



The Magnifier

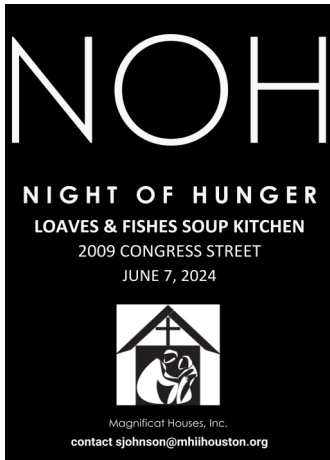
...news from Magnificat Houses

Magnificat Houses, Inc. (MHI)

Winter 2024

New Year, New Opportunities

Night of Hunger to Raise Empathy, Awareness and Funds



A **Night of Hunger**, will take place at MHI's [Loaves & Fishes Soup Kitchen](#) at 2009 Congress St. on Friday, **June 7th, 2024**, beginning at 11:00 am. The immersive event challenges participants to **experience a night of voluntary fasting**, allowing them to empathize with the hunger millions endure daily. Those who take part will **gain a firsthand understanding** of the difficulties faced by the homeless and hungry, as they unite in solidarity, sharing a collective commitment to raising funds to **alleviate this pervasive issue**.

Participants will seek pledges and donations from friends, family, and colleagues, to reach a **\$120,000 goal**, with all proceeds going directly toward **supporting MHI's objectives to combat hunger and homelessness**. Last year, we served **105,945 meals** at Loaves & Fishes and **59,276 meals** in our housing programs while providing nearly **30,000 bed nights** to **unhoused individuals**.

A Night of Hunger provides a **unique opportunity** for community members to **actively engage** in a critical social issue, raising funds while bonding to achieve a common goal. The event fosters **a sense of empathy** by encouraging participants to **step into the shoes of those less fortunate**. Corporate sponsors who align with this meaningful cause demonstrate a **commitment to social responsibility** through significant, **amplified positive impact**. This shared experience cultivates a stronger **connection between our community and the cause**.

We are seeking commitments of **\$10,000 from companies with 20 or more employees** or **\$5,000 from small companies and start-ups or individual participants**. For more information about the event or to reach out with contacts and/or referrals, please email Shun Johnson at sjohnson@mhihouston.org or call **(281) 206-0608**. Together, let's transform a Night of Hunger into a beacon of hope for those in need.

Team MHI Participates in the Annual Homeless Count & Survey

The **Point-in-Time (PIT) Count & Survey** is a count of people experiencing homelessness — both sheltered and unsheltered — taking place for a single night in January. To count, **Team MHI joined some 450 volunteers** from area agencies, including **Career and Recovery, Inc.** (pictured right) organized by the **Coalition for the Homeless (CTFH)** the lead agency to **The Way Home**, Houston's local homeless response system. The survey takes place across **Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties**, providing a snapshot as a basis for **HUD funding** for homelessness interventions in the Houston region through the **Continuum of Care**.

The **2023 Count found 3,270 people were experiencing homelessness** in the three-county area, **2,028 of which were staying in shelters**, an increase of over 18% versus 2022. According to the CTFH, the increase is likely due to **shelter occupancy** "lowered due to COVID-19 but is **now returning to pre-pandemic levels**." 2024 Count results are anticipated this spring.



MHI has also seen increases in the number of people served in its housing programs, having **assisted 1025** unduplicated individuals in **2023** across **14-day and 90-day emergency, jail diversion, and supportive housing programs**. MHI is on track and looking forward to **providing an additional 149 supportive housing units** to reduce unsheltered homelessness with the **opening of RoseMary's Place in June 2024**. (see pg. 3 for a picture of progress on this initiative!)

In Our Ministries...

Loaves & Fishes

Love thy homeless neighbor! At a special **Valentine's Day & Ash Wednesday** celebration, **Loaves & Fishes** and [ACCESS Harris County](#), a division of **Harris County Public Health**, partnered to show abundant love and care for Houston's homeless. Accessing Coordinated Care and Empowering Self Sufficiency (ACCESS) is an integrated care-coordination model that works to **improve outcomes for vulnerable individuals** through Care Coordination Team.

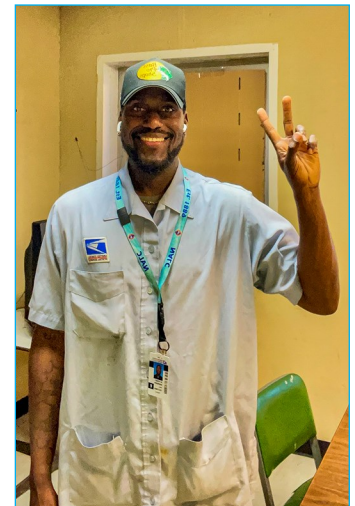
In addition to helping to prepare and serve 387 meals, ACCESS distributed 97 gift bags of self-care items and emergency blankets assembled by the **Boy Scouts of America**. They offered socks, emergency ponchos, Valentine's Day cards, and access to medical services, including **on-site Covid, Flu, and RSV vaccines** to all. ACCESS also enlisted the talented cutting crew from the [Premier Barber School](#) to provide fresh haircuts for more than 35 soup kitchen guests. **MHI Board** members, directors, and staff offered spiritual support, prayer, and ashes in observance of **Ash Wednesday** for all who wished to receive, **affirming love and fellowship** to make this an extraordinary community event.



Housing

Alfonso Harrison, an East Coast transplant, **came to Houston with hopes and dreams** of becoming a **better version of himself**, but his initial plans crumbled within weeks of his arrival. Funds and unsustainable work options exhausted, he **placed his trust in in what God had in store for him**, called 211 to inquire about shelter and got the [intake info for MHI Housing](#).

Upon acceptance, Mr. Harrison **made the most of his emergency stay**, searching for jobs and going on interviews. He embraced opportunity, enrolling in and **graduating from the [NCCER Core Construction program](#)**, adding to his credentials. Prayers moved mountains, and he received an email from the **United States Post Office** with a **job offer** and was able to transfer to **MHI's 90-day program**. *"Magnificat House showed me a level of grace and patience that I will forever be grateful for. Throughout my time here I've grown into a better person and I've been blessed many times over."* He credits MHI for teaching him **self discipline** and providing the **structure** he needed to start his **new career and move out into his own apartment**. MHI credits Mr. Harrison for his enormous gratitude and trust in the process during his **journey toward independence**, and we wish him all the best for an **outstanding future**.



St. Joseph House & Anawim Thrift Store

MHI continues to leverage program supports to **facilitate positive outcomes** for community members in a **collaboration** between [St. Joseph House](#) and [Anawim Thrift Store](#). The work-ordered day and access to employment opportunities are vital components of the [Clubhouse model for psychosocial rehabilitation](#). The **Transitional Employment Program (TE)** enables members to return to paid work through short-term, part-time employment placements outside of the Clubhouse. To date, two of these placements have happened at Anawim.

Sister Agnes Maria, Interim Director of St. Joseph House, effuses, "This is an awesome **opportunity for our Clubhouse members!**" Suzanne Young, longtime super volunteer and Anawim Angel observes, "The Program is beneficial to both of us. We needed help and they needed TE. These **employees are reliable and responsible.**" Jose Vazquez, Clubhouse member, feels TE reduces his anxiety and is a great fresh start after "finally being back working after a year."

TE benefits both employees and employers alike, as employers can **practice corporate responsibility** with the assurance of Clubhouse **coverage on all placements** during member absences. Past TE placements included The Chocolate Bar, Walgreens, and Rice University. To learn more about how your organization can support TE, contact sagnes@mhihouston.org.



This Is How We Love One Another...



CELEBRATING MILESTONES AND ACHIEVEMENTS: Graduation Day came in January for students completing **Goodwill NCCER Training**. For some, it was their **1st time ever** wearing a cap and gown. Encouraged and inspired, Jorge Carrion (pictured left) is furthering his education and opportunity with enrollment in the **Goodwill Clean Tech Accelerator™** program equipping him for well paid, high demand jobs, in the growing clean energy sector.



ACCESS HARRIS COUNTY: shared the love on **Valentine's Day at Loaves & Fishes**, bringing medical services, linkage workers, bags of essentials, fresh haircuts in partnership with **Premiere Barber School**, Valentine's cards, and beaming smiles to brighten spirits & remind the homeless community they are cared for and loved.



TAMALES Y FELIZ NAVIDAD: A beloved tradition returns to **St. Joseph House** for Christmas Eve. Each year, the sweet **Missionary Sisters of Mary of the Eucharist** make **500 tamales** for all of MHI. The Sisters and their helpers serve the Guatemalan-style tamales following **Christmas Vigil Mass**, adding to the joy of the season for all gathered to celebrate as **one MHI Family**.



MOLINA HEALTHCARE: donated a **blood pressure monitor unit** for use in our intake office at the **Moran Center**. HBP is higher among homeless populations, but this life-saving, generous gift will help **keep our guests healthy and safe**.



LAS POSADAS: is a re-enactment of **Mary and Joseph's search for lodging in Bethlehem**, performed just before Christmas. During this annual tradition, we **joyously open our doors to welcome and shelter them**. It is symbolic of opening our hearts to the love of Christ by **welcoming the stranger and the sojourner** in their travels, and **central to our core values at MHI**.



CHRISTMAS BINGO PARTY: for more than three decades, parishioners at **St. Matthew the Evangelist Catholic Church** have invited MHI community members to this annual event for **fun, food and fellowship** in the spirit of Christmas.



Windows, insulation, and exterior panels, oh my! Construction continues as **RoseMary's Place** stays on track for opening to house **149 chronically homeless** at it's Midtown location at **3300 Caroline St.** later this year. Stay tuned for updates about this **new chapter for MHI!**



MHI BOARD and STAFF members gather at **St. Joseph House**, committed to moving toward an **exciting future for MHI**.

STAFF NOTES



HEATHER WILEY

Volunteer Coordinator

A recent transplant from Washington State, Heather comes to MHI with 16 years of social services experience, working with families. She has served as social services director and case manager for emergency shelter and rapid rehousing. Now learning what

MHI does in the community for single adults, Heather is excited to network and build service opportunities for MHI.



WINDY PADILLA

Receptionist

Windy's long history of social advocacy and nonprofit work spanning 25 years has prepared her to greet our guests and all who call on MHI with great love. Having prayed for this job, she feels working at MHI is a godsend, and

it is exactly the place she needed to be since Day 1. Being on the front line in the admissions office at the Moran Center, she says she loves what we do and how we do it.



BLAKE ROBINSON

Driver

Native Houstonian Blake was a truck driver for a state-wide distributor, but now transports a more precious cargo—our guests! In addition to transporting incoming guests to houses, he also assists with furniture pickup for Anawim Thrift Store and other logistical

needs for MHI operations. He values his daily interaction with guests because he says it feels good helping people.

Maureen Sanders Brings Her Expertise to MHI



MHI has named outstanding nonprofit executive, Maureen Sanders, as Interim Executive Director. Ms. Sanders, a powerful advocate for social justice and equity for vulnerable and impoverished populations, has more than 30 years of experience leading financial and non-profit organizations. She has most recently served as the key executive for the oldest safety net charity clinic in the country, San José Clinic, here in Houston, Texas.

She combined her compassion for the poor

and business acumen to lead the faith-based charity clinic in providing healthcare services to more than 4,000 patients annually who were underserved, uninsured and lived at 250% or below Federal Poverty Level. Ms. Sanders was also a career bank executive in Houston from 1981-2009, including marketing, business development and private banking customer relations roles. Pleased to share her vast expertise, Ms. Sanders comments, "I have known about MHI for many years, and now I have a brief opportunity to serve the homeless in the special way that MHI does."

The Magnifier is published quarterly by Magnificat Houses, Inc. Gina Monti, editor/photographer. Tribute donations are recognized quarterly. Submit photos and news items to gmonti@mhihouston.org. Magnificat respects the privacy of those in our care; persons pictured have offered their consent.



Magnificat's ongoing, responsible stewardship means you can give with trust and confidence. For the third year in a row, the Better Business Bureau Awards for Excellence panel recognized MHI as a **Winner of Distinction**. MHI also earned the highest possible **Four-Star** rating from Charity Navigator (citing MHI's commitment to good governance, financial health and accountability); and the **2024 Platinum Seal of Transparency** awarded by Candid (formerly GuideStar and Foundation Directory).

DONATE ANYTIME:

Via our QR code, or
mhihouston.org/donate



Thank you for your loving support of our mission!



Meal service is only a part of community outreach at Loaves & Fishes Soup Kitchen. We aim to serve our homeless community with dignity in as many ways possible. Haircuts, clothing and providing resources to improve quality of life are just some of the ways we love each other.