



The Magnifier

...news from Magnificat Houses

Magnificat Houses, Inc. (MHI)

Winter 2021

Our 'Multi-Purpose Center' Makes Progress Possible (on a dime)

Frees Space for More Affordable Housing

Our spacious Housing Admissions Center opened on January 3rd at 1410 Elgin, a bright and uplifting space where applicants can wait comfortably—in new lobby furniture donated by Waste Management. This stands in stark contrast to our cramped temporary offices on Austin Street, which afforded only outdoor bench seating and zero social distancing.

The move also opens some of our Austin Street apartments for conversion to much sought-after “affordable housing”—now in progress with other spaces in planning stages

When Covid forced our unexpected office move to meet county mandates, the Moran Center—and many volunteers—came to the rescue. Our staff ably accomplished this major move in-house without further fundraising. Our founder’s vision proved prescient: she had raised funds for “a multi-purpose building” to meet MHI’s changing needs as we strive to meet society’s ever evolving needs. Major foundations enrolled in her vision and, with generous individual donors, brought the Moran Center to fruition in 2012. We appreciate their generosity each and every day!



Winter Blackout & Freeze Hits Our Houses Hard!

As we go to press, the historic Texas winter storm’s impact on MHI begins to emerge:

- *Six of our houses and one apartment incurred ice or water damage and require significant plumbing repairs or replacement; additional repairs are needed for St. Joseph Clubhouse.*
- *We are working to replace our depleted food stores and water supply.*
- **On a warm note:** *Throughout, our food services staff continued supplying all our houses and our downtown soup kitchen. Loaves & Fishes served 798 hot meals during the storm, and before and after, distributed 966 donated blankets, 860 sets of hats, gloves and sox. On Monday, when the kitchen is usually closed, a single guest volunteer managed to create 68 hot meals to serve those who showed up hungry amid the bitter sleet.*

Please help if you can! www.mhihouston.org/donate

MHI CELEBRATES GINA MONTI (Virtual Hugs Are Not Enough!)



The office staff gathered to watch Gina Monti’s virtual graduation from Houston Community College on December 11th as she gained an Associates Degree in Business with highest honors, having been inducted into the National Society of Leadership and Success, Phi Theta Kappa, and National Society for Collegiate Scholars.

In 2014 Gina came to Magnificat needing housing and distance from her rebellious teenage years when bad company and bad choices, she says, sent her down a dark road and a drug related arrest. Now she was ready for change, ready to reinstate the dreams of her youth, when she had high hopes for a productive and meaningful life. For nearly seven years here, she eagerly volunteered wherever needed, and served as house leader, driver, special assistant to Fr. Frank, serving at our thrift shop, and our downtown soup kitchen. She frequently spent the night upstairs at Myriam’s Hostel, called to personally guide these temporary guests—women who chronically lived in the street—toward healthy practices and the possibility of moving to Magnificat.



Gina offered to work on The Magnifier, soon becoming an indispensable photographer, reporter, and social media specialist. Chosen as assistant editor and researcher for

the 50th Anniversary hardbound history of Magnificat, she contributed her essay “She,” which heartbreakingly documents the cares and fears of the anonymous women who live on the street. After publication, Gina enrolled in the Weekend College at HCC—starting with calculus! Today, she is working on a second Associates Degree in World Languages while teaching English online.

Gina joins the annals of MHI “Success Stories” which features previous guests who, against all odds, have made personal leaps toward independence. Their presence teaches us and makes us stronger and more loving, and they leave behind a world of hope for those beginning their journeys here.

FOOD SERVICES MOVES UP:
Once quartered in the basement of Maranatha House, these guest volunteers are thrilled with their larger, more mainstream service area in the west wing of the Moran Center. These guys helped move and organize thousands of canned and boxed goods and other donated items used throughout our mission.



Meanwhile, at Loaves & Fishes...

These days our downtown soup kitchen consistently feeds 330-350 meals daily, and notes growing evidence of family hardship due to high unemployment and other Covid side-effects. We thank the individuals, churches and companies who volunteer service here, and the schools who urge their students to practice compassion through service under our wing.

Meanwhile, at St. Joseph’s Clubhouse...

The Clubhouse *never* closes. Despite the temporary cessation of in-person services (Covid rules) our staff works full time staying in touch with active members and reaching out to less active members who may have fallen into depression or regression. From our February 2020 closure to date, staff has made 3,650 points of contact by Zoom, phone and social media, to help with issues from loneliness to crisis vents—whatever is needed: involving other agencies, assisting with housing, clothing (we had a cold weather drive), delivering 50 Christmas surprises and gift cards to members, and supporting a dying member. Our members know they are loved and essential to our community.

**WILLIAM ‘WILL’
STONE
1952-2021**

A Memorial Mass and gathering celebrated the life of Will Stone on January 14th in our Visitation Chapel.

Will’s fellow Clubhouse members mourn Bill’s passing. His upbeat spirit and sense of humor energized all who knew him, as was recognized in affectionate eulogies by the Clubhouse leadership and staff.



Meanwhile, at Anawim Thrift Shop...

Anawim’s Angels helped complete our big thrift store consolidation, with all donated goods moved to their sphere to sort and reorganize...then these motivated volunteers made time to provide this poor neighborhood with two community Christmas events.



Shop open Mondays through Saturdays, 10am-4pm
2102 Common St., Houston, TX 77009, 832-831-4196



Our Coziest Christmas Ever!

*...but undaunted by masks and mandates,
we brought Christmas merriment to the houses
with caroling and gifts*

Susanna House



Morning Star House



Emmaus House



*...and elbow bumps instead of hugs
(for now)*

Lourdes Court



Rosary House



Donna Marie House

Dismas House



Ignatius House

Guvanina House

Susanna Courtyard



Bethany House



Ave Maria House



...so many circles of love



MHI RESPONDS TO CITY HOUSING CRISIS



MHI is responding to the increasing demand for affordable housing which has swelled exponentially during the pandemic, as the new homeless—the unemployed, underemployed and low income—priced out of every safe and livable market. Our operations team has been sprucing up six sizable, dignified apartments on Austin Street, ready to welcome new residents to join our community, make new friends and participate in our holiday events—

which will resume when safe for all.

'Chaz' Dropped by the Housing Offices...



...to bid a fond farewell to the housing team who helped him turn his life around. Foreign born, Chaz gained a USA job with an international contractor where he worked for 17 years until his job was abolished. After a rough patch, in 2019 he turned to MHI for support, with a passion to give back. Soon promoted to house leader for our largest house, Maranatha, he helped others stabilize and move forward. Chaz leaves us for an excellent international job! God speed, dear friend.

The Magnifier is published quarterly by Magnificat Houses, Inc. Casey Kelly, editor; Gina Monti, communications assistant. Tribute donations are recognized quarterly. Submit photos and news items to ckelly@mhihouston.org.

DONATE ANYTIME: www.mhihouston.org/donate

Save the Date!

April 27, 2021

...to meet us under the apple tree!

Tuesday, 6-9 p.m.
at Houston's own
apple cidery & brewery
City Orchard
for an evening of
fun, friends, eats, music,
and flights of fresh brew
or whatever! Safe mingling
inside or in the courtyard
(watch silent films, walk a labyrinth!)

Mini-Auction & Tickets to Benefit
Magnificat Houses, Inc.

Would you enjoy volunteering to help with this event?
Contact Annette Pieniazek: apieniazek@mhihouston.org

Staff Advances Human Resources Training

Our housing and administrative staff is enrolled in the 30-hour Grace Hill Vision online training course in **Fair Housing & Beyond**—which covers compliance practices and law, and topics such as fair housing, sexual harassment, diversity and inclusion, workplace safety and more. Grace Hill is the nationally recognized leader in training built specifically for multifamily professionals.

Magnificat Houses has merited the GuideStar Gold Seal of Transparency, which allows nonprofit donors and funders to make educated decisions.



Thank you for your loving support of our mission!



Our sisters cooked up 500 tamales, tied each with a corn husk bow, and delivered a package to every guest.