



# The Father McKenna

C E N T E R • I N C

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Winter 2026 Newsletter

## A Cold Start to 2026 at the Center



Dear Friends,

It's been a very interesting first few weeks of 2026! We have been navigating the extreme cold and "Snow-crete" while making sure our Day Shelter and Food Pantry programs experience as few disturbances to service as possible.

Even in the face of the cold, we continue to serve an unprecedented number of guests across our core programs. In the month of January, we welcomed 533 men for hot breakfast and lunch – a total of 1,498 meals – while serving 351 families across 374 visits to our food pantry. Of these 351 families, 28 were first-time visitors to the Pantry.

Our continued ability to provide these essential services, especially through extreme weather conditions, is a testament to the generosity and perseverance of our volunteers and supporters who joined us on the coldest and snowiest days of the year. We cannot thank you enough for the part you play in helping the Center serve as a sanctuary and source of hope for our neighbors in need.

With gratitude,  
The Father McKenna Center Staff

## Spring Volunteers Needed

Our Day Shelter and Food Pantry are in need of volunteers throughout the coming months!

We especially need help with the front desk / receptionist position between 7:15 and 8:30 am on weekdays, as well as food pantry shoppers from 1:00 to 3:00pm Monday through Thursday.

Interested in helping? [Sign up here!](#)

See you soon!



## Hypothermia Transition Housing Program Going Strong

The Center has opened its doors every night since mid-November for the members of our 25-26 Hypothermia Transition Program, welcoming a small group of men to live in community and work towards a successful transition out of homelessness. The nine men currently participating in the program share a home-prepared meal with volunteers from the Gonzaga Mothers Club every evening and receive intensive case management support from our lead Case Manager Sydney Simmons.

**“The Hypothermia program has been a great experience. Everybody gets along, and the volunteers have cooked some great meals. For any new person going through the homeless life, this would be the best place to start – a place to find support and learn how to support yourself. Sydney has shown us the tools we need to move forward. If someone applies themselves, they can work their way out of homelessness.”**

– Gregory B.



The program currently has eight participants, having graduated two men already. One of the men moved into his own apartment at the end of 2025, and another recently moved into bridge housing. As the end of this year’s program approaches, we’re excited to continue watching these men find much-deserved success! There are still some openings to serve weekend or holiday breakfast through the Gonzaga Fathers Club - [send us an email](#) to sign up.



## Spotlight Series Continues

Our Spotlight series is back, and this time we’re talking to Sydney Simmons, the Center’s lead Case Manager. Sydney supports clients in our Day Shelter and Hypothermia Transition Housing programs as they work to achieve their goals and navigate homelessness.

Sydney’s kind and welcoming demeanor serves as a comfort to guests, staff, and volunteers, and establishes the Center as a warm and welcoming place for those in need of help. Check out the video to learn more about how she found herself here and what makes up her average day at the Center!

## Client Spotlight - Paul Hill

If you’ve spent any time around the Center over the past few years, you’ve likely met Paul Hill. His bubbly personality and relentless positivity are a highlight to many a day at the Center.



Paul (pictured in red) first visited the Center’s Day Shelter Program in 2024, and worked closely with Sydney and our case management team to get back on his feet and secure a housing voucher. Paul moved into his apartment in 2025, and has now ‘graduated’ to our food pantry program.

In the fall, Paul completed the Catholic Charities/Financial Stability Network Money Management class. Paul still joins us in the day program from time to time to participate in peace circles, catch up with friends, and continue to build community.

During the snow and cold snap at the end of January, Paul was instrumental in keeping our Day Shelter services flowing – cleaning, helping out in the kitchen, and even throwing on gloves to serve – doing all he could to support the Center on days where many of our staff and volunteers were not able to make it downtown.

Paul’s presence at the Center lifts spirits and helps new guests see the progress that they can make by working with our team and participating in the full range of services we have to offer. We’re proud of Paul for how much he’s been able to accomplish during his time at the Center, and are excited to see what he’ll achieve next!

**“Everyone has their challenges, but it’s nice to see people coming to the Father McKenna Center and getting their lives changed and their needs met - sharing in friendship and passing along helpful information.”**

**- Paul**



## New Ways to Support our Programs



As an increase in need continues to impact our Day Shelter and Food Pantry programs, we are excited to share our new Food Drive, Clothing Drive, and Fundraising ‘toolkits’ to make it easier to foster support for the Father McKenna Center in and around your community.

These kits combine the best advice from years of successful community efforts into a simple guide. [Send us an email](#) or call (202) 842-1112 #122 to get your hands on a toolkit and help support our neighbors in need this Spring!

# Board Game Day at the McKenna Center

At the beginning of February, we hosted our first board game day! This new weekly Day Shelter program offering provides a fun outlet, friendly competition, and a chance to build meaningful connections between guests and volunteers.

So far, our guests have played Chess, Checkers, Scrabble, Cranium, and Apples to Apples, as well as completing some puzzles.

Have some old board games or puzzles building up dust? We'd love to take them off your hands. Give us a call today to coordinate a drop off!



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