



# Saint John's Hospice Newsletter

March 2009

1221 Race St  
Philadelphia Pa 19107

215-563-7763

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

**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.**



**Helping those in need  
on behalf of those who care**

**Kevin Barr**  
Program Director

**David Stier**  
Operations Manager

**Iraina Salaam**  
Social Services Supervisor

**Gerry Huot**  
Volunteer & Community  
Relations Coordinator

**Anthony Willoughby**  
Food Services Manager

## Thank You!

By Kevin Barr, Program Director

If the only prayer you say in your entire life is 'Thank you' and you mean it – you have prayed enough. (Meister Eckhart)

When I am blessed to meet many of the Saint John's Hospice volunteers and donors I always try to look them in the eye and say "Thank you". Many times the response that I get is "No, I need to thank you and Saint John's for the opportunity to be of service here". They often continue by saying "I get so much more from being here and being present to the men who come through these doors than the time or donation that I give."

Every time I hear that response is another oppor-

tunity for me to practice gratitude. For what are we grateful for at Saint John's? We are grateful for the hundreds of homeless men who come to us each day. We are thankful for both their unique gifts and their wounds. These wounds have the possibility of becoming sacred wounds through our presence and God's grace. We express gratitude for all of our staff and volunteers who help us bring some kind of consistency and order out of life situations that are often unpredictable and, at times, chaotic.

We are so very grateful for our benefactors; all those who have made so many financial sacrifices to support our ministry over the years. We will be especially dependent upon these financial sacrifices this coming year in light of the economic downturn. This financial crisis has brought more men to our doors, less funding from public sources, and more pressure to those wonderful men and women who support us year in and out.

Our prayer is simply "Thank you" and we mean it. According to Meister Eckhart, a Dominican priest from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, we have prayed enough. May you find the grace today, to say, to breathe, to pray "thank you". May you have the opportunity to practice grateful living daily. What are you grateful for today?



**To be grateful is to recognize  
the Love of God in everything.**  
Thomas Merton

### Did you know? ...

**Mercy Hospice** at 334 S 13th St here in center city provides recovery housing and comprehensive services for homeless single women and women with children. They are our sister-shelter. They also provide day services, including a noon meal to about 40 women and children every day.

For volunteer and donor opportunities, please call **Deborah Kelly**, Volunteer & Community Relations Coordinator at 215-790-7549 or email her at [dekelly@chs-adphila.org](mailto:dekelly@chs-adphila.org).

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**United Way Donor  
Option #272**

**Combined Federal  
Campaign #25893**

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

## News Bits & Pieces ...



Miss **Joan Crawford** retired on October 31st after 20 years of service to Saint John's Hospice.

### A Former Resident Writes:

"Happy New Year—Jan 2009

"THE LORD PROVIDED. I remember standing in the cold, in a long line, many years ago. I was fed, I got to take a shower, and a roof, a bed to have for a few days. And I haven't forgotten St. John's. I live in New Jersey now. I'm on my own and making it work. The Lord has been looking out for me. Here's a small Thank You."

*In ordinary life we hardly realize that we receive a good deal more than we give, and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.*

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

### SJH Website Now Active

[www.saintjohnshospice.org](http://www.saintjohnshospice.org) went active in September. Credit goes to former Volunteer & Community Relations Coordinator **Beth Bresnan** and volunteer **Veronica Bilotti** for their fine work. **Franz Fruewald**, Catholic Human Services Chief Information Officer, sees it as "an attractive site that is easy to navigate and maintain."

Look for anything about Saint John's Hospice including:

- New Updates & Photos
- What we need
- Online "DONATE" button
- Casserole Recipes
- Instant "Contact Us" link

Please call or email with what you'd like to see—ask for Gerry at 215-563-7763 or email [ghuot@chs-adphila.org](mailto:ghuot@chs-adphila.org).

### AM1340 WHAT Christmas Promotion Benefits Saint John's Hospice

Were you listening? In addition to "the best music of all time", **AM1340 WHAT** radio promoted Saint John's Hospice and set up clothing donation boxes throughout the Philadelphia area. **Dave DiRenzo**, general sales manager for the station and a long time volunteer at SJH, spearheaded the promotion with the sentiment that "we can't live in our own world; we have to give back to the community."



**Charlie DeChristopher** of DeChristopher Bros Memorials and **Anthony Willoughby** load donations in SJH van.

Promotion partners were **DeChristopher Brothers Memorials**, **Prudential Savings Bank**, the **Marketplace at East Falls**, and **Springfield Ford Lincoln Mercury**. They hosted clothing and donation collection boxes. There was also a special promotion at a **LaSalle University** basketball game.

**Kevin Barr**, **Gerry Huot** and one of our residents were featured on-air. The station was instrumental in having Saint John's establish an on-line donation capability for our website.



Servant of Charity **Fr Paolo Oggioni** distributes ashes to lunch guests on Ash Wednesday. He offers Mass each week at SJH.



**Bishop Joseph R Cistone**, helped serve lunch on November 25th, shown here with **Anthony Willoughby**, SJH Kitchen Manager, **Joseph J Sweeney** and **John M Wagner** from the Secretariat of Catholic Human Services.

*We are never more than one grateful thought away from peace of heart.*

*Brother David Steindl-Rast*



Kwanzaa at SJH—spearheaded by **Iraina Salaam**, Social Services Supervisor. The feast included drums, gifts, and a Kwanzaa Quiz with prizes.



**Lisa**, **Jeanne**, **Mattie**, and **Irene** from A. S. Jenks School host a Birthday Celebration for SJH residents in December. They bring goodies and music, decorate the dining room and help serve four times a year ... honoring our men.

*Gratitude takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and to praise of the goodness of God.*

*Thomas Merton*

## Who Are You, Oh God? And Who Am I?

The two “who” questions above were repeated by Saint Francis of Assisi over and over again as he embraced “Lady Poverty”. We embrace Lady Poverty everyday at St John’s Hospice as we meet hundreds of homeless men and respond to them with both dignity and respect.

SJH has a distinctive Franciscan flavor. Brother Kip Ledger, OFM Cap has counseled and supported thousands of homeless men in the three years that he has ministered at Saint John’s. Two Capuchin postulants, Alan Trotter and Brian Stacy, have performed many varied duties—kitchen and mail room help, sorting and giving out clothes, and helping men get necessary identification—in the time that they have served here. A few blocks down the road is Saint John the Evangelist Church, run by Friar Frank Yacobi and several other Capuchin Friars. Their church and parishioners continue to support SJH through their poor box collection and their prayers.

The simple yet powerful image above helps capture how this Franciscan spirit resonates at Saint John’s Hospice. It depicts Saint Francis of Assisi kneeling on the ground.



His eyes are cast downward as he recognizes God’s Holy Spirit not in the sky but firmly rooted in the ground, in our ordinary lives.

We pray that all of us be graced with this earthy, inclusive Franciscan spirituality. When we ask these two questions—Who are you, Oh God, and Who am I?—may we recognize both God’s presence in the poor and His spirit in us calling us to respond to their needs. May all of us be aware of and connected to God’s loving spirit flowing in us, with us, and through our broken and blessed lives. And may all of us continue to support this special place that is Saint John’s Hospice with our time, our talent, our treasure and our prayers. Amen!

## Boot Drive Honors St John Neumann and Benefits SJH Residents

St John Neumann, Philadelphia’s fourth bishop, died in 1860 after (as legend has it) giving his shoes to a homeless man. In his honor, we solicit funds and provide boots to our residents each January near his feast day.

We were not able to procure Timberland boots this year. But we did obtain good quality waterproof boots that were very well received by all ... and saved money as well.



Boots ready for distribution to SJH residents in January in honor of St John Neumann, 4th Bishop of Philadelphia.

## Coffee House Celebrates 3rd Anniversary

Saint John’s Hospice Coffee House Program reached the three-year anniversary in March. This milestone was capped by a celebration on the night of March 12 that included Coffee House guests as well as SJH and archdiocesan staff.

Saint John’s Hospice **Coffee House** cares for 27 homeless men seven nights a week from 10 pm to 6 am. It opened in early 2006. It operates in the “yard”, the enclosed alley between the hospice and Good Shepherd Program residences. In addition to a heated area sheltered from weather and street traffic, the Coffee House offers staff support as well as snacks, beverages, and a restroom.

**Hanif Jackson** leads the Coffee House staff that includes **Raqueeb Dockery**, **Mustafa Brooks** and **Grady Savoy**. Hanif takes great satisfaction that we reach a population that doesn’t use the shelter system. He tells about one man who was accepted into and completed our residential program—he now has an apartment, a car, and two jobs.

“The difference between our Coffee House and other overnight programs is that we are

open seven nights a week. And it’s not just about coffee and donuts; we strive to help our men have the vision that that they can have so much more in life,” says Hanif. “We constantly help them get other services such as outpatient programs and housing opportunities. We also follow-up with our



SJH Coffee House guests pose with **Kevin Barr** (rear, 2nd from left); **Monsignor Timothy Senior** (rear right), Vicar for Clergy and Catholic Social Services Board Member; and **Jim Amato** (right), Deputy Secretary, Catholic Social Services.

consumers ... no other coffee house does this.” Hanif concludes that “my greatest wish is that we can continue to provide the needed services to address what men need to rebuild their lives, heal themselves, and see these results.”

Three men who had successfully moved out of the Coffee House program to our residential program spoke at the celebration. Two have since graduated from SJH into transitional housing. Each shared how much the Coffee House meant to them. They were all struggling desperately when they entered the yard and found the coffee house to be a great source of hope and support.

“Instead of giving them a piece of fish, we teach them how to fish,” says Hanif. “We plant the seeds knowing that we sometimes won’t see the harvest. What’s important is that the guys have a place where they can come and feel safe and loved.”

**Dave Stier**, SJH operations manager, characterizes the Coffee House as a place of hope. A small glimmer of hope is so important for men to pick themselves up and begin again.

# Saint John's Hospice



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*Helping those in need on behalf of those who care*

## Residents' Computer Lab

Steve Walenta has a passion for computers. He is a nine-year case manager at SJH and recently earned his Master of Social Work (MSW) degree.

Steve thought it would be good for our men to have computer access. The lab grew from donations to a point where a small investment for a DSL line (and a supportive administration) allows for seven computers that can access the internet at one time.

"Computers are not a luxury any more," says Steve. "The computer and the internet are more and more part of fully functioning life in modern society. For example, it is virtually impossible to search or apply for jobs without it. Providing access to homeless men has become essential to breaking their chains of homelessness."

The men at Saint John's have made the computer lab a hub of social and work activity. Case manager **Gerard Roldan** recently installed typing and reading programs. We are always looking at ways to improve computer literacy and help keep our men connected to society and their families.

## What a Glorious Season ...

By **Gerry Huot**  
*Volunteer & Community Relations Coordinator*

The Christmas season has blown me away. It was an honor and a humbling experience to see such an outpouring of generosity on the part of so many!

We saw gift of treasure, both in donations made directly to Saint John's Hospice as well as through our new "Donate" feature on our website.

There were the gifts of clothing and toiletries from individuals and as part of church or school or other groups. We received coats, underwear, hats, gloves, scarves, blankets, and food.

There was the gift of talent, especially with the musicians who graced our dining room throughout the Advent season leading to Christmas.

There was the gift of time with the groups who helped in our dining room as well as conducting drives, delivering to Saint John's Hospice, and sorting clothing and

other donations. The sad part was not being able to accommodate everyone who wanted to help.

Thank you to everyone. That comes not only from the staff here at Saint John's Hospice but from the hearts of those we serve.



***Every breath we draw is a gift of God's love; every moment of existence is a grace.***

**Thomas Merton**

guests but also from the lips of our many volunteers who offer so much. Somehow, we ourselves gain when we give.

One of my daily blessings is a gratefulness prayer waiting on my computer each morning. (I've sprinkled a sampling throughout this newsletter.) These reflections come from a free website, [www.gratefulness.org](http://www.gratefulness.org). I share and recommend it to you during our Lenten journey.