



# The Magnifier

...news from Magnificat Houses

Magnificat Houses, Inc. (MHI)

Summer 2022



*Anticipating a full house, James "makes beds."*

## Gifts for MHI Housing Initiative Bring Ten Beds Back Online

Down for serious restoration over many months, **Scanlan House**, our sizable classic two-story on Stuart Street, re-opened its doors in August to welcome ten new residents—some new to MHI, some transferring from **Ave Maria House**, where rehabbing is underway. On a rotating basis, we are necessarily upgrading and restoring all our houses for the long haul—with the help of generous donors.

Imagine the wear and tear: Since 1976, **Scanlan** has been full, and in continuous occupancy, often serving as our emergency intake home and principal prison release center. For much of our history, temporarily shutting down Scanlan, or any of our 15 aging houses, was simply unthinkable as, daily, we sought to place the dozens of desperate people literally at our door.



*Newcomers welcome!*

Next scheduled for turnaround are **Ave Maria** and **Guvannina** houses, their repair costs pledged by a private donor. Generous individuals also donated for upgrades to Scanlan, which also enjoys the annual support of the **Scanlan Foundation** for routine maintenance and other needs through our **Adopt-a-House** program.

**Which house will be fourth?** We hope someone who cares deeply

about homelessness will step up and make the fourth one possible.

**To learn more about donating or adopting a house, please contact MHI Development Director Annette Pieniazek ([apieniazek@mhihouston.org](mailto:apieniazek@mhihouston.org)).**

### New Leadership at MHI:

## Seasoned Nonprofit Executive Takes MHI Helm on Sept. 6

After a three-month search, the MHI Board has enthusiastically selected **Victor Hay**, a 30-year veteran of Houston homeless and mental health service organizations, to serve as Executive Director of Magnificat Houses. "We are fortunate to welcome a leader who is not only well-versed in serving our target populations, both as leader and as counselor, but who also understands the nonprofit and service agency worlds," said Board Chair Suzanne Young.



**VICTOR HAY**

Hay joins MHI directly from **Covenant House TX**, also a faith-based nonprofit, where for 21 years he has created and led major programs as Lead Operations Director. Covenant's mission is to give homeless youths (age 18-24) a safe haven where they're shown absolute respect, unconditional love, and a path to lasting independence—which complements Magnificat's 54 year mission with men and women over 18. Both nonprofits see training programs, another of Hay's strengths, as key to helping the displaced plan for independence. For nine prior years, Hay served as caseworker, then case manager, at **MHMRA** (now the Harris Center), where he was steeped in the intricacies of serving the mentally ill.

Hay holds a Master of Arts degree in counseling from **Prairie View A&M University**, gained while working at MHMRA, and a Bachelor of Science degree in criminal justice from **Lamar University** in Beaumont.

After high school in The Woodlands, Hay accepted a track scholarship to Lamar where he intended to study law. But a different calling was waiting for him—counseling—which he discovered when employed by a Spring, Texas, group home. He now knew what he really wanted: to make a difference in the world. To change it for the better.

# In Our Ministries...

## Loaves & Fishes

Soup Kitchen Manager **Richard Dang** brings a new culinary consciousness to our time honored kitchen: he holds a certificate from the International Culinary Institute of New York and, importantly, cheffed for a major NYC soup kitchen.

**MEALS NUMBERS STILL INCREASING:** Through July 2022, L&F served 66,208 meals, an increase of 4,631 meals over the same year-to-date period in 2021.

### Volunteers Needed Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays

Might your organization pledge to cover one of these hard-to-staff days?

Volunteers arrive at 2009 Congress at 8:30 a.m., assist in preparing and/or serving meals and clean-up, and are free by 11 a.m. Contact Larry Cronin: [LCronin@mhihouston.org](mailto:LCronin@mhihouston.org)



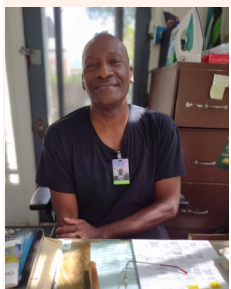
## St. Joseph Clubhouse

Annually, Clubhouse Members look forward to their important advocacy outreach during May, **National Mental Health Month**. Members design and make advocacy materials, such as teeshirt logos and individual signs expressing their ideas about dealing positively with mental health issues. May 21 saw members and staff gathered in force in Sam Houston Park to participate in **NAMI Walks Your Way 2022**, organized by the Greater Houston Chapter of NAMI. **The National Alliance on Mental Illness** is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. **St. Joseph Clubhouse** also participated in the **Harris Center Mental Health Fair**.



## Housing

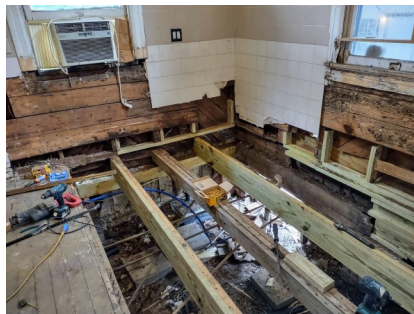
### Scanlan House Update (scenes from Restoration Purgatory)



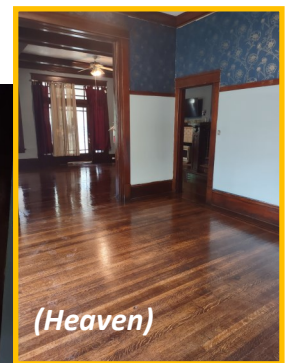
The welcoming face of **Scanlan House** is its affable peer leader **Clifton Ross**, a veteran who gained full employment through MHI's partnership with NVOP\* — yet stays on to

help others coming off the street to re-structure their lives. A nine-year resident, Clifton previously led **Ave Maria House** while volunteering enthusiastically at our soup kitchen.

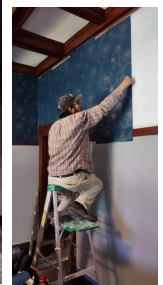
\*National Veterans Outreach Program



*Kitchen stripped to its bones, awaiting cabinets created in-house*

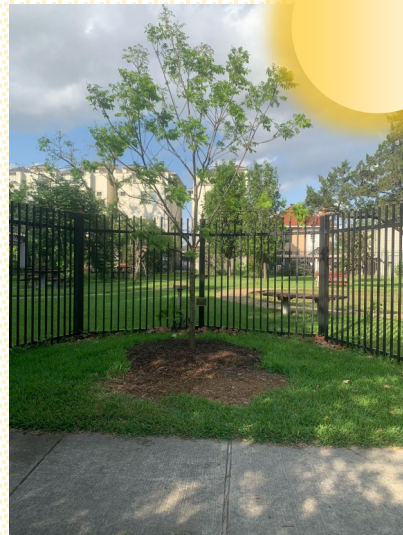


*(Heaven)*



## Department of Answered Prayers

Without fanfare, our quiet neighbor Alfredo Gutierrez honored his mother Maria by fixing an aesthetics problem well outside our modest budget: Some years back, the fence around Brenner Park, our refuge for Clubhouse members, was crushed when lightning felled our giant sycamore tree. A section of the hand-made iron fence was crushed beyond repair and, frankly, an eyesore. Mr. Gutierrez not only had the fence repaired and the stump removed, but planted a young pecan tree. He writes that he and his mother “would often walk around the neighborhood while she was in Houston getting cancer treatments at MD Anderson, and we would also often stop and pray outside the fence of St Joseph House.” We are honored to host this pecan tree in memory of **Maria de Lourdes Gutierrez**.



*Ascend Cares Foundation, supporters since 2019, put in an energetic Service Day then presented Loaves & Fishes with a generous check. Thank you!*



*The 4th of July and other summer gatherings were forced indoors by record temperatures—but we found fun anyway.*



**SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS ALL**—one volunteer and two MHI staffers completed advanced training at the Holy Name Passionist Retreat Center.



*Gina Monti works with HCC on issues of student homelessness and works to bring student talent volunteer opportunities at MHI.*

*At Café Catholica at the Catholic Charismatic Center, our sisters aim to interest young people in our Matthew 25-based mission.*



*Residents, members and staff celebrate together for holidays, birthdays and special occasions.. This time, farewell to Janice.*

# Staff Notes



**CYNTHIA ROGERS**, our new Housing Manager, brings deep experience with street populations and the mentally ill, having recently served the **Salvation Army** as supervising case manager in the diversion program and, for 11 years prior, worked for the Houston Housing Authority.

**ERIKA VASQUEZ** joins us Supportive Services Program Manager. She holds accounting degrees from the University of Valle in Colombia. Bilingual, Erika is a certified Life Coach with expertise in the Prison Entrepreneurship Program. She recently was certified as Spiritual Director.



**GINA MONTI**, Development & Communications Assistant officially joins MHI's staff after eight years volunteering across all our departments. Gina is photographer and assistant editor for this publication. Gina holds two degrees with honors from HCC, and continues work toward her BA.

**LET'S GO KROGERING!** Magnificat Houses, Inc., has enrolled in the Kroger Community Rewards Program. You can benefit MHI's works by linking in your Plus Shopper's Card at the secure website [krogercommunityrewards.com](http://krogercommunityrewards.com). Thank you!

*The Magnifier* is published quarterly by Magnificat Houses, Inc. Casey Kelly, editor; Gina Monti, assistant editor/photographer. Tribute donations are recognized quarterly. Submit photos and news items to [ckelly@mhihouston.org](mailto:ckelly@mhihouston.org). We respect the privacy of those in our care; persons pictured have offered their consent.

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

[Giving Back](#)

## Thrift Store Cites 'Godsend' Volunteer

**Cirilo Castenada**, a former resident and refugee from Houston streets, completed his MHI training program, including an energizing stint developing his customer service skills at



nearby **Anawim Thrift Store**—just as the busy 2020 holiday season approached. Within two months, the Harris Center moved him farther away into an apartment of his own. Cirilo missed the MHI community and wanted to say thank you for all the blessings he received at MHI, especially the guidance of house leaders and the loving community while he got his life together. The Anawim staff couldn't believe their good fortune when their friend Cirilo came back to volunteer nearly full time.

### *Free Donations Pick-Up Service!*

Anawim Thrift Store has teamed up with a veterans-run delivery service to simplify donating household goods. To place a pick-up order through our website:

<http://mhihouston.org/how-to-help/support-our-thrift-stores>.

**Click on the pop-up truck!**



Platinum  
Transparency  
2022

**Candid.**

*The Better Business Bureau* recognizes MHI's consistently low overhead—under 10%—meaning more donor dollars go to our services to the poor and mentally ill. MHI also merits **Candid's GuideStar Platinum Seal of Transparency**, which allows nonprofit donors and funders to make educated decisions.

*Thank you for your loving support of our mission!*



**Many months in coming, the extensive repairs to Scanlan House finally reach the fun part: aesthetics.**