



Touching Lives

ST. MARY'S CENTER QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2011

Do You See Me?



“I am the CalWORKS mom raising my six year old daughter and getting my bachelors degree. I am not looking for sympathy - I am striving to be self-sufficient. It is hard enough to survive on \$561/month. Now you plan to cut that amount. How do you explain to a 6 year old that there is no food or clothes? I am willing to sacrifice. Why don't people look at people like me when they make these cuts.” Jasmine

“I am a disabled senior, a mother, grandmother and great grandmother. I am a client of St. Mary's Center, a member of Recovery 55, I am on the peer board and advocate for the Alameda County Community Food Bank. I have lived in my car and in the shelter here. I was hungry, chronically confused, and on drugs. After I pay my rent, I live on \$200 a month. I am one of the fortunate ones. People are hungry. Many have nothing and we are America.” LaTanya

If faced with this question - “Do you see me?”, there is little question Ann O’Leary, local advocate with a national reputation would answer - No. Ann has worked on the Obama/Biden transition team, as a legislative assistant for Senator Hillary Clinton and held a number of positions within the Clinton Administration. Now

she is the Executive Director of the Berkeley Center on Health, Economic and Family Security where she sees up close and personal how policies intended to address a certain situation actually makes it worse.

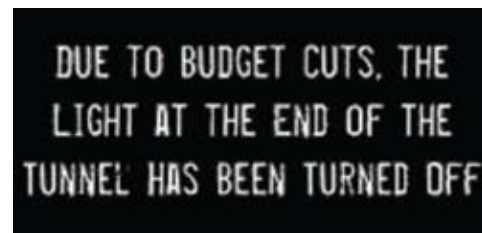
O’Leary was at St. Mary’s Center in December for a meeting with the California Partnership, a state-wide organization “organizing for the California dream.” As extremely low-income seniors entered the community center to pick up their groceries, Ann and a host of others talked about the economic turbulence that is ahead and why the voice of those most affected must be heard.

Ann admits her positions in Washington D.C. have informed her work but it doesn’t compare to what **“I have learned from meeting people in the community.”** Looking at the demographics impacting the state of California relative to the proposed budget cuts, Ann is especially concerned that cuts to In-Home Support and Stage 3 Child Care would be short-sighted.

Stating that **“currently 12% of Californian’s are over the age of 65 but by 2030 that number will grow to 20% of the population”**, she sees that many will need help with daily living. She noted **“cuts to In Home Support Workers will mean**

a loss of services, a loss of jobs and a third ripple - those who do have elderly parents who have counted on such care will likely loose their jobs if help is not available for their parents.”

Continue on page 7



- 1) Half of Proposed State Spending Reductions Target Health and Human Services Programs.**
- 2) Debt Service as a Share of State Revenues Has More Than Doubled Since 1999-00**
- 3) The Majority of Budget “Solutions” in Recent Years Were Temporary or Did Not Materialize**
- 4) California’s Poverty Rate Increased Significantly Between 2006 and 2009**

Information Provided by the California State Budget Project & Census Bureau

Transforming Lives

“It Goes Both Ways”

Seniors at St. Mary's Center are being given a gift from a volunteer who reflects, **“It goes both ways.”** Portrait artist, Judith Mortenson was on the receiving end of a surprise celebration on February 15, 2011. Seniors and staff thanked her for sharing her talent over the past two years and for sketching portraits of striking resemblance.

The celebration, both solemn and playful, offered a glimpse into the rapport between artist and seniors. Exchanges flowed with connection and authenticity. One senior, Cal remarked, **“You captured a guy I really missed.”** Judith asked **“Have you found him?”** Cal responded, **“I am tracking behind him.”**

Erskine noted, **“You brought out a comfort ability. I didn't even perspire.”** Judith replied, **“I did! In fact, each time I begin a portrait there's panic. Gradually it evolves but initially it is kind of scary.”**

Judith continued, “You were all very patient. You would sit for a whole hour, even professional models sit for twenty minutes and then take a five minute break.” Seniors chuckled, “We didn't know we could!”

Susan Werner, St. Mary's Center staff member, art facilitator, and coordinator of the Portrait Project noted that initially community members were reluctant to be sketched. Wondering out loud **“What changed?”**, one senior responded, **“We started seeing the finished product.”**

The finished product is a matted piece of art that combines the beautiful pastel portrait sketch with a reflection from the senior. The portraits are professionally framed by community member and artist, Kathy Meijia. Remembering back to when she resided in St. Mary's shelter, Kathy said, **“There is so much self doubt and anguish. One person seeing the beauty you thought you had lost, helps.”**



Clyde reflected, **“You pulled people out. You called out an essence I had not paid attention to before. It was a magical and spiritual connection.”** Judith understood. **“Typically artists do not get to converse with the model. It really helps to get the inner beauty.”**

As an expression of gratitude, seniors presented Judith with a book of personal statements of appreciation and copies of their portraits. Staff members joined in expressing gratitude. Shirley Cheney, Recovery 55 Coordinator, shared, **“The portraits capture the person's' inner light which cannot be seen by the eye alone.”** Kim Marsh, Program Director of Outreach and Advocacy remarked, **“You inspire me. People have gifts and talents - you share yours.”** And Judith aptly answered, **“It goes both ways.”**

Clyde Thomas, November 26, 1944, Oakland, CA



When I look at my portrait I see a person who has gotten older in life. It is a gift to be alive and to have a life to look back at and forward to. I feel the blessing of just being here. I see myself as happy to be in the present, the here and now, and looking to the future as a blessing.

I have had reservations about growing old and losing friends and family. I have wondered if God would allow me to continue to exist: to mature and to grow wiser. In living my life, I have come to grips with the beauty of what I've been given. When I was younger I never really understood the beauty and awesomeness of life.

The Lord saved me in my addiction. The Lord revealed grace to me as I went through so much desperation, fear, and hopelessness. I had lost everything and had even stopped thinking I was human. I have come to grasp the beauty, power, and all the Godness of life through trials and tribulations.

When the artist sketched me, I trusted her and let her do her thing. Artists are perceptive and have feelings and gifts. I have learned to appreciate other people and to allow them to be who they are. Those who have benevolence bless us through their gifts if we allow them to.

The gifts are God given, like the power of heaven. I have learned to yield to the awesomeness of our Creator. If we allow ourselves to speak as ourselves, not try to falsify or to pretend, we give the blessing of life, of God, to one another.

Blessings to Sister Liz Fisher as she starts a new chapter of her life. She decided turning 80 was a good year to start exploring new things. We will miss her extra ordinary attention and the compassionate service she provided to the seniors of St. Mary's Center and hope she discovers many more ways to find joy.



Latanya Wolf, April 16, 1948, Detroit, Michigan

This portrait touches me. It centers on all of my being: who I am today, where I've been, and what I've yet to become. It expresses the essence of my life: the struggle, the determination, and the purpose. It also expresses the joy of my fulfilling life and of giving back. I have complete, total gratefulness and inner peace.

The artist captured the glowing inner light I was trying to hide. This light overpowers. My hiding has been a way to survive. In my life I had to look and react in different ways than I wanted. Situations around me were so different than my real self. I created a façade to keep others from seeing the real me. I didn't let my light shine. However, I couldn't truly hide what I am and what I'm destined to be.

I see amazement in my portrait. The eyes show awareness and the smile shows the happiness of surviving the entire ordeal. The left side of my face appears darker. This darkness expresses what my eyes have seen and what I've been through. The right side appears lighter; it is clearer and brighter as I face what is to come. I am smiling and ready for a whole new beginning. I am leaving the darkness and going into the light with excitement. My higher power/myself is in control. I am grateful for all of my life: the trials and the good times. That's what makes me whole.

I see a powerful, determined woman. I've made it. At St. Mary's Center I began waking up to reality. I came to understand myself which helped me change my life and regain my self worth. I survived being homeless, hungry, confused, and betrayed by loved ones.

I now know who I am, what I am, and what I am destined to become. I understand my purpose. I am an advocate at St. Mary's Center. I speak out for those who can not speak for themselves. I want to give back and to show others there is hope for them. When I speak out now, I help both others and myself. I have a voice and I want it heard: Hope and Justice for All.

The grace that my higher power has shown me to make it through to this point and to wake up is amazing. It's grace that brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me on.



Volunteers Extend Our Reach

“I had the best time in the world! We had so much fun cooking, eating and even cleaning! I taught one man how to play “heart and soul” on the piano, and he learned it pretty well. At first, I thought it was going to be scary being around a lot of homeless people, but I soon learned I was very wrong. Most of them were really nice and called us girls, “darling,” and the boys, “handsome!” They had this whole meeting while we cooked, where they did art while talking about their problems. Isabel and Grace recited their oratorical poems, and everybody got all teary. It was beautiful.” Lucy is 11 years old

At 88 years old, John Di Palermo is no novice to volunteering. And that was the reason he received the prestigious Jefferson Award for his help in organizing the “Muffin People”. This is not a baking group - this is a cadre of people who collect and deliver food that would otherwise be discarded to help feed the hungry. While a great idea, coordinating with the stores, volunteers and service organizations takes a dedicated person to make it work.



Lucky for St. Mary's Center, John knew when he retired that he did not want to be a couch potato. And as they say - the rest is history! Twenty three years ago John stepped up to start this effort. Congratulations John on your award and on behalf of all of the people you and the “Muffin People” help to feed each week ~ our deepest gratitude.

Special thanks to:

Trader Joes, Safeway, Starbucks and Diablo Foods for providing the food and all of the “Muffin People”: Ed Ahearn, Cheryl Berkes, Chuck Blay, Mary Lou Blumer, Paul Boero, Douglas Brown, Bob Campbell, Tom Coull, William Craig, Joe Di Grazia, John Di Palermo, Jack Dice, Ed Franz, Herb Gindy, Dan Hagan, Bill Hansen, Dave Humm, Roy Knoth, Debbie Koo, Dick Kostyrka, Ellis Langley, Rich Laufenberg, Darwin Marable, John McGhee, Ron Mayo, Jane Oberman, Rudy Ruppenstein, George Sarkis, Frank Spagnoletti, Dick Vaughn, Pepper Wardle, Bill Widman, and Bill Wiegmann.



Thank you to Maria Watt with Prevent Blindness who came out to do vision screening for the children in the Preschool. She and a team of volunteers will be coming out again in March to screen those who were absent. So far so good. All the 40 kids who were screened showed normal vision development.

Special thanks to Carole Lee at Grand Lake Gardens for helping provide fresh vegetables to St. Mary's Center. This senior living community built garden boxes and planted organic vegetables to help feed the hungry in our community. Last year alone, they delivered over 500 pounds of homegrown, organic produce to St. Mary's Center. This intergenerational effort (youth built the raised beds) is a great example of what we can do as a community to work together. We are most grateful!

Building Community

St. Mary's Has Soul!



It felt like a step back in time. The look, the music, the dance, the movie, the food, the camaraderie, and the laughter all added to a feeling that would make James Brown or Aretha Franklin feel right at home. It was the Soul Stomp and Soul Food Luncheon at St. Mary's Center.

Dressed in African inspired attire and the garb of the 70's gave a clue that this was no ordinary lunch. DJ Jazzn' (Jean) got the place rocking. The documentary "Soul Power" about the music festival headed by James Brown for the Foreman/Ali fight in '74 played silently in the background. Bill from Recovery 55 offered live drumming to keep the party going and there were instruments for people to join in and create a theme of unity.

The electric slide got everyone on their feet as James Brown's "Big Payback" ignited the feet and the spirit. Funny man, MC Hutch warmed up the crowd with antics about getting older and still being able to "get down" and Olufula tickled the ivories of his key board during lunch.

If that wasn't enough! Then it was lunch time and Gregory, Jameisha, Faye, Brenda W. and Steve whipped up a delicious soul food lunch of fried chicken, cabbage, mac and cheese, and hot water cornbread. As a finale, seniors and staff enjoyed a slow dance to Blood Stone's 1973's hit "Natural High." And it was!

Beyond the Call of Duty

The case managers at St. Mary's Center get periodic phone calls that make them smile. Keenly aware of the acute issues facing so many of the seniors, there is utter delight when people beyond St. Mary's walls also hold out a hand of care. Our thanks to Oakland Police Officer Helena Schmidt for checking in on Gregory during his years of sleeping on the steps of the Police Building. For ten years, Officer Schmidt showed such care to Gregory. Now housed, Gregory was anxious to tell his case manager, Sister Mary about the day a Police Officer knocked on his door in December. Anxious, he slowly opened it to find Officer Schmidt with a Christmas gift!

Holding Each Other

On a cold and raining day in December, community members gathered to honor and remember those who have died on the streets. Calling out names, lighting candles, invoking peace and challenging ourselves to work for justice became part prayer and call to action.

St. Mary senior, Gregory Branch spoke of Article 25 of the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights, "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of themselves and their family." Gregory's reflections were poignant as he is without a place to call home and is residing in the shelter. He talked about how the Declaration of Human Rights looks at society in terms of how it takes care of its people and being an example to the rest of the world.

David Kim of the Community Rejuvenation Project, came to the Homeless Memorial to bear witness by creating a piece of art. Bringing an easel, blank canvas and acrylics - David painted an image that captured our brothers and sisters in need. David sees it as "the street taking care of the street. A homeless person embracing another homeless person."



Such a sentiment is not lost on Grady and Christine (pictured with the art piece) as both are now living at St. Mary's Center Shelter. The painting inspired Grady to make a sculpture in clay and reflect on our responsibility to each other.



"Friends holding one another, that says a lot. It's a blessing to see people holding each other in some way. In the shelter everyone is getting along. I need this break from violence, heartaches, and misunderstandings.

We all need places of comfort, care, and peace.

We find places for those needs, we know them when we hold one another." Grady

Christmas at St. Mary's ~ *Frenetic, Joyous, and Delicious!*

Like most large families, the seniors and children at St. Mary's relish the holidays. The generosity of many ensure special meals for the seniors, hot chocolate with marshmallows and homemade cookies for the preschool children and their families, visits from Santa and a host of elves bringing gifts.



Here's a sample of the generosity.

- ♥ AT&T Pioneers made 118 handmade stockings filled with goodies for the 48 children in the Preschool and their siblings.
- ♥ Santa Reese & Elf Earlene brought gifts to each child - all purchased and wrapped by Earlene Dutton long-time donor and volunteer for the Center.
- ♥ Delta Airlines, Winning Situation Inc. and many supporters donated toys and classroom materials during the holiday season.
- ♥ Sister Marilyn connected families to donors so that the eyes of over 1,000 children were bright on Christmas morning.
- ♥ Special thanks to St. Joan of Arc, St. Bonaventure, St. Mary Magdalen and St. Philip Neri/St. Albert for matching parishioners with children and giving a multitude of gifts!
- ♥ The parishioners at St. Agnes brought in a party and gave each of the seniors a \$25 gift card to Sears.
- ♥ Case managers put together wish list of items for their clients and members of St. Joan of Arc and St. Bonaventure bought and wrapped the gifts for the seniors.
- ♥ **Many Thanks for all of the little and big acts of kindness!**

“Be-Friending Ourselves”

“Friending” is not just a social network phenomena. It was the subject of a recent art experience for guests at St. Mary's Shelter. Entitled “Be-Friending Ourselves”, Art Facilitator Susan Werner, invited seniors to mold clay into the shape of a friend to accompany them on their journey to be housed.

Asking them to forget about the voices of personal criticism, Susan encouraged seniors to focus on the energy within. These colorful sculptures and reflections give a glimpse into lives actively seeking to understand themselves. We are grateful to the artists for sharing these personal expressions. The entire exhibit is on display in St. Mary's Community Center.

Man in a Boat on an Island



“In the shelter, it's new for me to be around so many people at one time. It's easier to deal with than I thought. I know people here truly care about what happens to people. I'm used to seeing things in very fixed ways. I've grown

from being here. I'm learning to listen to other people with an open mind and to accept them for who they are. Being with older people, I find it easier to have patience. God put me here for a purpose; not only to find a place, but also to help save the rest of my life.” - Jack

Blanca

“Blanca watches my condition and sees when I'm struggling. She knows my needs and supports me without being asked. That

makes life easier for me. I want to have the intuition, mind, and spirit in my heart to help my friends before they have to ask. Giving to one another keeps us strong, united, and brings light into our world.” Linda



Car taking me and Friends to Tea

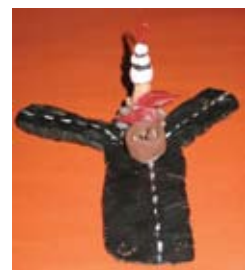


“Deborah and Brian are new friends in the shelter. They offer me inspiration, chores, advice, suggestions, and help with serving tea and turning on the TV. I hope they will continue to befriend me in kind ways. I will continue to get

along with them.” Janie

Traveling Down the Road of Life

“I am at a crossroads, questioning which way to go. I want to consider choices more fully now; I hope to make the right choice. I wish I would have known what I know now in the past, and had done things differently. Now I do the best I can with what I have. I'm letting go of anger gradually: the bowl is a place for bad thoughts to go. As I see my life coming to an end, I am settling down and finding inner peace.” Christine



Creating Change

Senior Advocates ~ Making Lives Visible

As Senior Advocates for Hope and Justice, we speak up in hopes our social systems recognize people's humanity. We know our own involvement is paramount, that our stories help people understand the issues and that our work ethic and voice is helping to build a healthier community.

We went to Sacramento a number of times in the last couple of months as the proposed budget announced by Governor Jerry Brown affects our lives and those least able to afford cuts. Working in collaboration with the California Partnership, Hope and Justice Member La Tanya Wolfe spoke before members of the Assembly and Senate, representing St Mary's Center, Alameda County Community Food Bank and Health Access. LaTanya reminded representatives that the proposed budget cuts were "waging people's lives" and she was one of them.

Members of Hope and Justice joined with others in the California Partnership Network and rallied in front of San Francisco's City Hall to urge the Governor to put all options on the table. We chanted, "Chop from the top, not mom and pop" as reporters from KTVU news and the San Francisco Chronicle documented the protest. Many of us were new to organizing and voicing an alternative reminded us of Martin Luther King's legacy, "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase".

All work and no play is not the mantra of Advocates for Hope & Justice. That was visible as nearly 200 people packed St.



Mary's community center for the Chinese New Years Celebration. An anonymous donor helped cater Chinese food for the festival and many of the community who were not familiar with Chinese culture enjoyed an afternoon of community and new awareness about the "Year of the Hare."

In February, the Center was decorated with hearts and important figures in Black History. Dr. Carter G. Woodson helped to make Black History Month possible as a reminder of how important African Americans were to the history of America. St Mary's Center celebrated Black history month in a number of ways including a wonderful Soul Stomp and Lunch. (see story in this issue)

Finding ways to make an impression, seniors recently presented photograms, pictures and statements, in opposition to the drastic cuts proposed in the budget. We asked, "How dare you take from a

senior" reminiscent of the civil rights struggle where many wore signs stating, "I am a Man". By practicing simple acts of self empowerment, we help people to see the consequence of their decisions. Mickey Jones, an aide to Assemblyman Sandre Swanson was touched by the action and promised to further the message to other representatives in office.

These are most challenging times and the voice reminding us of our humanity needs to get bigger. As senior leaders, we have championed personal challenges, we are inspired by ancestors, and we are buoyed by people around the world and nation breaking the silence of despair so that hope can dawn. We see our interdependence as a community and would honor your participation in our work. For information about how you can help - contact Elena Berman - Senior Advocate Coordinator at St. Mary's (510) 923-9600 x 211.

If you want to join in advocacy efforts, call Elena at (510) 923-9600 x 211.

In the coming months:

- Seniors will be working to help educate voters about voting for the tax extensions to help minimize further cuts to programs.
- Senior leaders are headed to Sacramento on May 17th for the Hunger Action Day.

From Preschool Director ~ Lorita Riga



Thank you for all of the ways You help St. Mary's Center.

Our Preschool staff is aware of the toll the economy and cuts are having on families. Many families are under stress. Just last week as a group of kids were sitting with a teacher eating breakfast one child ("B") said to another ("J"), "Hey J are your parents yelling and screaming at each other." J replied "Yes, they are always yelling and cursing." B said "They need to go to preschool like this so that they can learn how to use their words."

Although it makes us feel good to know that a child who is 4 years old is understanding how preschool can help, it is hard to hear how parents are behaving in front of their children. B was a child who was a screamer, yeller, and hitter when he was sad or mad. Now he has learned to "use his words."

Until the budget is passed we will not know what impact the state funding will have on our Preschool. Currently, forty eight children are enrolled. Donors and foundations help to subsidize the amount we get from the state as our families are unable to pay the cost. We are grateful for the support and are currently hoping to freshen up some of our classroom material (i.e. dolls, puzzles, paint, craft materials, science materials) so if people would like to donate please use the envelope included with this newsletter.

Do You See Me?

Continued from page 1

As for Stage 3 Child Care she states, **“This is a bargain we made with people who got off welfare. It is for people who are now working but have no one else who can care for their children.”**

Yokia Mason, a health educator with Improving Pregnancy Outcomes Program remembers being a CalWORKS participant and is now self sufficient. **“It takes years and years to be self-sufficient. Some come from generations of welfare. The childcare is their only hope.”**

Hearing the stories and seeing the faces of people affected by the myriad of proposed cuts helps us to think beyond the sound bite of the evening news. Being with the people who see their lives turning “topsy tervy” makes the conversation of elected representatives seem clinical and numbing.

With California short a billion dollars a month this fiscal year, the federal deficit growing in ways unimaginable and local entities wondering what services will survive - there is no question that cuts will come. We wonder if people think about the person who will bear the brunt? Are the young and old able to shoulder the burden? And what of the long term consequences? Will it someday affect the “American dream” that we imagined was our entitlement?

Some years ago Martin Niemoller wondered out loud about our personal responsibility to speak up.

*“When the Nazis came for the communists,
I remained silent;
I was not a communist.*

*When they locked up the social democrats,
I remained silent;
I was not a social democrat.*

*When they came for the trade unionists,
I did not speak out;
I was not a trade unionist.*

*When they came for the Jews,
I remained silent;
I wasn't a Jew.*

*When they came for me,
there was no one left to speak out.”*



Take a minute to speak up in a conversation, call President Obama to voice your priorities, email the Governor, or call your mayor. If we don't speak up ~ who will?

To leave a comment for **President Obama call (202) 456-1111** or write him at The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW Washington D.C. 20500. You can email our President at www.whitehouse.gov/contact.

Reach **Governor Brown** at The State Capitol #1173, Sacramento, CA 95814 or **call (916) 445-2841**. Email him at gov.ca.gov/. Other contacts: Assembly Speaker John Perez - 916-319-2046, Senate President Darrell Steinberg - 916-651-4006

A Fun and Friend Raiser

Part of the fun at St. Mary's Center Auction is bidding on the items and meeting new people. If you have an idea for an excursion, overnight accommodation or someone you think would like to join us - Call Amy at (510) 923-9600 x 222.

Here's a glimpse of last year's offerings:



Staff member Reese Craighead leads a Walking Tour in San Francisco and happened to meet a St. Mary's senior playing sax on the corner!

Ananda Wiegand, our gardener at St. Mary's, arranged for a Cheese-Making Class and we got to meet the goats too!



And we hear the travelers headed to a week's stay in the Chalet in Wengen, Switzerland will be there in September!

Don't miss this year's Gala -kick up your heels, open your check book and have a great time knowing so many people benefit!

**Circle the date - St. Mary's Center
Gala is October 8, 2011**

*Join the St. Mary's Center
Gala Committee*

A fun and mighty group that helps to organize St. Mary's Center's only fundraiser of the year. It's a dinner, dance and auction with all proceeds benefitting the programs that help homeless seniors get housing, isolated elders live independently and preschool children get a good start on their education.

Much of the work is handled through email and you can sign up for specific tasks - like getting 3 items for the auction. So if you've got a little time and a deep commitment - contact Amy Vaughan (510) 923-9600 x 222 or avaughan@stmaryscenter.org. And circle the date - Saturday, October 8, 2011 for the event.



St. Mary's Center
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Getting to Know St. Mary's Center

- Visit our website to read the stories of lives changed and much more - www.stmaryscenter.org
- Volunteer to make dinner for our Shelter residents. Families, churches, youth groups, businesses sign up to make the evening meals seven days a week. You could be one ~ call Sister Marilyn at (510) 923-9600 x 220.
- Come for a tour of the Center. See what good your support engenders - call Amy Vaughan to arrange a tour - (510) 923-9600 x 222.

Writer: Elena Berman, Katrina Brekke-Miesner, Lorita Riga, Susan Werner, St. Mary's Seniors
Photographers: Reese Craighead, Lorita Riga, Susan Werner, Mary Lou Blumer
Design/Layout: Innovative Images

Wish List

- Digital Camcorder
- Power Point Projector
- Coffee
- Sturdy, Manual Can Opener

sign paperwork that authorizes St. Mary's to receive SSI checks on her behalf. Then there were doctor appointments to help deal with her hearing loss and high blood pressure. Paige also transferred her prescriptions to a local Walgreens so the staff at the Board & Care can pick them up.

Anne's son is relieved that his mom is getting the care she needs, and is safe and happy. He visits every other day often bringing her treats. Anne is delighted. "I slept until 9am! I feel secure, I'm glad St. Mary's is managing my money and that I have an advocate to help me."

From Crisis to Relieved

For many social services organizations moved in the next day.

Paige Hustead picked up where Mary left off. Taking Anne to the Social Security office was the first stop; it was necessary to

At this point, Sister Mary felt confident Anne's immediate crisis was over yet there were still a myriad of issues to attend to. Mary transferred Anne out of the Senior Homeless Program and into Outreach & Advocacy (both programs at St. Mary's) so that Anne would have an ongoing case worker to help her maneuver the system and her own health issues.

As an act of last resort, Anne (not her real name) age 76 years old was dropped off at St. Mary's Center by her son at 5pm one recent evening. Sister Mary started to piece together some of the story. Anne had been homeless for six months; her son was at his wits end and had issues of his own that needed tending. Taking care of his mom was not an option.

Inviting Anne into the shelter that evening was the first step. The healing effect of a home-cooked meal and a night of rest out of the rain is what sets St Mary's Center apart. Anne's story helps to demonstrate that fact.

The next day, Sister Mary found out that there was a case open on Anne at Adult Protective Services (APS). It had been opened by her son in hopes the government agency might help. Sister Mary talked with APS about paying the first month's rent at a Board and Care Home, to buy time to piece together a long term plan. APS said yes. Keenly aware and with good relationship with care providers, Mary knew there was an opening at the West Care Chalel. Anne