



# The Magnifier

...news from Magnificat Houses

Magnificat Houses, Inc. (MHI)

Fall, 2017

## Hurricane Harvey Trounces MHI Properties— Major Repairs Underway

Sustained hurricane force wind and driving rain variously damaged 12 MHI structures, with two more taking flood water. Yet, amid the flurry of repairs, our mission of housing and feeding the homeless continues.

### RISING WATER DAMAGE

Six inches of water penetrated **The Moran Center**, including our thrift store **The Mustard Seed**, our art studio, wood shop and work re-training areas, destroying a low bank of computers. **St. Joseph Clubhouse** basement took four feet of water and destroyed a recently upgraded air conditioning system. Flood waters also covered the hilly six-acre farm based campus of **Dona Marie Clubhouse**,



*FLOOD WATERS invaded our thrift store on Elgin (L) and service animal pens at Dona Marie Clubhouse (top), where roof damage was significant.*

filling the barn, claiming two beloved service animals and ruining needed heavy equipment. Water rose to the doorsteps of both

residential cottages and the main service building, sparing interiors. Roofs were another matter. The main building roof was the hardest hit—though quickly repaired thanks to an emergency grant from **Duquesne University**.

**Cityteam/San Jose** committed to replace one residential roof.

### WIND & RAIN DAMAGE

Most of our residences —primarily older houses built between 1930-1960— suffered roof damage. While **Anawim/ Sherman House** and **Lourdes Apartments** were hardest hit, another eight houses incurred serious leakage which penetrated ceilings, walls and electrical

*(Continued on Page 4)*

## MHI Joins Judge Emmett's Jail Diversion Program

**County Judge Ed Emmett** has invited MHI's participation in the **Harris County Mental Health Jail Diversion Program**, much in keeping with our founding mission to help the mentally troubled live normal lives in community. County statistics show a high percentage of petty crimes are committed by the mentally ill, many of whom come from unhealthy neighborhood situations vulnerable to drug culture crimes—and highly vulnerable to recidivism. Emmett's office considers releasing such prisoners into MHI's welcoming community ideal as family style support systems and Clubhouse mental health programs are already in place.



While MHI has long welcomed such ex-offenders into our 90-day transitional program, offering shared bedrooms, the County program requires single room occupancy (SRO) facilities as a permanent housing solution. Scheduled for SRO conversion are spaces in **Maranatha House** and **Bethany House** for men, and in **Anawim House** for women.

The new residents will follow Magnificat's usual pathway to independence through community support, a focus on work reentry, and supervised prescription drug delivery.



**COME GET YOUR WINGS!**  
(See Page 4)

**SUCCESS STORY: Gina**  
(See Page 2)

## SUCCESS STORY:

# Resident Gina Monti Hits the Ground Running—or Pedaling

When spirited Gina heard the great news—pizza was being donated to our soup kitchen on a usually closed evening—she quickly hopped on her bike and alerted every homeless encampment and hangout in pedaling distance of downtown. Pizza is a rare treat among Houston’s hungry and she didn’t want to miss a soul.

Gina could relate, having been through some extremely rough times. Her father’s pancreatic cancer had left them both homeless—not a possibility she ever imagined coming from a stable single-parent home in the Houston Heights and harboring aspirations of college and career. After her father’s death, Gina felt hopeless and alone. She floundered between couch surfing and living in her van, eventually connecting with bad company and “making some very bad choices.” Soon she was coping with addiction, jail time, illness and—the last straw—physical abuse. **Magnificat Houses** was on her radar—she had considered volunteering here long before her troubles began and several



times was offered a job by a Clubhouse Director, the late Ron Gregory. Now she found herself in jail, taking a hard look at herself, when a Catholic chaplain gave her an invitation to live at Magnificat. After so many years of running, she felt a call from God. Now in safe and supportive company, Gina accepted culpability for her choices and straightened out her life in residency. She’s still here, by enthusiastic choice.

Never losing sight of her early calling—to help the afflicted and the less fortunate—Gina seems hard-wired for success as she holds several posts at Magnificat. As assistant manager of **Myriam’s Hostel**, which provides temporary shelter for women chronically living on the streets, Gina offers unconditional love and support as she sends them out each morning to face their challenging day. She also serves as Facebook editor/writer/photographer for **MHI, Loves & Fishes, The Mustard Seed**, and staff photographer for this publication. In her “spare time” she is a researcher for the forthcoming hard-bound book celebrating Magnificat’s 50-year. For so many here, Gina is merely indispensable.

## Magnificat Community Retreat Signals A Deepening Spiritual Commitment

The 2017 WATCH Retreat drew community members from many denominations and perspectives to engage in a deeper study of MHI’s ongoing message of service. The challenging exploration into personal and institutional values was co-led by the Brothers of St. Dismas and the Sisters of St. Mary Magdalene and hosted by St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic Community. **It’s theme:** “Through Love, with Love, in Love and service to others, you will experience a renewed meeting with Jesus!”

Deacon Denny Hayes led attendees in a personal exploration into key spiritual questions,

among them: *How can we deepen our relationship with God? How can we help others grow spiritually by giving of ourselves in apostolic action? How can we inspire and encourage each other to grow in our*



*acts of service to God and to one another? As laity, how can we vibrantly bring these messages to our community and the world at large?*

Participant Gina Monti noted the group strengthened its commitment—taken directly from the Magnificat Houses Constitution—“to promote the full development of the individual as a member of the people of God.”

St. Maximilian’s, based in Houston, is a 25-year friend of Magnificat, whether volunteering at **Loaves & Fishes**, providing holiday celebrations and cookouts for the community at **St. Joseph House**, or nourishing our apostolate through the annual retreat. MHI is grateful to the people of St. Max for their frequent and loving examples of apostolic action.

## Kindness Thrives in Harvey’s Wake

Two Pennsylvania based international aid groups, new to MHI, stepped up quickly after the hurricane to assure continuance of our services to the poor.

**The Spiritans**, an outreach of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit Province of the U.S., donated emergency funds at the behest of our Executive Director John Boyles, who leads the group’s Houston chapter.

**The Relief Foundation**, a non-profit serving people and areas which have experienced great hardship due to forces beyond their control, flew in 25 volunteers from all around the country to pitch in at **MHI, Loaves & Fishes**, and **Dona Marie and St. Joseph Clubhouses**.



For those in need, they brought with them hundreds of pairs of new shoes.



# Heartfelt thanks to volunteers who make our work possible!



Clutch City Foundation



Texas Modified Dolls

Matthew's Ministries celebrated the Astros big win at Loaves & Fishes



Up In Smoke (R) brought briskets all the way from Minnesota.

Others from Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and many Texas cities, brought food and helping hands.



Some came with checks, some with food, some with clothing and goods, others with a labor force to help with repairs. All came in love and kindness. Many thanks to these volunteers and others not pictured. You touched so many lives with your generosity.



Texas Southern University Alumni Chapter



Washington Gym



Brown Bag Project



St. Thomas High School



Incarnate Word Academy



Hurricane Harvey Emergency Crews cheerfully tackled the dirty jobs



Prove You're an Angel Once and for All!



Bring your family to our **Anawim Thrift Shop**, where wings are artfully supplied (no worthiness tests required). By shop- per request, our resident artist Sonny Levario will add a kid's version to our store front. Consider bringing along any unwanted "stuff" cluttering your domain. Anawim has a special mission to serve a low income area with affordable—sometimes free—clothing and household goods, so your donations and purchases serve a heavenly cause.

**ANAWIM THRIFT STORE**  
**2102 Common Street**  
Monday-Saturday, 10-4

We pick up estates and big stuff:

**713-524-7333**



*Save the Date: October 6, 2018*



**A SEA OF GALA PLANNERS**  
*lend their considerable talents to rock our 50th Anniversary.*

**Mayor Sylvester Turner has inked us in! Have you?**

## Hurricane Harvey (continued)

equipment, requiring new sheetrock and paint, wood replacement under eaves and on window casements and railings and, in some cases, electrical repairs.

### ***But We're Thankful!***

None of our residents suffered displacement. Our **Loaves & Fishes** soup kitchen downtown, despite minor damage, was running within four days (while our usual guests dined free with refugees at the Brown Convention Center). Volunteers and staff at **The Mustard Seed** hoisted hundreds of for-sale items to high ground, restored others, and opened the store within three days. Fortunately we have been able to handle some smaller repairs in-house, in keeping with our mission to empower residents through work-based training (in building trades and furniture and home rehabilitation). But major repairs will require help—and prayers!

### ***You Can Help***

By donating your time, money or building materials. Please contact Director of Volunteers Larry Cronin:

**lcronin@mhihouston.org. Thank you!**

## **DONATE**

Kindly visit our website:

**[www.mhihouston.org](http://www.mhihouston.org)**

*(same site, new web address)*

Or use the enclosed envelope.

Please write your check to:

**Magnificat Houses, Inc.**

## **VOLUNTEER**

Contact Larry Cronin  
Director of Volunteers  
[lcronin@mhihouston.org](mailto:lcronin@mhihouston.org)

**Visit Us, Like Us,  
Follow Us!**

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[SJH.Clubhouse/](#)  
[DMClubhouse/](#)

## **THRIFT STORES:**

***Shop or Donate***

The Mustard Seed, 1410 Elgin  
Anawim Thrift Shop, 2102 Common

**We pick up estates: 713-524-7333**



*The Magnifier* is published quarterly by Magnificat Houses, Inc. Casey Kelly, editor; Jerrell Jones and Gina Monti, staff photographers. Volunteers may submit their photos to [ckelly@mhihouston.org](mailto:ckelly@mhihouston.org).