

# SAINT John's HOSPICE

WHERE HOMELESS MEN  
FIND DIGNITY, RESPECT  
AND NEW BEGINNINGS



## A Great Reason to Celebrate at Saint John's Hospice



From Left: Fr. Dennis Witalec, Amy Holdsmen, Megan Maguire Nicoletti, Most Reverend Archbishop Charles Chaput, OFM, Cap., James Amato, Fr. John Daya, OFM, Cap.

Friends and supporters gathered together at the SJH parking lot on February 29th, to celebrate the new addition to

the SJH family. Thanks to the generosity of the Maguire Foundation and Catholic Social Services, Saint John's Hospice was able to purchase a new refrigeration truck that will be used to pick up casseroles and donations of clothing and toiletries throughout the Philadelphia and surrounding areas. This gathering was an opportunity to honor those who, through their generosity, made this gift possible. David Stier, SJH Program Director, welcomed the guests and honorees. He spoke of the important role that this truck plays in connecting SJH with its volunteers, the heart and soul of our mission: "Our organization could not function without a vehicle to pick up all of our food and clothing donations. The fact that it was a gift is just incredible!" The Most Reverend Charles Chaput, OFM, Cap, Archbishop of Philadelphia, was present along with James Amato, Secretary for Catholic Human Services. Megan Maguire Nicoletti of the Maguire Foundation, and Amy Holdsmen, (Executive Director of the Maguire Foundation), were also present at the ribbon cutting ceremony. When asked what this event meant to the Maguire Foundation, Ms. Holdsmen replied, "It was a blessing for the Maguire Foundation to participate in the truck dedication. It was readily apparent how integrated

St. John's Hospice staff and volunteers are in the lives and spirits of the people that they serve."

On an average day, SJH serves 57 casseroles to hundreds of residents and day services guests. Casseroles are prepared by a dedicated family of volunteers from forty-seven parishes in the area. They donate the food and thousands of hours each year to ensure that SJH is able to carry out its mission of feeding the homeless and poor. The casseroles are picked up by SJH driver, Mike D'Ambrosio. Mike spends many hours on the road driving, picking up these donations. He knows the importance of a dependable vehicle to get his job done: "Although my work, at times, is physically demanding, having a new truck that is reliable makes my job that much better. I am extremely grateful to the Maguire Foundation and CSS for this very generous gift."

The Workers' Compensation Section of the Philadelphia Bar Association continued their ongoing support of SJH by presenting a generous donation. Fr. Dennis Witalec of Epiphany Parish and Fr. John Daya, OFM, Cap. of St. John the Evangelist Parish were present to bless the truck, its driver and all SJH volunteers, past and present. The Saint Mary Interparochial School Choir provided entertainment for the event. A reception catered by

*Tootsie's Salad Express* followed afterwards in the Saint John's Hospice dining hall.



The Honorable Tina Marie Rago and Danielle DeRosa, Esq. present a check to David Stier for SJH from the Workers' Compensation Section of the Philadelphia Bar Association.

## From Saint John's Hospice Program Director



We can experience this Year of Mercy more fully by reflecting on our own personal encounters with mercy. Exploring this with any degree of seriousness requires courage and commitment. Many of our residents had the opportunity to do this while on retreat at Malvern Retreat House in May.

I was humbled and challenged by some of their reflections, particularly as they focused on personal examples of forgiveness. I wasn't surprised to hear about the depth of pain and trauma that our men had experienced in life, although this is never easy to hear; but I was challenged by their stories of how they have responded to these troubles. If I had experienced those same hardships, would I have been able to respond with the same level of grace? What if more of my life experiences were similar to theirs? Would I be homeless too?

Understandably, people who come into contact with St. John's Hospice often express their struggle to understand homelessness. How does one come to be homeless? How does a person get out of it? These are hard questions to answer. Surely the truest answers vary as much as each individual life story. What traumas, circumstances, and choices has each person experienced? Whether homeless or not, we each have our own version of the story, even though some of us appear to be more fortunate than others.

The commonality is brokenness, whether we live on the streets, or at St. John's Hospice, or in a lovely home. We are all broken. Many of our most ardent supporters have a deep awareness of this shared brokenness. Some have told us directly. Maybe they saw the pain in a man's eyes when he walked through our lunch line, or perhaps they felt the struggles of a family member who experienced homelessness. Undoubtedly, every volunteer and every supporter has experienced compassion for another human being. All have shared in that same unity that we experienced on retreat.

Our men feel your compassion, and many of them express their gratitude for it – for you – on a daily basis as they pass through or dwell within the shelter of St. John's Hospice and Good Shepherd.

Thank you for not turning away from our shared brokenness.

Thank you for being an instrument of mercy.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Stuer". The signature is fluid and cursive.



**Saint John's Hospice seeks to be  
a community grounded in faith and service  
where homeless persons find dignity,  
respect, nourishment and  
opportunities for new beginnings.**



## Pop-Up Restaurant Provides Hope For the Homeless

Entrepreneur Jason Pinardo founded Pop-Up Philly, an event providing food, clothing and support for the homeless of Philadelphia. On February 28th, the Armory on 23rd street was transformed into a beautiful restaurant. SJH residents joined over 160 members of the homeless community to share in the event. Jason was inspired to create this pop-up event in response to the homeless he encountered daily on the streets of Philadelphia. Jason started a campaign on GoFundMe, raising over \$13,000 in just three days. He also reached out to CSS and SJH for support. Kris Jaeger, Director of Development & Community Relations for SJH says, "When Jason told us about his plan for the pop-up, we were more than happy to do whatever we could to make his vision a reality.

After seeing how many people were inspired and uplifted by this event, it



GSP residents and staff enjoying the Pop-Up Philly event at the Philadelphia Armory on 23rd Street



Volunteers, local media and guest gather at the Amory for the Pop-Up Philly event for the homeless

was apparent that it was well worth the effort." By the day of the event, Jason had raised over \$20,000. Twenty-five local vendors donated their time, goods, and services. Cescaphe Event Group provided the dinner for the evening, serving lobster bisque, Caprese salad, braised short rib over creamy polenta, and hand-filled cannoli for all to enjoy. Twenty dollar Visa gift cards were distributed to each guest present, along with gift bags filled with toiletries and prizes. Clothing was available for all the guests as well. Jason is already working on another event scheduled to happen in the fall of 2016. SJH plans to work along with Jason once again to make this event possible. Thank you Jason, for your dedication and compassion as you continue to serve the homeless community of Philadelphia. "My goal is to give somebody hope. If we feed 150 people and just one person walks away with a sense of hope, then that \$20,000 is worth it."

## A Small Act of Kindness Makes a Big Difference



My Brother's Keeper volunteers pictured here with SJH Food Service Manager, Anthony Willoughby

In the mid-eighties, Jim and Flo Wheatly spent most of their time traveling between their home in rural Pennsylvania and Sloan-Kettering hospital in Manhattan. They were getting much needed care for their son who was diagnosed with pediatric non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Like many people, Flo typically, was quick to turn her head from a homeless person in need. One day that all changed. While on a street corner in NYC, Flo's son became sick from his recent treatment. Crowds of people pushed by with no one offering to help. Just then, a rugged man reached out to them, grabbed their suitcase, helped them onto the subway and then to a cab that would eventually get them to their

destination. When they parted, Flo was overcome with gratitude. She gave the man five dollars. He turned to Flo and said, "Don't abandon me." From that day on she knew that there was something more to be done to help the needy. Years after that meeting, Flo could not forget the strangers words. She went home one night and took out her sewing machine and gathered some scraps of material from her past sewing projects. The final product was a sleeping bag. This small act of kindness was the beginning of something much bigger than Flo could have ever imagined. Flo and her husband Jim began passing the sleeping bags out to the homeless on the streets of NYC. Word of their ministry spread and soon groups began sending sleeping bags to the family to distribute. In response, Flo started My Brother's Keeper, a non-profit organization that makes and distributes blankets to homeless people in the U.S. and abroad. Now, more than 6,000 sleeping bags are distributed all over the country annually by the organization. Twice a year, My Brother's Keeper visits SJH, bringing a truck filled with nearly 100 sleeping bags, each containing packs of toiletries inside.

## A Time Away to Reflect and Refresh

On May 18-19, the beautiful rolling hills of Malvern Retreat Center was the setting for the 2016 Retreat for Men in Transition. Each year SJH residents, day and coffee house guests, and staff enjoy an overnight retreat consisting of talks, prayer, reflection and food. This year, the theme was *Make Me a Channel of Mercy*, featuring keynote speaker Fr. Joe Corley. Resident Marc M. says of the experience, "I felt very relaxed—it was nice to get involved with everyone. The sharing and comraderie was great." The topics discussed during the retreat focused on mercy and forgiveness. A great time was had by all.



## Spotlight on SJH Resident



SJH resident, Nate found himself at Saint John's after a series of traumatic experiences. For seven years he dedicated all of his time to taking care of his mother; he did not want to have to put her in a home. The deaths of his mother and brother brought him into hard times. After their passing, Nate had to take care of all of the funeral arrangements and was soon left with nothing. He came to Saint John's looking for a way to build himself back up. While residing at SJH, Nate found employment and is working on acquiring housing. "Saint John's provided me with a safe haven, a means of getting back on my feet, and resources to acquire employment and housing. Many people on the staff have become like family members." Thanks Nate, for sharing with us how SJH has helped you.

## Help SJH Carry Out Its Mission, Today and In the Future



*Because of SJH, homeless men of our city  
receive help and hope to survive another day.*

*Because you're there for us,  
we can be there for them.*

A simple gift through your will or estate  
will help us to continue to do what we do today,  
far into the future.

It's a gift that costs nothing during your lifetime.

Please consider including SJH in your will.

For more information, contact Kris Jaeger,  
Director, Development & Community Relations



215.563.7763

[kjaeger@chs-adphila.org](mailto:kjaeger@chs-adphila.org)



## Our Archdiocesan Friends To the Rescue!



Co-worker at the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, gathered in support of SJH to make 520 sandwiches in just one hour to be distributed to the homeless at SJH.

During the construction of a new HVAC system, the SJH dining room had to remain closed for three days. Over 900 meals would not be served to those in need and hundreds would not receive services that they have come to rely upon. Thankfully our friends at the Archdiocese of Philadelphia were there to help. Led by Anne Ayella of Nutritional Development Services, employees of the Arch gathered to make hundreds of sandwiches for SJH to hand out during the construction. Anne commented, "The staff of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center were really excited to be part of a hands-on Work of Mercy in this Year of Mercy and did a great job. We met our goal of making 520 sandwiches in just one hour. Folks are already asking about the next sandwich making project. We are grateful for the opportunity to share in the wonderful work of Saint John's Hospice." Thanks to all for making this possible!

## From Avoiding Detentions to Making a Difference

When asked how he came to know SJH, long-time volunteer David DiRenzo's story is unlike any other. DiRenzo is a graduate of Cardinal Dougherty High School, where he acquired quite a few demerits. The discipline office had a policy where students could choose service to pare down their infractions. As Dave recalls, "That's when I was given the opportunity to work at Saint John's Hospice, which at the time was run by the Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd." Dave remembers, "'Back in the day' we cooked, prepared and served meals. From what I remember, it was quite an undertaking. The old saying that God works in mysterious ways certainly applied. I fell in love with Saint John's – a love affair that remains through today." DiRenzo can still be found on any given day of the week serving our men in the dining hall. Thanks Dave, for your ongoing support of SJH. And a special thanks to



David DiRenzo with his sons, whom he now brings to SJH for volunteer experience.

## Saint Joe's Alums Lend a Hand



From left: Bill Lederer, Amanda Paola, Harry Faris, Chris Pecoraio, Rich Brennan, Robert Thomas, Sarah Lipis

On Saturday April 23rd, Saint John's Hospice welcomed Saint Joseph's University alumni for their annual Global Community Day of Service. For four hours, participants cleaned various areas of the SJH buildings. Some volunteers cleaned the dorms, mopping floors and scrubbing down walls, while others cleaned the dining hall and kitchen. Saint Joe's alum, Rich Brennan, a member of the SJH Development Council, remarked: "The alumni volunteers at Saint John's Hospice were united with Hawks around the world for a Global Community Day event rooted in the Jesuit tradition of service to others. We were honored to serve at Saint John's, which provides crucial services to the homeless within the Philadelphia community." A big SJH THANK YOU the St. Joe's alums for their dedicated

service and ongoing support.

## SJH Welcomes New Community Relations Coordinator

Saint John's Hospice has hired Becca Switzer as its new Community Relations Coordinator. This is a new position to promote outreach and development throughout the SJH community of friends, parishes, and supporters. Becca's responsibilities will focus on all aspects of our volunteer efforts, including scheduling of volunteers and the coordination of drives and collections throughout the community. Becca will reach out to the SJH casserole parishes to keep all of our loyal volunteers and supporters in touch with SJH, its mission and goals for the future. She will also work closely with Kris Jaeger, SJH Director of Development, in all areas of fundraising and event planning. Becca has a degree in Strategic Communications, with a focus in Public Relations and a minor in Public Health from Temple University. She has previous experience in development, event planning, and community relations. Please feel free to reach out to Becca to say hello! She will be the point person for all of your volunteer needs and concerns. Her email is [rswitzer@chs-adphila.org](mailto:rswitzer@chs-adphila.org).



Becca Switzer, SJH Community Relations Coordinator

## Spirited Drumming—Music for the Soul



Walking to lunch one day, former SJH Program Director Kevin Barr was moved by the beat of a drum (actually an upside down bucket!) outside of the Reading Terminal Market. It reminded Kevin of Male Spirituality sessions that he had attended where drums were used by the participants. The rhythmic call of the drumbeats encouraged Kevin to invite “Gooch the Drummer” to Saint John's. From there blossomed monthly “Music Nights.” For the past four years, Jason Gooch has brought his creativity, energy, and passion for music and fellowship to the men of Saint John's. The first few sessions were dominated by the sounds of drums. Gooch soon invited other musicians to be part of the celebration. The evening has become an opportunity for everyone to share their voices and talents as well as their heartfelt human and spiritual yearnings. It is true that music is born amidst both beauty and vulnerability, which transforms the hearts of the men who come to Saint John's as well as those who support our ministry. Gooch's talent and spirit continue to be an immeasurable gift to the SJH community. Isn't it a *wonderful world* when one person's ‘yes’ can make such a difference in so many lives?

**Do you donate through  
the United Way?  
If so, designate your  
donation to SJH!  
Donor Option 272**

**Will your employer  
match your gift?  
Ask now to  
increase the impact  
of your contribution!**

**Interested in Volunteering  
at Saint John's Hospice?  
Contact Becca Switzer  
[rswitzer@chs-adphila.org](mailto:rswitzer@chs-adphila.org)  
215.563.7763**



# We Love Our Volunteer Family!



## Meet

### Joe Selfridge:

When asked what he liked best about volunteering at SJH, Joe replied, "It is a well run program that meets so many needs... it's so involved with people putting in their efforts, and the clients are so appreciative and so grateful."

Once a lawyer and

then teacher at West Catholic HS and LaSalle College HS, Joe has been volunteering at SJH for 2 years. We are overjoyed to have Joe as a member of our volunteer family. He's always there when we need him.



## Meet

### Judi Samulewicz:

Volunteer, Judi says, "It's not a good day unless you do something for someone who can't repay you." Judi has been making casseroles and volunteering at SJH for four years. She can be found happily serving our men in line at least once or twice a week. Judi gushes, "I just love it; I miss it when there

are weeks when I can't come." Thank you Judi, for your big heart, outgoing personality and great pound cake!



## Meet

### Nancy McGeehan:

One of our newest volunteers, Nancy came to SJH after hearing about the program and its mission during mass at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul. When asked what she enjoys most, Nancy replied, "What I like best about volunteering at Satin John's is the comradie between volunteers and the men Saint John's serves. It's nice to see everybody

together." Thank you, Nancy, for your warm smile and helping hands and for sharing your time with SJH and with our homeless brothers in need.



## Meet

### Jim Dowling:

"I'm motivated to come back by the good feeling it gives me; it's my way of giving back," says Jim Dowling. Jim has been volunteering at SJH for the past four years. He started as a volunteer at St. Francis Inn, where he was serving once a month. Eventually, Jim wanted to give back more frequently. That is when he found SJH. Jim can be found every Wednesday

on the floor talking with the men as he serves them their lunch. Thank you, Jim, for your kind heart, compassion and dedication to SJH and to those whom we serve.

## **In Loving Memory of Our Friends and Donors.... *Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.***

Philip Barr  
Jean Brev  
Joseph Burns  
Angeline Cammarota  
Angeline Cardile

Mary Carroll  
Regina Fitzgerald  
Dolores Gallagher  
Jack Janoski  
Tony Laughlin

John McCandless  
Joseph Orlando  
Edith O'Neill  
Ann Polek

Richard Riedel  
Patrick Smith  
Nicholas Varga  
Margaret E. Weitzel



## Saint John's Hospice

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**Visit us on the web!**

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

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WEST CHESTER, PA



Saint Mary Interparochial School Choir performs two songs at the SJH Truck Dedication and Blessing Ceremony.

For more details, see page 1.



Saturday, September 24, 2016 • Seven o'clock in the evening

**With Special Guest, NFL Hall of Fame Writer, Sportscaster,  
Radio Host and Award Winning Author, Ray Didinger**

**SJH Honors Back on My Feet  
as the 2016 SJH Partner in Mission Award Recipient**

**SJH Fall Fling Gala**

Philadelphia's Historic Reading Terminal Market

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

*Save the Date*