

# End of Year Newsletter

## Reflections on 2016

Instead of “action and reaction” that weaved through the tapestry of last year’s events, this year seemed to be more peaceful and “pregnant with promise”. Our ministry experienced slow but steady growth consistently serving over 100 guests each meal rather than peaking at 100 the last few days of the month. We have a terrific and stable team of resident volunteers; a couple have been volunteering for almost 5 years (Marlin and Aaron). Those who visit us, remark, “Wow, this is a well-greased machine!” Thanks, Marlin, Aaron, Anthony, Robert, John, and Nieto!!! We have expanded our day volunteer teams, mostly women, from 2 to 3 now to 5-8 per day. The more the merrier! And our student volunteers now represent OLLU, Incarnate Word, and St. Mary’s, in addition to our old faithful, Trinity. And the 2015 Dorothy Day conference, sponsored by Oblate School of Theology, also introduced us to new monetary and food donors.

And finally, new this year, CWH has entered into several positive collaborative city-wide initiatives, including the effort to end veteran homelessness and an initiative to build a single-site permanent supportive apartment complex and/or a tiny home community using a housing first model (see articles below). So, YES!!!, It has been a very good year and we are extremely thankful to God for all of these blessings.

The year might have seemed almost too idyllic except that 2016 was an election year, quite a historic one at that. Homelessness was not a huge issue in the debates, but probable changes in HUD leadership under the new administration has the potential of undoing the good that has been accomplished over the past two years in regards to HUD’s support of permanent supportive housing using a Housing First model. This model has been especially beneficial for those experiencing chronic homelessness with additional challenges, such as, mental health issues, history of incarceration, poor credit ratings, and addictions. If this recent wave of support is crushed under the new administration, affordable housing opportunities for those experiencing chronic homelessness might likely diminish.

It seems that many individuals and organizations concerned with the dignity, safety, and justice for the most marginalized in our communities, experienced some sense of hopelessness at the lack of compassion exhibited during this last presidential campaign. Now that

the campaign is behind us, one might respond in one of several different ways:

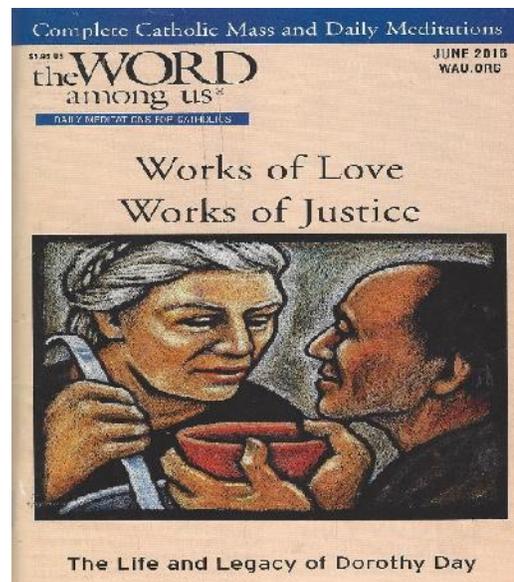
1. Depression, hopelessness, despondency
2. Anger, violence, and aggressive protest
3. Acceptance and hopefulness for unity (among those long-time vulnerable populations along with the newly identified vulnerable populations) such that a transformation might become possible.

WWDD or What Would Dorothy Do? We feel like she would promote the “third way”. That is, she would reach out to ALL of the vulnerable populations (new and long existing, like the homeless) and make an effort to unite them in solidarity to promote the common good.

Instead of building walls, she would foster plans for tearing down the barriers that separate the individual silos of vulnerable people along with their advocates and supporters. She would urge us to instead build bridges and be courageous in our efforts to unite in solidarity. Only TOGETHER are we strong enough to have an effect on leadership. Only TOGETHER, can we promote systemic changes in our economic, political, cultural, and spiritual forces and shape a better future for America.

Recently, the wearing of safety pins in an act of solidarity and expression of “safety” has become popular. At CWH, we provide and wear safety pins with beads (each color representing a different vulnerable population) to convey the message that CWH is a safe haven for all. Of course, we have always welcomed all, but NOW there seems to be a new sense of urgency to unite in solidarity, glued by compassion, in order to be stronger against the powers of hate, prejudice, oppression. Wearing the pin denotes the message, “I’m in”.

## Dorothy Day Is Honored Again...And Again



Dorothy Day's image was on the cover of the June issue of Word Among Us, a monthly publication featuring the readings for both daily and Sunday Masses. Additionally, 4 of the magazine's 6 articles featured the life and work of Dorothy and the Catholic Worker movement.



Thank you Mark Wittig for the enlarged framed copy which we hung in our soup kitchen between pictures of our local CWH founder, Dee Sanchez and longtime director and newsletter editor, Jim and Stephanie Grossnickle-Batterton

Additionally, Fr. James Martin, a very prolific and well known author whose books have won several awards...started his new weekly video series with Dorothy!!!!

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**VIDEO**  
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**DISPATCHES**  
In Ireland, a citizen's assembly will deliberate on the future of the country's constitutional ban on abortion. Rhona Tarrant has the story.

**PODCAST**  
America's Los Angeles correspondent, Jim McDermott, S.J., talks to Kerry Weber and Matt Malone about religion and television.

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November 24, 2016 America

## Ending Chronic Homelessness in SA

A very generous USAA donation to the city of SA pumped additional funding and energy into the push to end veteran homelessness. Some of our very own long term CWH guests received keys; however, they still join us for our strong coffee and nutritious hot lunches. It is fun to see their excitement and to hear about their new experiences.

During the three month push at the beginning of 2016, CWH was invited to participate in the city's "boot

camp" to locate, dialogue with, and help persuade our guests to make the giant step from chronic homelessness into an apartment with wrap-around support services. Many of the strategies developed by the city-wide team are now in place to meet the next local challenge...to end chronic homelessness. CWH will continue to contribute towards this effort as the majority of our guests do, in fact, meet the HUD criteria for chronic homelessness...at least one entire year of homelessness or 3 episodes of homelessness that total at least 12 months within a 3 year period.

The most challenging aspect of ending veteran homelessness was the lack of affordable housing stock and the recruitment of sympathetic landlords. This challenge dovetailed with the CWH aspiration to develop a single-site apartment community/hospitality center. CWH has been researching and raising awareness and support to build a dedicated apartment complex using a Housing First model with extensive wrap-around social/health/educational supports. For the past two years we have been searching for a motel/hotel to renovate and/or for a vacant property on the East side where apartments could be built from the ground up. There has been a great deal of support for the project by both private and city individuals, chiefly because affordable housing for this population is so scarce. Our efforts were featured in an article on Thanksgiving Day in the SA Express News.

SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS AND MEDIA.COM Thursday, November 24, 2016 | K25

**CHARITY**

# Catholic Worker House expanding its mission

Nonprofit establishing a Housing First approach to homelessness

**By Elaine Agala**

The Catholic Worker House of San Antonio has been creating the Housing First approach to homelessness. Over the last year, events at home, in Washington and as far as the Vatican have given hope to its mission to feed the hungry, which is continuing to do so on the city's East Side and house the (chronically) homeless, which it hopes to do.

When Pope Francis addressed Congress, he greeted four Americans, one of them was Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker Movement. It sparked a renewed interest in her social justice work.

More than 1,000 miles away in San Antonio, the Catholic Worker House felt the momentum, said Debra Plautche, its retired pediatrician and the nonprofit agency's volunteer director.

Those events helped find support for its next goal: Housing First, the chronic homelessness in affordable housing is what's called a "Housing First" approach.

Catholic Worker found an ally in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's emphasis on "Housing First" programs and program leaders in the City of San Antonio Department of Human Services and the South Alamo Regional Alliance for the Homeless, which prioritizes HUD funding for the city and county.

The concept of Housing First is unlike traditional homelessness programs that provide support services up front — job placement or substance abuse treatment — before providing temporary or permanent housing.

Housing First arranges for "a roof first," Plautche said, "where they feel safe and that restores their dignity, where they feel they are not looked down upon and can do all those necessary things — sleep, eat and go to the bathroom underneath their own roof, not in public places."

That dignity "gives them the desire to get out of some of the habits that cause them to be homeless over a long period of time," she said.

Catholic Worker wants to build or renovate a 60-to-80-unit apartment complex (think old motel) for the chronically homeless. To help pay for it, Catholic Worker would sell its three properties in Dignity Hill.

Plautche said the agency would raise money from private individuals and foundations and make use of tax credits. She said there's also potential funding from HUD and other governmental agencies.

Catholic Worker would continue to run its hospitality center near the proposed apartment complex, she said.

"Housing First is something this community is looking at," said Edward Gonzalez, assistant director of the city's Department of Human Services, which oversees homeless coordination, adding providers.

"Though it's not the only approach, the city supports it," he said.

Plautche is helping and "Housing First gives the homeless a place where they feel safe."

Chris Plautche, director, Catholic Worker House of San Antonio

Plautche, director of the Catholic Worker House and a retired pediatrician, assists homeless clients with food at the East Side facility.

Throughout the city, Catholic Worker would be the first to run a dedicated housing complex. Residents would live in an 80-to-100-unit facility.

To prove such centers are viable, Plautche has been living in one for almost five years. "I love it," she said. "An efficiency in all you need if you're by yourself, it's not a hardship at all."

The complex would bump up the number of affordable-housing units in the city, another focus of federal action, and require residents to pay one-third of their income to rent, whether that comes from full- or part-time work, Social Security or other income streams, she said.

Plautche is searching for land or properties on the East Side, where Catholic Worker has operated and where its clients are used to congregating, she said.

Several agencies in San Antonio are already getting Housing First federal funding, including Home for Hope. But providers have "scattered" housing

strategy in helping and "Housing First gives the homeless a place where they feel safe."

Gonzales, who's on the South Alamo Regional Alliance for the Homeless board, said Catholic Worker's proposed complex can become reality and that federal funding opportunities are available.

Plautche was an early proponent of the Housing First model, now in practice for two decades nationally. She said research just beginning to surface shows such programs are more cost-effective than temporary shelters in reversing chronic homelessness.

Several agencies in San Antonio are already getting Housing First federal funding, including Home for Hope. But providers have "scattered" housing

opinion@saexpress-news.net

## Volunteers Attend Seminars at MLF Community First in Austin, Texas

All six resident volunteers visited, provided supper hospitality to the current residents and spent the night at the Mobile Loaves and Fishes Community First Village in Austin, TX in October. We were blown away by its beauty, inclusiveness and immensity. 250 tiny homes/travel trailers are planned and most are already built/in place. The leaders did not miss a detail: health clinic, respite and hospice lodging, store, chapel, multiple cookout and picnic sites, a city public bus stop, a movie theater, café, four 10-person teepees for volunteer or retreat groups and much more. Two weeks later, two volunteers attended a 3-day seminar on how to put such a village together.



It was very inspiring.....and has become one of the options for permanent housing that CWH has been considering. Several 20+ acre parcels of vacant land have been researched and visited. So far none seems to be the perfect location. We continue to pray that the Spirit will eventually lead us to that location....whether urban or rural.

## Record Volunteer Day: July 12th

Two large independent groups totaling about 55 individuals blessed our guests with abundant food, clothing, hygiene supplies, music, and most of all, love. One was Brother Richard's M-25 Outreach Ministry (featured in our Spring 2016 newsletter) and the other was a one-time college group from Dallas, TX. It was quite an exciting day, especially in trying to juggle the chores and moving some activities to the back courtyard.



Brother Richard's M-25 Outreach Ministry a monthly blessing. This time a teen group helped out.



Dallas Mission Group

## OLPH Men's Prayer Ministry Keeps Raising the Bar! Steaks in June! Really???





with the "Four Great American's" (one of them Dorothy) commemorating his address to the US Congress in September 2015.

Augie, owner of Augie's Barbed Wire BBQ, has provided CWH with MOST of our hot lunch entrées and sides for over a decade. Without Augie's generous donations, our hot lunches would be really skimpy. Thank you so very much, Augie, for thousands of delicious lunches each year.



Rick Grigsby, for St. Mark's Mobile Loaves and Fishes as they have been contributing most of the breakfast items, some of lunch items, and all of the suppers since 2010!!! CWH most active partner!

Holy Spirit Sisters for their support is so many ways: soup kitchen volunteering, board membership, individual donations and the annual Christmas grant.

Rev. Clifford Waller, a former Board Member and major donor, in particular, Erin's House, and all new windows in Faith and Day Houses. He has been a long-time quiet giant for CW.

Yup! It's true! Just asked the 120+ guests who joined us for the meal!



Mr. and Mrs. Mike Stehling who have been long time contributors to the CWH over two decades as well as big supporters of ACTS and immigrant programs.



Mike Polanco, leader of OLPH Church Men's Prayer Group who instigated the monthly Saturday cook-offs (see "steak feast" above) and huge blessings of hygiene supplies, socks and underwear each Christmas season.

Poncho and Gringo's, a CWH friendly restaurant on Nolan just 2 blocks away from us. We have held many lunch meetings there and we are graciously treated.

Mike Etienne, CEO of the Promise Zone on the Eastside. His help with locating and leveraging funding for our

## Several Donors, Volunteers, and CWH Supporters Recognized

Thanks to the generosity of Mark Wittig, long time CWH Board Member and Board President, a few of our outstanding supporters over the past 20 years were presented with framed image of Dorothy Day on the cover of Word Among Us or the image of Pope Francis

permanent supportive housing - Housing First project has been much appreciated.

Eileen Moxley, our Donor of the Year, for her "extreme" generosity all year in providing all of the coffee service, ice, cleaning, and paper goods needed for the ministry each month. Thanks again so very much, Eileen! (See related story on Eileen in the Spring 2016 newsletter.)

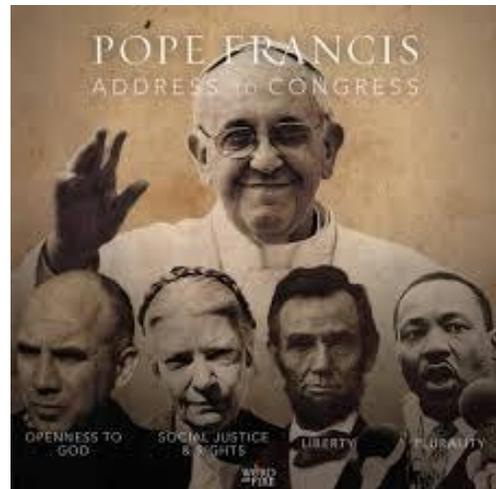
Oblate School of Theology received both images for the new "Dorothy Day Conference Room" in gratitude for the Dorothy Day Social Justice Conference that the school hosted last year.... in conjunction with our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!! We also received a totally unexpected spin off blessing...delicious left-overs from the OST dining hall year around!



Lynn Goodmanstrauss, founder/director, and resident, Manual, accepted a Dorothy Day image for Maryhouse CWH, a hospice ministry in Austin, TX.



Yes, and Pope Francis himself!!! CWH mailed him the image of him with the "Four Great Americans" on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. We wanted to convey our gratitude for his recognition of Dorothy as one of the four "Greats". And we even received a "Thank You" letter!



## Tobit Ministry

Public awareness is increasing about the Tobit Ministry funeral and burial services available to those who have passed while living on the streets. On December 1<sup>st</sup>, Debbie Taylor, a H4H member who lived on the streets for 20 years was buried with a very solemn and beautiful ceremony. Although she never visited CWH, she was well known by both the Resurrection and Chow Train ministries.

Tobit brochures are now available at CWH. Thank you Paul Vance for your vision and generosity.

## SA Memorial Service



Once again SAMM Ministries and the City of San Antonio will host the annual memorial service for all of those who died in 2016 while experiencing homelessness. It is always held on the longest night of the year, December 21<sup>st</sup>. It is held at the gazebo at Milam Park at 7 PM on that Wednesday night. Nine CWH members will be remembered that night. It is a very moving and reverent event for any who are interested in paying their respects.

## Open Door Baptist Church in Cibalo



Many thanks to the Open Door Baptist Church Cibalo. In September, the women's group lead by the pastor's wife, Cathi, dropped off boxes of hygiene supplies, new T-shirts and socks. Not only did they bring all of these wonderful items, but they packaged them in home-stitched tote bags of really exceptional quality. This

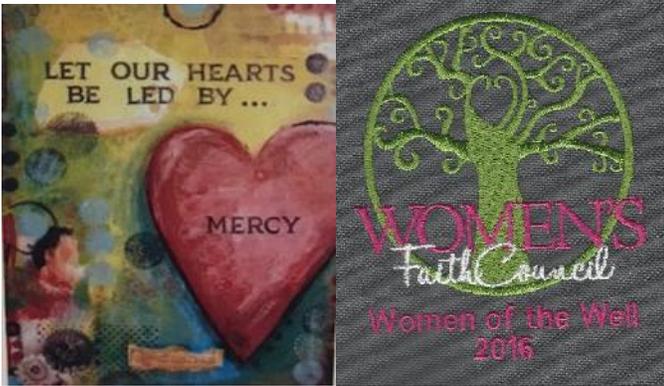
was not the first time that they have done it. They have delivered goodies several times as secret Angels and we did not even know anything about it since they gave the goodies directly to the folks in our courtyard. It seems that the congregation felt called by the Lord to get more involved in the outer community. Thus, they have been bringing these items to our friends who live outside all year. Thank you so very much for your generosity.

## Annual Beer Festival and Monthly Dignowity Music Festival

The Beer Festival and now a monthly Music Festival at Dignowity Park has opened up a new venue for CWH hospitality...this time to our housed neighbors. These events have bathrooms limited to temporary port-o-potties. Thinking that the event clientele, especially the females, might be grateful for REAL bathrooms, we opened our doors for bathrooms and mint or citrus water. We also offered free parking for those with disabilities. Just trying to do our part for the community!



## Retreat Focusing on the Works of Mercy



CWH was invited to lead an all-day women's retreat in Boerne at St. Peter's on the Rock Catholic Church. It came at the time when Pope Francis' Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy was coming to a close, so the topic was on "mercy". It seems that the retreat planners felt that CWH was a flowing fountain of the works of mercy (both corporal and spiritual) and thus CW was invited to speak. It was sponsored by the Women's Faith Council and was a true celebration of joy as well as a retreat.

## Northwest Vista College Video Production

CWH was chosen as one of the non-profit agencies for a class project in advanced video production. We were fortunate to have some really enthusiastic and talented students assigned to our project. They did a great job of filming, interviewing and editing!! The 4 minute video highlighting our ministry is posted on the CWH website soon. Thank you Pedro Class and Eloy Ramos!!!

## What We Really Need

We know that you received a prior request for items that are very much needed, but just a brief reminder:

1. Used dishes – plates, forks, and coffee mugs
2. Hygiene supplies, especially toothpaste, brushes and men's deodorant.
3. Socks, and men's underwear (especially M and L)
4. And, of course, monetary donations &/or gift cards

## What It Feels Like (Or So I'm Told) To Experience Homelessness

by [confessionsofabanshee](#)

Want a quick way to be ignored, feel stigmatized, or miss out on an opportunity that is well deserved? Just say, "I'm experiencing homelessness."

"Oh, um. Okay, well. I just don't know what I can do for you."

"What's wrong with you? What happened to you?"

"Is there someplace else you can go?"

For nearly a decade, I have repeatedly heard these and a million other ignorant comments and questions fielded to my clients that are experiencing homelessness. Granted, over the years I have learned that I cannot expect people to understand what it feels like for those that experience homelessness, what homelessness really is, or why it is an issue that warrants our collective empathy. Homelessness is an incredibly complicated social issue. It is utterly misunderstood, poorly depicted and completely stigmatized in our culture. It is not surprising that most people are not only clueless but also unaware and ill-informed. Though most days I feel that there is still much to learn, here is my attempt to put into words what it feels like (or so I'm told) to experience homelessness.

To experience homelessness is to **experience loss**. It is the loss of a job, a home, a marriage, a child, a pet. It is the loss of stability, good health, a sane mind. It is the loss of control over an addiction. It is the loss of ability to provide for yourself or your family. It is the loss of friends, of privacy, of shelter, of comfort. It is the absolute loss of hope, the loss of self, and the loss of dignity, self-worth, and pride. It is the loss of all that makes us feel most human. To experience homelessness is to experience loss every second of every day, yet the struggle to simply survive is so unrelenting there is no time to grieve.

To experience homelessness is to **experience worry**. It is to worry about where to sleep, what the weather will bring, when law enforcement will hassle you, and if your belongings will get stolen in the night. It is to worry about the invasive and aggressive voices in your head and when they might stop telling you to kill yourself. It is to worry about getting stabbed, beaten and/or raped on the streets. It is to worry about where you can find a little something to help you sleep, where your next meal will come from, or how you will pay for the trespassing ticket you are sure to be issued. It is to worry about finding a private enough place to relieve yourself. It is to worry that you may never, ever be able to get off the streets. To experience homelessness is to experience worry every

second of every day, yet the struggle to simply survive is so unrelenting there is no time to unwind.

To experience homelessness is to **experience dehumanization**. It is to watch the disapproving eyes of passersby who refuse to make eye contact with you. It is to feel lesser, insignificant, inhuman. It is to ask for help and be ignored. It is to experience verbal and physical abuse. It is to have your individuality disregarded, your value as a human diminished. It is to elicit abhorrence, disgust and exasperation from others instead of compassion and empathy. To experience homelessness is to experience dehumanization every second of every day, yet the struggle to simply survive is so unrelenting there is no time to feel human.

To experience homelessness is to **struggle with insufferable moral choices**. It is to question whether the values that you have always held will serve you in the animalistic and dangerous world of the streets. It is to abandon long-held ideals and standards to meet more basic, more primal, more pressing needs. It is to become someone entirely new, not out of desire but out of a necessity that those who have not experienced homelessness cannot even begin to understand. To experience homelessness is to struggle with insufferable moral choices every second of every day, yet the struggle to simply survive is so unrelenting there is no time for choice.

To experience homelessness is to **see a perspective not afforded to most**. It is to learn that the most valuable piece of our humanity is our connection to others. It is to know the true value of functioning collectively and asking for support. It is to be loyal to and protective of those around us. It is to reach deep within the oldest part of our brains and deepest part of our souls to find the skills, the resources, the courage and the strength to survive.

To experience homelessness is to **gain this profound perspective every second of every day, yet to express this perspective is fruitless because if you are experiencing homelessness, no one is listening to you**.