



The Father McKenna

C E N T E R • I N C



Slow Miracles . . . Making a Difference

June 2021 Issue

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

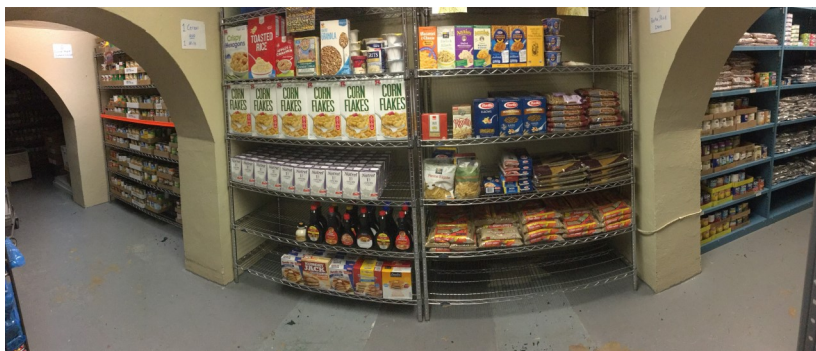
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Feeding the Hungry, Following Fr. McKenna

Throughout his 30 years of ministry at St. Aloysius Parish, Fr. Horace McKenna would help his neighbors with a few dollars, especially when it was to help put a meal on the table.

Today, nearly 40 years later, The Father McKenna Center continues to help our neighbors to put a meal on their tables. The Food Pantry helps 400-plus families from Ward 6 (the neighborhoods surrounding the US Capitol) to acquire the food they need.



It seems almost unbelievable in the United States of the 21st Century that there are so many families who face food insecurity. One in eight families lives below the "poverty line" in the U.S. and more than 15 million children are among them.

The Father McKenna Center Food Pantry is part of the answer for the families who come to us. We offer them the opportunity to acquire supplemental groceries every two weeks. The Pantry offers shelf-stable items (canned or boxed foods, like: soups; canned meats; canned and dried beans; pasta; rice; canned vegetables and fruits; cereal; pancake mix; vegetable oil; peanut butter and jam). But we also offer fresh produce, fresh bread, milk, eggs and packages of frozen meat.

The Father McKenna Center Food Pantry relies on the generous support of a number of canned food drives (Gonzaga, Visitation, St. Peter's School on Capitol Hill, Holy Trinity Parish, among others) to provide the food that our patrons want when they come to the Center.

2nd Annual Gonzaga Fathers Club Food Drive

Last June the Gonzaga Fathers Club sponsored a canned food drive to benefit The Father McKenna Center Food Pantry. This year we are doing it again.

There will be 50-60 convenient drop-off locations. To find a location near you, email Ned Hogan (nhogan@fathermckennacenter.org) and he will send you the information. If you can help, please purchase these items between June 13 and 20 and deliver those items to a location near you.

Preferred items: Canned Green Beans (16 oz. cans); Canned Collard Greens or Spinach (16 oz. cans); Canned Spaghetti Sauce (16 oz. cans); Canned Baked Beans (16-22 oz. cans); Jelly or Jam (16-22 oz. plastic bottles); Progresso or Campbell's Chunky Soups (all varieties).

In 2020 the drive netted 25,000 items. Can we top it in 2021? To find that list of local drop-off sites email Ned Hogan (nhogan@fathermckennacenter.org)

Volunteer Spotlight

Barbara Bartlett, SHCJ

"I keep coming to the Center because I encounter people I wouldn't otherwise meet, and I find God is at work in them, just as he is in all of us," reflected Sr. Barbara.

"My career began as a secondary school science teacher, but I always wanted to go to the missions in Africa. So, after 15 years as a teacher I was missioned to Ghana and later to Nigeria for a total of 23 years."

When she returned to the States in 2004 Sr. Barbara worked for several years with the people at Bethlehem House here in DC.



After a brief posting to New York, Sr. Barbara returned to DC in 2015, and began volunteering here at The Father McKenna Center. Sr. Barbara is willing to do whatever is needed - cutting vegetables, sorting clothing, tending to our modest library for the men or helping serve in the Food Pantry, the Grab n' Go. In short, she is a "jill of all trades!"

Sr. Barbara is so touched by her work with us, that she tells all who live with her. It had a major impact, when the Society of the Holy Child Jesus made a major donation to the Center in March as part of "Catholic Sisters Week!" Thank you, Sr. Barbara!

"I have fond memories of Fr. McKenna. He always wanted to help you, but he was also very willing to just listen."

Novella Stevens, a neighborhood resident, has been coming to the Food Pantry for more than 30 years. "I need the help that the Pantry provides."

A three-time survivor of breast cancer, Novella is the mother of five children. Currently a son and a daughter, who has four children of her own, live with Novella.

Patron Spotlight

Novella Stevens

That's seven people in a small apartment! She is a regular shopper at the Food Pantry.

Novella had a wonderful job as a data entry technician in the Federal government, but her health issues have forced her to accept Social Security disability. That means that her income is less than \$12,000 per year.

"The Father McKenna Center has been a real help to me over many years. Trying to balance all my bills, in the past I have fallen behind on utilities, and the Center would offer help. I know most of the staff at the Center - they are really caring people who want to help me and others as we struggle to survive."

Novella is just one of hundreds of people who rely on the Food Pantry - and we are blessed by their coming to receive our help!



5th Annual Walk4McKenna Saturday, September 25, 2021 8:00 am @ Gonzaga

We are also making plans to host the Walk "virtually" even if we are able to gather in person.



Entry Fee will be \$35.00 (includes a t-shirt and a Continental Breakfast)
www.fathermckennacenter.org/walk

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

Food Items

- Progresso or Campbell's Chunk Soups (all varieties)
- Canned Chicken or Tuna (12 oz or smaller)
- Jelly (in plastic containers)
- Baked Beans (in 22 oz cans 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:

- Men's Shorts
- Athletic Shoes (all sizes)
- Socks (particularly white)

If you have suits and sports coats to donate, please call Jubilee Jobs at (202) 667-8970

A Shopping Experience

Or “what it’s like to come to The Father McKenna Center Food Pantry”



For a 2 minute video shopping experience, visit:
www.fathermckennacenter.org/food-pantry

The Father McKenna Center Food Pantry is available to all residents of Ward 6 in the District who demonstrate a financial need for food assistance.

So, what is it like to shop at The Father McKenna Center.

Upon arrival, each patron has their temperature taken and is asked if they are experiencing any COVID symptoms.

They must then present their picture ID (to initially sign up each year they must also present proof of their residence in Ward 6 and proof of financial need).

After signing in, each patron is asked to complete a shopping list, indicating the items they would like to acquire. The list is prepared weekly to reflect what have available on the shelves.

One of our volunteer “shoppers” then takes the shopping list and collects the items they have chosen (canned goods, produce, meat, eggs, milk and bread). These volunteers are the “lynchpin” of the operation, because they keep a busy pantry moving along to serve 12-15 shoppers in one hour each day.

While the patrons wait for the volunteers to gather their items, they have an opportunity to converse with other patrons, creating a sense of community. Many of our patrons already come with a neighbor or two, and sometimes new friendships have formed at the Center’s Food Pantry.

When the volunteers return with their groceries the patron works with the volunteers to pack those groceries into bags (some provided by the patrons, others are offered by the Center.)

As they depart, nearly every patron offers a word of thanks to the team, and looks forward to their next visit.

A Jesuit Novice’s Perspective

Alec Hufford, nSJ, a first-year Jesuit novice in the USA East Province spent the month of March working alongside the McKenna Team. We asked him to share this reflection on his experience.

At the end of my first day serving at The Father McKenna Center, the kitchen manager, Russell, asked with a knowing chuckle, “Making a lot of new friends, huh?” Now, after having completed my month as a Jesuit novice assigned to the Center, I can say, with a grateful heart that Russell’s observation was quite prophetic. For in my short time with The Father McKenna Center, I experienced and was deeply impacted by the grace-filled culture of encounter, communion, and friendship cultivated daily by the volunteers, staff, and guests of the ministry.

In joining together to serve individuals and families experiencing poverty, the volunteers and staff demonstrate joy and energy in their daily work of accompaniment and service. How awestruck I was to witness the generosity of the Franciscan Mission Service and Jesuit Volunteer Corps young adults, along with other staff and volunteers, who give so much of themselves each day to provide for all the guests whom they have grown to love and care for. Welcomed often into spiritual conversation with these newfound companions about our shared mission provided a depth of friendship not often seen in the contemporary world. This circle of friendship continues to ex-

pand, including not only those who serve, but also the men and families who are served: by the end of my time, I was known by name by many of the guests, had shared in deep, personal conversation with them, and received sincere, moving goodbyes from them.

I came to see that in a way the genuine community of service cultivated by the Father McKenna Center offers a lived realization of the “communion of saints,” as God’s servants on earth join together with one another and with those of years past, especially with the spirit of Fr. Horace McKenna himself, to further God’s kingdom on earth. Once I heard Cortez, the Director of Services, speak about a developing program with deep faith in this timeless communion, saying, “then Horace will take it over, like he does everything else around here.” In the end, at The Fr. McKenna Center, I experienced the grace of being one of many individuals who came together as a unified community, praying often “to commend our bodies to the Lord’s service,” and so we do.





From the desk of

Kimberly Cox, FMC President

Signs of summer are all around us! The days are longer, the temps are higher and the cicadas have returned. At The Father McKenna Center, summer is marked by a series of "Hellos" and "Goodbyes." In this special edition of our Newsletter you will meet seven new members of the Board of Directors. They bring a diversity of skills and perspectives to our work that I believe will strengthen the work of the Center. At the same time, we bid a fond farewell and express deep gratitude to ten members of our

Board. Their commitment to the people we serve and their vision for the future of the Center have made a difference in our ability to fulfill our mission. It has been an honor to know and serve with them.

In our work at The Father McKenna Center, we recognize the importance of connection between people and its power for transformation. Each encounter is an opportunity to break down the barriers between "them and us." Through year-long internships or an hour of volunteering, we build bridges between people and make space for connections and community that challenge preconceived notions. Thankfully, as the pandemic lifts we are moving toward making these encounters possible again.

Another sign of summer at the Center is the arrival of summer interns and immersion groups. We welcome four summer interns from Notre Dame and two groups of students from Gonzaga for week-long Immersion. All of these young people bring curiosity, a servant's heart and lots of energy to the Center. Their presence is a highlight each year.

With the "Hellos" summer also brings "Goodbyes." At the end of July we bid a fond farewell to our four full-time volunteers: Erin Brown, Emily Dold and Domonique Thompson from the Franciscan Mission Service, and April Cooke from the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. The four of them provided critical support to our staff and accompaniment for our guests and patrons in the areas of clothing distribution, volunteer support, morning reception, mail distribution and the Food Pantry. In keeping with our focus on the Food Pantry in this Newsletter, below you will find a reflection from April about her year working in the Food Pantry. Please check out our E-Newsletter and Facebook page in the coming weeks for reflections from each of these special volunteers. They have become part of our family and have a special place in all of our hearts.

I am filled with hope about the possibilities of encounter and transformation. I am also grateful for the devotion and commitment of the Center's staff and volunteers who have been focused on our mission through the past year and to our donors who have made it possible to continue our work. You will find a summary of our Annual Report at the Center of the special insert. It reflects the impact made by our donors, volunteers and staff in the face of the pandemic.

Father Horace McKenna is smiling down on all of us.

The Food Pantry Coordinator's Experience

Finding a Community of Love and Support

April Cooke has served as the Food Pantry coordinator since September 2020. Here is a reflection on her experience.

As I began my year working as a full time volunteer here from the Jesuit Volunteer Corps I did not know what to expect. In the first weeks of learning my role as the Food Pantry Coordinator my expectations started to shape. I expected to be ordering food, restocking the pantry and working at the front desk to check in patrons each day. All of these things are a part of my time here, but they are not the reason I wake up at 5:30 every morning with a true eagerness and excitement to get to work.

What I did not expect to find this year was a community of families and individuals who give me such love and joy that ultimately outweighs the very tangible resource of food I give to them.

In this year of Covid, I feared not being able to connect with others during my year of service. Instead, I find myself overwhelmed with the joy and positivity of the food pantry patrons. I had no idea that these men and women would give me the gift of getting to know them and their lives. I never expected for them to care so deeply about knowing about me. I didn't know that so many of them would pray for me and my health and happiness.

In a year where there is so much hardship and isolation, I have been given the joy of being welcomed into a community of faith and love that started years ago with Father McKenna and will continue for so many years to come.

