



Touching Lives

ST. MARY'S CENTER QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2011

Celebrating Our Sisters

Mark your calendars for St. Mary's Center's Gala ~ Saturday, October 8, 2011 when we unveil a new chapter of our history which dates back to 1939! To celebrate the occasion we will honor 39 religious women who have touched the lives of seniors, children and families over the course of our mission that extends more than seven decades.

The early record of "St. Mary's Center" is chronicled in a delightful book that serves as a history lesson and a mirror. When Father Charlie Philipps arrived at St. Mary's



Church at 7th & Jefferson in 1936, Oakland was reeling from the Depression, racial divide and lack of opportunities. Father Philipps' activism was visible early as an agrarian reformer and friend to the farmers in Sonoma County during the Depression. In Oakland, he would also leave his mark as a champion of the poor.

Author Gerry Cox describes Father Philipps as The Radical Peasant, (title of the book). Yet more than a biography, the book describes how addressing the needs of this Oakland community would change the direction of lives touched by his work.

Seeing the extreme poverty, Father Philipps asked the Sisters of the Holy Names to make the parish school tuition free and institute a breakfast program

for the hungry children. He also started the Sunshine Camp at Russian River so 200 children from West Oakland could experience the great outdoors for two weeks each summer. Camp counselors including Bishop Cummins remember songs around the camp fire and lively conversations each evening that helped to shape values.

"At St. Mary's we were doing 'old fashioned' stuff. The whole field of Social Work had gone in the direction of clinical therapy in an attempt to solve human problems. Our kind of supportive therapy had fallen out of style. But we have returned to feeding the poor, getting them jobs and housing."

SISTER ROSEANN CURTISS, SSS



Aware the need was bigger than his ability, Father Philipps welcomed the Sisters of Social Service to St. Mary's in 1939.

Using Jane Adams Settlement House model, the Sisters of Social Service were organizers dedicated to women and children issues. The Sisters provided basic services, social clubs for Filipino's & Latinos, creative arts, youth groups, and activities for children.

The leadership and dedication of Sister Patricia Feely, (pictured right at the Morning Bread line), caught the attention of volunteers from across the Bay Area wanting to help.

In 1942, the Sisters of Social Service opened a Settlement House with a Spanish speaking staff to engage the community. Author Gerry Cox notes that the response was the reason the first Spanish newspaper and first celebration of Las Posadas in Oakland happened at "St. Mary's Center". There was also a residence house for unemployed women, a soup kitchen for the hungry, a free clothing center and a Christmas celebration for over 400 children. Lawyers provided legal aid, a local pharmacist gave free prescriptions and dentists offered free services.

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Transforming Lives

“A KINDER GARDEN”

To say things grow at the Preschool is an understatement! Pictured here are 15 pounds of carrots! The harvest also included 15 lbs of Swiss chard, 10 heads of lettuce and 29 children headed to Kindergarten!

Weaving play, gardening, reading and so much more, St. Mary's Preschool has an impact that lasts.

The big news at this time of year is the 29 (out of 48) children who graduated and are headed to Kindergarten this fall ready to learn!

That idea was a bit lost on one little boy. While he was very excited to graduate he was surprised when he asked his teacher, “Are you going with me?” After his preschool teacher explained she wasn't, he exclaimed “I'm not going to kindergarten!”

His teacher took the opportunity to explain she needed to stay at preschool to help the younger kids get ready for kindergarten, just as she had helped him. She also reassured “you'll have a great kindergarten teacher who will help you get ready for the 1st grade.” He seemed to be relieved.

And so the cycles continue. Later this summer, Preschool Director Lorita Riga (pictured here with one of the graduates) will be signing up families for the slots that are open next year.

The reputation of the Preschool is well-known. The California Department of Education recognizes that it exceeds the state goal in terms of children served. And the neighborhood families realize it impacts the lives of their children for a lifetime!



Understanding the Work ~ An Interview with Sister Mary Nolan

If you get involved with St. Mary's Center you start to realize the momentum you get from taking time to celebrate, listening intently and pursuing outcomes many simply dismiss. Sister Mary Nolan, Director of our Senior Homeless Program notes, “We celebrate when someone gets housing, when a senior re-unites with a family member, ...” She talks about Arthur who was separated from his son for 42 years and now has re-connected. “It is a victory of light over darkness, it is one more candle of hope. Si se puede.”

That feeling of “yes we can” is not some Pollyanna notion at St. Mary's Center. Sister Mary (pictured here with Dr. Stephen Fisher) continues, “We work as a team here to provide the very best services to people who otherwise would not have them. Poor people deserve real mental health services, not the leftovers.”

Mary's faith figures prominently not as a preaching pulpit but a walking the walk. “For me, the Incarnation is the coming among us. Moving us to our dignity as children of God - it is the most pressing piece of Gospel living. Here and Now - don't wait.”



With a degree in Nursing, a Masters in Social Work and years of experience working with seniors, Mary brings more than commitment to the marginalized. Her clinical skills mesh with life experience and an understanding of human dignity. She says, “My eyes are open and seeing the light that is inside each of us.”

Those that know Mary, realize she easily mixes understanding, patience and chutzpah. She readily admits, “Sometimes it is about tough love. There is no scooping up and saving. This is a team. Pick up your bed and walk.”

As a Sister with the Dominicans of Oakford, Mary knows “her team” is bigger than the staff of St. Mary's Center. It also includes the seniors and her fellow Sisters - all 165 of them. “We can't do these things alone to breathe faith into humanity.”

Aware she is right where she is supposed to be, Mary explains why St. Mary's is so important. “Life is harsh and violent. Within this fence there is an alternative world. I believe it is how we are called to live. Not leaving anyone behind.”

ACT OF KINDNESS & IMPACT

Lessons in Light and Darkness



Like many of us, Linda Keller is a bit of a paradox. A resident in our Winter Shelter, Linda created this pastel in the Wellness Art Class. It is entitled, "This Little Light of Mine." The flickering candle indicates Linda's light is shining!

Her poem from the Wellness Writing Class however, shows a woman aware that living on the streets means hiding your eyes, your light. The title of her piece is ~

"When Walking Alone"

"When walking at night alone in a deserted place I pack something like a pipe or a piece of wood or break a branch off of a tree or a bush and I talk loud or sing real loud and swing up the object I have picked up like a crazy person that says to strangers don't come around me and in fact they avoid being anywhere near me and then I feel safe.

When I am walking on a street full of strangers I never look directly at them because I don't want them to speak to me. Sometimes I don't recognize old friends because I won't look at people who pass by and I have been accused of being stuck up or two faced that's not true. I am afraid of most strangers and strange places because I have been attacked before thinking I was talking to an old friend who was all but forgotten and then being beaten up when I let my guard down and was alone with them.

I seldom talk to anyone on the street anymore unless I look closely and see who they really are."



Artist Gina Truex

Artist Gina Truex has a special connection to the women of St. Mary's Center. Since November of 2010, Gina has facilitated art projects with the women's group reminiscent of the quilting bees of old. Encouraging creative capabilities and projects that symbolize their personal growth, Gina's impact was recently applauded at the Recovery Celebration in early June. The women's most recent handiwork

was proudly displayed ~ each woman having made a beautiful butterfly to symbolize their transformation. Together, they made this beautiful banner proclaiming how they are to each other.

Elizabeth & Janet Kennedy

Elizabeth & Janet Kennedy are a mother/daughter team on a mission. Reading an article about St. Mary's Center in The Tribune in December of 2008, Elizabeth decided to visit. "I knitted a scarf and decided to bring it down to the Center and asked if it was something the seniors needed", says Elizabeth. The answer was resounding and the reason the Kennedy's have been busy ever since.

Living in the Oakland hills, Elizabeth admitted she knew nothing about St. Mary's until she read the article. "Ever since, we have been making scarves. I know as we get older, we get colder so it seemed like something that might help." Help indeed.

When they delivered two large bags of colorful scarves this winter, Sister Mary told them about a man who had been homeless for 30 years. "When staying in our shelter he was so delighted to get a beautiful blue scarf you made. It means so much to those we serve." Delighted to hear of the response, Elizabeth and Janet decided to take a tour of the Center to learn more about the program and the difference such acts of kindness make.



Thank You Novartis!

On June 7th, a team of Novartis employees rolled up their sleeves to do a deep clean in the kitchen and work in the garden. Adam Smith, who coordinated the connection, says, "Our impressions from the day ranged from feeling very gratified in the work that we did to very

saddened in the fact there is still a segment within our community that is clearly underserved. St. Mary's made us all feel good that there are good people trying to reach out and help the individuals and families in need. Our company gives us one "free" day per year for community service, so you guys are clearly on the top of our list."

Retired?

Starting a new chapter of your life and wondering what to do next? Consider this option. Our Outreach & Advocacy team is re-initiating the Senior Friendly Visitor Program and looking for volunteers. The goal of the program is to match volunteers with an hour to give each week with a homebound elder wanting a connection to the outside world.

The title of the program - "Friendly visiting" really describes the intent which is to break the isolation and show some care. Staff member Paige Hustead, will provide a training and match the senior and volunteer. The ideal volunteer would have time during the day. If you want to learn more, contact Paige at (510) 923-9600 x 207.

Building Community

WHY YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

by Sister Joanna Bramble

All of the elderly we serve in our **Senior Outreach and Advocacy Program** are poor; many of them are frail, sick or disabled. 64% of the clients are over the age of 75, 80 % are women, 85% live at or below Supplemental Security Income. In the past year, **SSI (Supplementary Social Security for blind, disabled, elderly) was cut from \$907/month to \$831/month because of the California budget crisis.** Some pay up to 70% of their income on housing. This means that these seniors often have to make the choice between buying food or paying rent.

In FY2009, about 25% (\$87,000) of the funding for this program came from government sources. Now, two years later in FY2011, government funding for this program has been reduced to 13% (\$38,000) and additional future cuts are very possible. There is less money from state, county and city sources for services for the poor and the elderly. At the same time seniors' income is being cut, causing more of them to come to us for services.

And that is just one of our programs. Government money for our Winter Shelter continues to be threatened both at the national

and state level. This pivotal program costs \$77,680 each year and is the only winter shelter specifically for seniors in Northern California. Our Preschool is looking at a cut of up to 25% of their budget.



Our Board of Directors and Development Team are working to identify new partners concerned with the basic needs of young and old. If you are concerned about the issues and people we are serving, **please consider your gift today** to make up this shortfall.

If you want more information about volunteer opportunities at St. Mary's Center, please call Amy to set up a meeting and tour (510)923-9600 x 222. If you would like to receive action alerts and event info via email please contact Mary Lou Blumer at mlblumer@stmaryscenter.org.

CONNECTING HOMELESS TO SERVICES

On April 15, 2011, St. Mary's Center hosted "Homeless Connect" to provide Oakland residents of all ages one location to address their needs and get access to services from various non profit medical and social service organizations. The day was a collaboration with the City of Oakland and multiple service providers.



FOOD FOR ALL AGES

The need for food is basic. The availability of healthy foods depends largely on where we live. The seniors, children and families served by St. Mary's Center do not have a local grocery store or produce markets. Seniors on SSI do not receive food stamps. All the more reason, St. Mary's is so important to their health. They count on St. Mary's Center.

"We are what we eat" is more than a slogan. It helps to determine if we are able to reduce the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, strokes and even Alzheimer's. For children, the impact of healthy eating is noticeable in brain development, attention span, risk of obesity and ability to succeed in school.

These are consequences much too serious to ignore and why St. Mary's boasts two gardens - one at the Center and one at the Preschool. Growing fruits and vegetables changes our connection to the land and encourages us to try new things. Many can attest that St. Mary's raspberries are the best and children in the Preschool were delighted to bring home carrots, chard and lettuce to their families.



The harvest helps to supplement meals and snacks and engage seniors and children in the process. Cooking demonstrations, sampling new foods, tips from a nutritionist, and information from community nurses all help to inform "we are what we eat!"

CELEBRATING RECOVERY

On June 1, 2011 the St. Mary's Center community was rockin'. Celebrating the journey of recovery from alcohol and drugs, seniors described the process they follow in Recovery 55 - five days each week. As Arthur Hill noted, "We seek progress, we are not saints."

Progress indeed: integrity, community, humor, husbands, families. wisdom, appreciation and perspective.

Weaving song, a skit, testimony, the twelve steps and deep gratitude ~ the spirit felt more like a revival.



Recovery 55 Program Director, Shirley Cheney noted "recovery is about being honest." And then she presented Richard Littlejohn with the Good Samaritan Award for finding a wallet and returning it to its owner with everything inside.

The man was moving his parent into a place across the street and lost his wallet. On getting it back even with the twenty dollar bill tucked inside, he asked "What is this place? I did not think there were people like this in the world." Richard seemed flattered to be applauded by the group. And jokingly quipped, "If only I would have known about the \$20!" Shirley let the crowd know he did and thanked Richard for his honesty. (Richard pictured above)



Then Shirley introduced an original skit entitled "The Promise" that was written, directed and performed by women at St. Mary's. Written by Minnie Hayles and Dorothea Johnson, the short play depicts extreme compassion as a woman came in from the streets sobbing. Once comforted, she is told, "You have come to the right place. St. Mary's Center rose into my life, like a promised sunshine!"

But then when the woman proclaimed "I promised myself I was going to get clean & sober and then, get my apartment, a car, new clothes and money in the bank."

The St. Mary's women cautioned, "Hey, hold on a moment, tomorrow is a promissory note; Live this day, and one day at a time."

Right here, right now, is the start of your promise."

Ending in song, the drama troupe had captured their own journey and growing wisdom. LaTanya started to sing, "You can promise till the end of time, so let's make this day yours and mine."

And then in unison the little play ended with a call to each of us, "Just for Today; Each one, Teach one".

"The Promise" was the perfect set up as Shirley moved on to recognize those who have kept their own promise of recovery.



People proudly stood up as she asked, "Who has been clean and sober for a month, six months, a year, two years, ... sixteen years." As each stood up the crowd joined in applause, especially as mentor Bill Wigfall stood up to celebrate his 16 years of sobriety. (Bill Wigfall pictured center, with caseworker Reese Craighead left, and Shirley Cheney right).

Recovery 55 has been noted as one of the best substance abuse outpatient programs in the state for people 55 and older. Its success is reason some years ago, a mental health component was integrated into the program to nurture the whole person. At the helm of Recovery 55 is Shirley Cheney, a dedicated and talented staff member. To honor her work and show their personal appreciation, Mr. & Mrs. Johnson presented a plaque to Shirley to show their gratitude. "This is the place that lifted me up. I have been off crack for a year. I got my husband back, my kids back."

Benny, another member of Recovery 55, was the last to speak. "I have learned about wisdom here. It is our conduct, character, and conversation and they need to be all in sync. St. Mary's is a place where I can work on me. I come to these meetings to see what I have to say. I am not going to believe all of my broadcast. Then I need to go out there to walk a better me."

Initiating a Relationship with Our Spirit



Art is a tool at St. Mary's that engages seniors in a process that is unfamiliar. More than a class, at St. Mary's the experience is more of a journey. The Rattle Project was no exception as Winter Shelter guests created an object of art that echoes ancestors, music and inner spirit.

Using gourds and a little bit of everything to get just the right sound, seniors then decorated these beautiful instruments as a reminder of their time together and inner strength.

Seniors are grateful to Susan Werner, art therapist at St. Mary's, artist Gina Truex who conceived and assisted with the project, Daniel Randolph, a percussion instrument maker, and Joan Sowers, a gourd craft person.



Grady: "Being in this class brought out the best in me, things I didn't know that I could do. Just through drawing I felt happy, content to be into me."

Charlie: "Important to be able to do something and complete it. I now believe I can do things helpful to myself and to others. Shines more light in life, helps out. We are all apart of what we're dealing with."



Creating Change

“I KNOW A CHANGE IS GONNA COME...”

Just as the summer solstice signals a change in seasons, St. Mary's has days to relish that indicate a new chapter. April 26, 2011 was the last "Shelter Dinner" of the season and seniors, staff and board members gathered to be with each other.

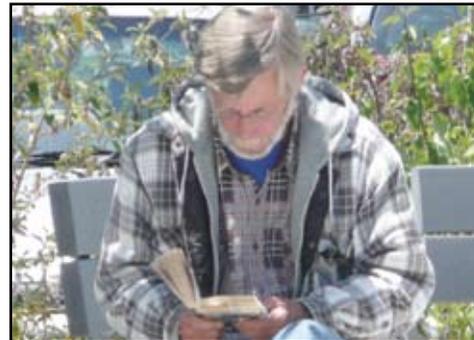


Music from Mejin's violin greeted guests and begged for the human voice to join in. Not to disappoint, people started to sing "It's been a long time comin' but I know a change is gonna come."

Setting a tone for a heartfelt evening, staff described how the journey of being together from December to April has prepared the seniors for a new chapter. Having a safe place to sleep, a case manager to help them develop a care plan, delicious home-cooked meals thanks to caring volunteers, money management, counseling, help with health care and the search to find housing described only part of the program.

At St. Mary's, shelter residents are asked to get involved in activities some may think odd for a social service organization. Yet these ancillary programs prove pivotal at St. Mary's. Staff congratulated seniors for throwing themselves into the Wellness meetings (each day from 4 - 5pm) where

they got to know their bodies with Interplay, learned to read nutrition labels to monitor their diet, expressed themselves in Art projects, learned to Tame their Emotions in an Anger Management Class and participated in a Writing Class to "give voice



to the silent."

And give voice they did. After a delicious meal from St. Philip Neri volunteers, winter shelter guests stood up to speak.

"This group is special. People are growing, getting happier. When you are homeless you feel like you want to go away. First of all you made me get up on time, get dressed, eat. I have discipline to take with me." Linda

"I came here overwhelmed and out of it. Paige was heaven sent." Willie

"What I will miss is an endless list. But most of all the fellowship and the arts and crafts. I have a lot on my mind." Ronald

"I have lots of praise. I had a lot of bad things happen and now all of the good things. People said to me I needed a lawyer but I came here and explained my situation and staff worked with me. I have learned a lot of ways to be a good guy - tools I will

carry the rest of my life." Gilbert

"When I first came here I was terrified. Mary helped me - it is a wonderful program. I hope you stay open as people need you. The staff is top notch." Brenda

"I came three weeks ago when my



house was foreclosed on. I was a stranger but you did not look down on me. I did not have enough to save my house but I have saved my mind." Mr. McIntyre

"I am a volunteer. I am a better person when I spend time here. Your stories are inspirational. (Commenting on a piece from the Writing Class, he continued), Those people are the real people. Thank you for making a big difference in my life." St. Mary's Center Board Member John Graf

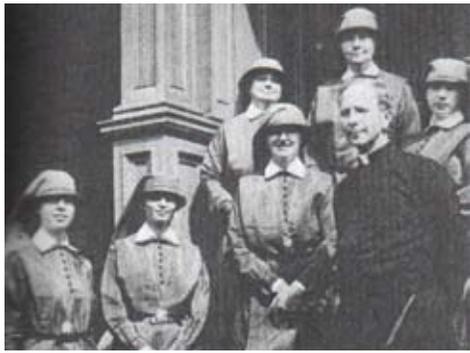
Sister Mary helped to sum up the power of St. Mary's Center ~ "While you will move into a new place, know you always have a home at St. Mary's Center. We are as the world should be."



A SPRING FLING

The community of St. Mary's Center loves a good time. And when DJ Jazzn' is around - make no mistake you will want to be on your feet dancin' or maybe crooning to a favorite soulful tune.

Assets worker, Iyabo Oladigbol organized the event and felt that it "breathed some life into the center and helped us to celebrate spring" For some it was reason to dress up, shake a leg or simply enjoy the camaraderie of friends. Members collected donations and SMC's chef Carmen Neil made a fresh spring meal. The women's group helped get some of the reluctant on their feet and the center danced until the sun came out so they could welcome spring - St. Mary's style.



“If a Poor People’s Hall of Fame was ever instituted in West Oakland, one would see the following women who left their mark at St. Mary’s: Sisters Vicentia, Miriam, Florence, Patricia, Roseanne, Rita Anne, Martina, Benedicta, Johanna, and Cecilia. Originally they were a new kind of “nun”, comfortable in modern dress and at home walking the streets of the poor, and became the embodiment of Charlie Philipp’s belief in living in service to the needy.”

THE RADICAL PEASANT

Celebrating Our Sisters

Continued from page 1

The Sisters of Social Service left St. Mary’s in 1969. At that time the parish school was still open, yet struggling. In 1973 the school closed, but Sister Mary Ondreyco asked to stay on to address the needs in the community. And as you might know, St. Mary’s Center was born again!

We are most grateful to Gerry Cox for documenting this early history and amazing story. On this occasion we would like to extend his list for the “Poor People’s Hall of Fame” to include the religious women who picked up the torch of St. Mary’s Center and still carry it today.

On Saturday, October 8th, join us in honoring 39 religious women! They include: the Sisters of Social Service ~ Sisters Vicentia, Miriam, Florence, Patricia, Roseanne, Rita Anne, Martina, Benedicta, Johanna, Cecilia and Sr. Mary Ondreyco SNJM, Sr. Amelia Marie Goethals SNJM, Sr. June Kearney SNJM, Sr. Helen Garvey SNJM, Sr. Victoria Dempf SNJM, Sr. Ruth Raftery SNJM, Sr. Baptista Dean SNJM, Sr. Carol Cook BVM, Sr. Marietta Mitre OP San Jose, Sr. Gerarda Marie Joubert SNJM, Sr. Loretta Rose Scott SNJM, Sr. Liz Fuhr OSF, Sr. Martha Bendorf SNJM, Sr. Chris Bennett SSS, Reverend Ellie Shepardson UCC, Sr. Marilyn Medau PBVM, Sr. Joanna Bramble CSJ, Sr. Veronica Longergan OP San Jose, Sr. Margaret Bollner, Sr. Sharon Joyer SND, Sr. Rosanne Curtiss SSS, Sr. Catherine Ginther OSF, Sr. Dorothy Buckley SSS, Sr. Pat Nagle IHM, Sr. Shirley Sexton SNJM, Sr. Anne Dinneen SNJM, Sr. Mary Nolan OP Oakford, Sr. Elizabeth Fisher RSCJ, and Sr. Mina Gaskel CSJ.

If you are interested in sponsoring this special event, please call Executive Director Carol Johnson at (510) 923-9600 x 223. Look for your invitation in late August but circle the date now so we have a full house to honor our history and all of the religious women who have given their talent and love so others might feel their own.

St. Mary’s Dinner, Dance & Auction - October 8, 2011

Feel the spirit of this community, support programs touching the lives of seniors and children right here in Oakland and bid on amazing items

- A Week in a Switzerland Chalet
- Sailing on the Bay for 6
- Bed & Breakfast in Mendocino
- A Weekend in a beautiful Twain Harte Home that sleeps 10
- Great restaurants, Wonderful wines
- A Walking Tour in San Francisco to explore the Environments of Lawrence Halprin, ... you get the idea!

Mark your calendar - Saturday, October 8, 2011 and look for your invite in August! For more information visit our website: www.stmaryscenter.org. To give an item, call Amy Vaughan (510) 923-9600 x 222.



Please come to our Gala on October 8th!

IS IT REALLY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION?

by Elena Berman



Over the next ten years, AC Transit is trying to more than double the cost of the Youth and Senior/Disabled pass. At the same time, the State is cutting \$15.00 more per month from SSI for the disabled/blind and seniors.

At a recent AC Transit Public Hearing, Milas Hackett spoke about one of the economic realities of low income seniors, when he said, “The bus fares keep going up and the bus lines keep getting cut and I haven’t had a cost of living adjustment in years.” Huey Tang represented the Chinese community at St. Mary’s Center and spoke about the immigrant community that doesn’t receive any government programs. He asked the board to respect the senior community by not raising the fares.

St. Mary’s Center joined Urban Habitat’s Transportation Justice Working Group to work in coalition with: United Seniors of Oakland and Alameda County (USOAC), Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), Genesis and Youth Uprising to achieve equity among the county’s transportation systems.

After all, if we don’t work to keep the “public” in transportation - what will be next? For more information about our advocacy efforts, call Hope & Justice Coordinator Elena Berman at (510) 923-9600 x 211.



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St. Mary's Dinner, Dance & Auction - October 8, 2011



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Yet we are aware that without senior housing programs, Section 8 and other programs, too many people are not able to feel their dignity, struggle to pay for rent, food, medications and heat. When you have a chance to support efforts for affordable housing for extremely low income people - think of Brenda and Benny and how lucky they feel!

After being on a waiting list for three years, Benny and Brenda finally have their dream ~ a one bedroom apartment at St. Mary's Gardens! We are delighted for them.



Finding a Home

Wish List

Money ~ So the poorest in our community have what is basic.
Garden ~ Hoses 50-100 feet with nozzles, Vegetable Seedlings, Garden Labels.
Kitchen ~ Mugs, Tea/Soup Spoons, Dish Washing Liquid (eco friendly), Sugar, Coffee, Heavy Duty Paper Plates, 5 oz Paper Cups, Paper Napkins, Salt and Pepper Shakers, Mixing Bowls
Office ~ Video Camera, Staplers & Scissors
For Our Gala ~ a great bottle of wine, a weekend getaway, dinner in your home, a handcrafted item

At the end of St. Mary's Shelter, Lady V noted: "It is my first time in an institution where they didn't push me out. I volunteered! It is not just us - there are lots of people like us."
 And then she broke into song ~ Lean on Me.
 Her sense of "the real" helps us see a picture many do not imagine. It is evident in the piece she wrote in the Writing Class ~
*I'm at her house now!
 To be continued ...
 St. Mary's house and I still don't know
 My own house when I use my mind to think
 Couldn't care less when I take a drink
 Other people's house when I use cocaine
 Lover's house when the husband made me mad
 Jailhouse prison when I was bad
 Husband and I house my married bed
 Friend's house on sleepovers
 School House during hurricanes
 Uncle's and Auntie's house for vacations
 In my bed at my Grandpa's house
 Grandma's and Grandpa's arms.*



Meet Lady V

"Places I've Slept"