaceable!



**Lisa Noel - Administrative Assistant** Lisa joined the McKenna team in 2018 as Administrative Assistant to Kim Cox. She has become a vital support to Kim on many levels. For many years she worked as a project manager at Fannie Mae, and after retiring wanted to be engaged in a nonprofit setting. She’s now an essential part of our team!



## Welcome to the “Three Amigas”

This spring, we referred to our three full-time volunteers (Joe Smith, Michael Broughton and Matthew Fichter as the “Three Amigos.” Their time with us ended on July 31. So now enter April Cooke, Emily Dold and Erin Brown, the “Three Amigas!” (They are (l-r) April, Emily and Erin in the picture.)

April is a member of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. Originally from Connecticut, she attended Boston College and spent a year as a medical scribe in the office of a pediatrician in Beverly, MA. She plans a career in medicine, but said, “I want to do a year of service to learn about the needs of those who are marginalized in our society before I follow my dream.”

Emily and Erin are members of the DC Service



Corps of the Franciscan Mission Service. Emily is from Massachusetts, is a graduate of The College of William and Mary, and spent this past spring as a research assistant working on child development issues. She has enthusiastically begun her year with us “happy to be part of a committed team.”

Erin is from Pittsburgh, PA. She spent the fall and winter of

2019 - 20 in Mandeville, Jamaica, but when COVID broke out her service program ended. She is eager to learn about the workings of a nonprofit agency. She is a graduate of John Carroll University in Cleveland. She hopes to learn a lot about nonprofit management during her year with us.



*From the desk of*

## ***Kimberly Cox, FMC President***

In this issue of the Slow Miracles Newsletter, you have met the staff and this year's full-time volunteers - the core people who follow in Horace McKenna's footsteps to care for our brothers and sisters. The McKenna staff is more than a group of people who work at the same address, we are a *team*. The magic of our team happens daily. It puts me in mind of a comment made by Margaret Mead, the famous American cultural anthropologist. Dr. Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed. It is the only thing that ever has." While our mission is not to "change the world," we are committed to changing people's lives – for the better.

When I think about it, it seems to me that working as a team is part of God's plan. Jesus sent his disciples out in teams of two; he promised to be with us when "two or more are gathered." (Mt. 18:20.) Again, in Ecclesiastes 4:9 it reads, "two are better than one."

Working as a team has taken on special significance during the covid pandemic. Like so many, we had to learn to work together, even when staff were working remotely. The most important thing that I discovered in this team was a deep sense of *trust*. As direct service providers, we were considered essential workers and staff needed to be at the Center. Our "bubbles" were larger than we might have liked, and yet because of the deep sense of trust we knew that every other member of staff was taking this seriously and taking precautions to protect themselves and the rest of the team.

I have seen so many examples of the importance of our team in the past five or six months. The team showed great flexibility in March as we made a pivot to the distribution of more food to our community as the reach of the pandemic became evident. In June the team pulled together to brainstorm how to deliver services in our Day Program and ensure the safety and dignity of everyone, and on July 20 we were able to open our doors to provide meals, clothing, showers and most importantly, case management, to men who are currently experiencing homelessness. Everyone pitches in to set up our Day Program out of doors on Eye Street. And then everyone pitches in to clean and sanitize our building.

Our Director of Operations, Christine Melekian, captured it best. She shared with me that she has never been on a team where everyone at every level is so committed to the mission. I couldn't agree more. That is the secret to our success. By pulling together, the McKenna team has done so very much in the past six months and I am honored to be a part of that team.

I pray that you can treasure your team, as I do mine. Whether your "team" consists of family members, colleagues, friends or neighbors, whether you are working side by side or remotely, as Helen Keller said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

## **FMC in a Pandemic - Helping Our Neighbors**

When COVID-19 changed life in March, The Father McKenna Center chose to 'roll up our sleeves' and respond as best we could.

We made the painful, but prudent, decision to suspend the Day Program for Men Experiencing Homelessness, so that our guests who used the shelters would stay in those shelters in protection from the virus. (Since March more than 300 people in the homeless population have contracted COVID-19 and more than 20 have succumbed to the disease.)

The Food Pantry continued operation, and the Center, in partnership with the Capital Area Food Bank, launched a Community Food Hub, serving any DC resident with a pre-packaged selection of nonperishable supplemental groceries. We also took over a "Grab n' Go lunch program in partnership with the DC Department of Human Services.

When we were running short of food in late May the Gonzaga Fathers Club stepped up and collected more than 25,000 food items for us to distribute!

Helping our neighbors is a team effort, and we are working every day to expand that team!

(Pictured at right—just some of the canned food collected by the Gonzaga Fathers Club!)

