



The Magnifier

...news from Magnificat Houses

Magnificat Houses, Inc.

Houston, Texas

Summer, 2017

LOAVES & FISHES TACKLES CITY'S EVENING FOOD GAP

Soup Kitchen Manager **Ron Graham** has longed for the funding to add evening meals at **Loaves & Fishes**, which serves about 250 free hot lunches a day to Houston's hungry. Dinner is harder to come by around Houston, with most city and service organizations closed, and many find themselves going hungry or foraging for a bite.



Cloydia Garrett and soup kitchen diners give thanks for L&F's first evening meal service.

This summer Ron's prayers were answered when several organizations stepped up to cover an evening at L&F either regularly, inter-

mittently or just once. L & F volunteer **Cloydia Garrett** committed to covering our food shortfall for Tuesday and Thursday nights, naming her personal mission **Christ Rose**; then she enlisted friend **Lynn Gomes**, who set up the **Humanist Food Pantry** to donate food for every other

Wednesday evening. A **Golden Heart** organization, through volunteer **Sherri Borten** has just pledged foods for the first Saturday of every month.

The Shepard Foundation's Nicki Shepard stepped up to offer a onetime Sunday evening pizza event, served personally by her son **Russell Shepard**, Carolina Panther wide end receiver and special teamer.



Panther **RUSSELL SHEPARD** journeyed from North Carolina for the privilege of serving pizza—diner's choice—to high scores from all.

Ron is optimistic that more individuals and organizations will decide to sponsor food for one or more evenings. "The structure is in place—we have the staff,

the facility, the utensils and a location well known to the hungry. All we need now are the angels." **Interested in contributing funds, food or services for an extra evening feeding? Please contact Director of Volunteers Larry Cronin (lcronin@mhihouston.org).**

New Executive Director Takes MHI Helm; Brings Business & Non-Profit Experience

After an extensive search, the Board of Directors has named Houston native **John Boyles** as Executive Director of **Magnificat Houses, Inc.**, responsible for executing our strategic vision as we enter into our 50th year of service to the homeless, the hungry, and the mentally ill. Assisted by **John Reece, Evans Neucere and Willie Madden**, John will lead all operations, finance and development efforts. He brings vast business experience to MHI as previous Director of Business Development and Marketing for **Artisan Field, Inc.**, a major cor-



John Boyles

porate marketing and branding firm. John also co-founded the Catholic non-profit enterprise, **Saint Basil Coffee**, an organic fair trade coffee distributor supporting world Catholic missions. Sparked by volunteering at our own **Loaves & Fishes** when he was just 13, John has dedicated most of his life to faith and service, including 18 years of diverse pastoral counseling and ministry leadership in parishes within the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and has extensive experience directing international mission projects. John holds bachelor's and master degrees from St. Thomas University.

Microsoft Offers MHI Digital Training



MHI STAFFERS were gifted with ongoing digital software training by the Microsoft Store/Galleria; MS employees also pitched in "a day of service" at our soup kitchen and main campus. (See back page.)

SUCCESS STORY—

Horace Anderson's Long Walk to Achieve Just Twelve Steps

For the fourth straight morning, **Horace** woke up in his car parked in a homeless enclave near Herman Park. Today would *have* to be different, he told himself. He had been enslaved first by drug addiction and managed to overcome it when gambling addiction took hold and cost him his apartment, livelihood, and girlfriend. The Men's Center had helped him before, but he'd never really believed in the required 12 Step Program. (Little did he know that only a year later he'd be *founding* an Alcoholics

Anonymous group and *leading* its 12 Step Program.)

This bleak morning, Horace felt the Lord was telling him to drive directly to **Magnificat Houses**. On the way, he ran out of gas, abandoned his car and started walking, repeating: *this time I'm going to tell the absolute truth to everyone*. When he met with Director of Housing **Deacon Martin**, he poured out his tribulations along with a full admission of his current and past addictions, about the gambling that replaced drugging, about the drug-related amnesia that once had him committed to a mental hospital, about the car wreck that had him declared dead—within his own hearing. He was ready to leave

all that unnecessary drama behind.

Deacon Martin assured him if he was ready to give service to others, though work at MHI, he would be helped. Horace loved work, all kinds of work, and the next day he plunged himself into whatever was needed: serving with the MHI work team at Toyota Center and other event venues at night and, by day, working in food service, then as a driver (delivering residents to medical appointments, picking up goods). His excellence in small and large tasks, organizational abilities, and his upbeat attitude lead to his appointment as House Manager of **Rosary House**, where he was in service 24/7. To that, he has added the 24/7 task of MHI Food Service Manager. To some eyes, that's 48/7 (and that's how Horace likes it).



In Rosary House, our ex-offender mission, Horace counsels willing new resident Jeremy.

So when Father Frank asked his help to found an on-campus AA group, Horace said yes—it was obviously God's will for

him. "God has always been my best friend," Horace says. "All my life he's shown me exactly what I needed to do to save myself." And if that meant leading a 12 Step Program...well, it was time to surrender.

In Memorial RON GREGORY 1944 - 2017

The MHI Community will miss Ron's cheerful nature and quick wit, and above all his reverence for friendship and energetic support of others. To our Missionary Sisters of the Eucharist, Ron will always be known as "big brother"—his was the first smile they saw when they got off the plane from Guatemala.



Ron arrived at Magnificat in the mid-90's, in recovery from music business excesses.

*Founder **Rose Mary Badami** quickly recognized his outstanding talents and soon named him Assistant Director, involved in all aspects of keeping a non-profit afloat. In 2000 Ron became the first Director of **St. Joseph Clubhouse**, serving until 2007 when his mother's death prompted his relocation. In 2013, ill and needing our support, he returned to live in **Dismas House**, offering love and encouragement to other residents until his death on July 16.*

Duchesne House Sparkles & Purrs Thanks to 'Adoption' Committee

For five years, the Duchesne Committee, a secular SWAT team, has been identifying human scale needs in the Houston area and unleashing their considerable skills and dedication to solutions. Current lucky recipient of their collective zeal is MHI's Duchesne House, our residential home on Sherman Street serving once-displaced women, many of whom have dealt with severe poverty or mental illness, some spending nights on the streets.

MHI Volunteers **Tissie Bean** and **Jane Hayman** proposed that "Duchesne adopt Duchesne" to quick approval by their Committee: after all, they shared a patron saint. While some members donated new twin beds, bedding, and funded supplies, **Debra Pletscher** and husband **Werner** stepped up to organize and actualize the hands-on tasks. Though floors were clean (the residents do their own housework) they were impossibly worn and stained; storage areas overfull and in need of culling; air conditioning, dishwasher and toilets needing repairs, and more.



Werner and Debra Pletscher, early adopters, heavy lifters.

Then there was **Precious**, the residents' beloved but feisty neighborhood cat in dire need of neutering. Jane provided trapping and delivery to BARC, where volunteer veterinarian **Erin O'Toole** kindly took Precious into custody, and behold: "He's a lot calmer, eating better, and now he lets us pet him," resident **Sylvia Wilson** effuses. She was triply thrilled when Jane managed to capture...

(continued on back page)

Special thanks to volunteer groups which make our work possible!



Our Lady of Walsingham brought us 42 young fence painters



St. Maximillian Kolbe cooks out Memorial Day + July 4th



Ritual feet washing offered by St. Simon & St. Jude at soup kitchen



Islamic women study group befriends LSF



Notre Dame hosts cookout for residents and members



Anaheim Thrift Shop got welcome AC relief as volunteers who built out new frames for new donated unit. Thanks!

Incarnate Word and St. Thomas high schools team up for Home Missions Magnificat day.



Second Servings delivers heavenly breads to LSF.



Ron Castro shepherds students from 7 area schools for soup kitchen bench painting.



Super volunteers feted at our thrift stores: Mustard Seed open house night (left and below) and Anaheim feast (right).





Save the Date To Celebrate!

MHI's 50th Anniversary **Gala Committee** has acted early to assure our event scheduled on **Friday, October 6, 2018**, is pure gold. Yes, our gala is more than a year away, but that makes time to mark our calendars in *ink!* Many thanks to **Artisan Field, Inc.**, for assisting with our Gala logo, which depicts one of the historical images representing Magnificat over the years: a seedling being replanted by loving hands. Volunteer opportunities are available; contact **Suzanne Young** mhigala@yahoo.com

Meanwhile, the **Book Committee** is pouring over our archives to write and publish a commemorative history of Magnificat Houses. If you have memories or contacts to enhance the book, we would love to hear from you! Please contact one of our book co-chairs **Martin Matulia** (mmatulia@mhihouston.org) or **Casey Kelly** (ckelly@mhihouston.org or 713-446-5226).

STAFF CHANGES

Kevin Campbell, Director of St. Joseph Clubhouse
Sr. Agnes, Director of Dona Marie Clubhouse
Ron Graham, Manager of Loaves & Fishes

Microsoft (cont'd)

After touring Magnificat, Microsoft's **Tiffany Njoku** and **L'Neece Fitts** generously arranged extended MS Office training sessions—beginning and advanced—for office staff and included residents in our work retraining programs.

"This greatly helps those reentering the work force gain a solid foothold in today's most universally used software," said MHI Board Chairman Rafael Garcia, "and significantly increases our staff efficiency while we endeavor to support the underserved."

Participants gave their MS trainers rave reviews for personal attention and patience in assuring all, regardless of skills level, gained new computer skills and an increased understanding of programs they were using inefficiently.

"It was downright empowering," said **Larry Burt**, transportation manager.

The Magnifier is published quarterly by Magnificat Houses, Inc. Casey Kelly, editor; Jerrell Jones and Gina Monti, staff photographers. Volunteers may submit photos to ckelly@mhihouston.org.

Four Ways to Help Us Help Others ...and thanks for asking!

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VOLUNTEER

Contact Larry Cronin
 Director of Volunteers
 lcronin@mhihouston.org

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Duchesne Adoption (cont'd)

...feral felines **Inky, Smokey and Raven**, persecutors of Precious, and paid another visit to Erin O'Toole. The whole neighborhood grew calmer. The Duchesne Committee plans more quality-of-life contributions in the future...not involving cats.

The patron saint shared by Duchesne House and the Committee is **St.**

Rose Philippine Duchesne, who emigrated to America in 1818, determined to build solidarity and unity among marginalized populations, especially American Indians, women, the elderly and the poor. "She was the perfect model for us," Jane said, "We share her determination and her desire to channel God's love in real life, human situations." The

Duchesne Committee originated from alums of **Sacred Heart Academy** determined to perpetuate its core value: *social awareness that impels to action*; now the group includes their families and friends. Over the years, many individual members have volunteered at our soup kitchen or Clubhouses and donated needed items large and small.



Sylvia Wilson and Precious Himself