



## I Can See Clearly Now

Our lives as Sisters of St. Francis require us to attend some meetings of Sisters and at these gatherings we share food and conviviality as well as serious discussions about our future. Recently we (the Sisters that labor at St. Mary's) agreed to bring dinner to the meeting. We chose our menu and parceled out the tasks of preparation, and pretty much the whole day of our supper meeting was spent making our dinner. We peeled potatoes and snapped asparagus and timed the roast to be ready for slicing and making gravy just before the trip to the meeting site. Earlier we had baked pies and cooked mushrooms.

As the afternoon progressed we mashed the potatoes and cooked the veggie and then we packed it all up covered and snug so that the gravy wouldn't spill and the side dishes were kept hot. We drove to the designated place, unpacked and slipped all the food into warm ovens and soon the assembled sisters were enjoying a good dinner having come straight from their places of work.

It wasn't until later that it dawned on me, all that preparation and cooking and transporting and keeping hot and delicious.. .all that toil is exactly what somebody does for St. Mary's Shelter every night of the week!

The Good Parishioners of the over 30 Churches in our meals program supply us with a delicious dinner, most often fully cooked and table ready promptly for dinner at 5:30. They even cater to the staff's jitters by bringing the feast early so that we know what we have and can slice the meat or cook the noodles in timely fashion. We are so lucky to have friends like these! Some examples-

One hot summer day, a little grandmother made the trip to the shelter with her grand children in tow. She had made a roast and cake for us and I'm sure her kitchen was humming and steamy that day as she wiped her brow and presented our dinner to us. It was her day to mind the grandkids AND to make our dinner for 15 to 18 people. Transporting it here was just another part of the deal.

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Last Christmas Eve we received a special treat. Gourmet food and lots of it, shrimp cocktail and beef tenderloin, crisp vegetables and cheese cake for dessert, and even chicken tenders and macaroni and cheese to cater to the kiddies with their favorite dishes. All this done single-handedly by one good woman, herself recently recovered from winter illness. She felt like canceling, but she didn't want to disappoint us, so all the treats arrived as scheduled and we devoured them.

One of my first days at St. Mary's happened to be

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## Case Manager's Report

Recently, through the power of the internet, American audiences and indeed audiences around the world have witnessed the phenomenon of Susan Boyle. She is a forty-something Scottish spinster from a small village that presented herself on a talent show asking for a chance to sing. To look at her frumpy outfit, her simple remarks and her transparent aspiration to be a famous singer, the judges and audience alike made it clear that they expected little from Susan Boyle.

Some smiled pityingly, some were derisive in their comments, others regretted her pain when she would face the rejection of the judges at the close of her act. No one expected much from Susan Boyle...until she sang! She opened her mouth and the ringing notes of "I dreamed a dream" from Les Miserables brought the audience and judges to their feet. She was fantastic, and all the more sensational because no one expected a good performance.

In the weeks since that time she has become a hero to all of us. Most of the world is in recession and we are painfully aware that the cards are stacked against us. We need someone to inspire us, and Susan Boyle is just the woman for that job, too.

In a way, our families here are a lot like Susan Boyle, a little disheveled, a little dusty and a little lost when they arrive. They don't look like much when you first view them, but in the long run, we end up cheering for most as they get their lives back on track and get busy providing something better for their children.

This spring's residents include a woman that is "great with child." She is due to deliver before these words reach your mailbox, but her patience and care with the three other children she has with her cause us all to remark. Her children are a joy to have with us. They are respectful and mannerly and openly loving. It is clear that

they have been raised to make something of themselves. She has a plan to provide for her family and we hope and pray that it comes about. God bless her and the child to come, too.

Another of our local heroes is a grandmother that arrived with her two small grandchildren in tow, the last one being born in prison. She is trying to make some sort of stable life for these children. She has begun well. They are polite and respectful and they have both been enrolled in school. We are challenged to help her find some appropriate housing beyond our doors, but for the time being, they too, are a joy to have with us. Remember us all in your prayers this summer.

### Collection That Helps

The third grades from Springford Area recently decided to help us once again. They called first to hear of our needs and collected "change" to help us. The result was that one of the proctors arrived with gift cards totaling over 200 dollars! We so appreciate the call first because we received something we can really use. In this case, milk and cheese and fresh fruit can be added to our staples so that healthy lunches are provided.

If you (or your group) get inspired by this report, call ahead to converse about your idea and how it could fit our needs. We can use much help, but some things are better than others.  
610-933-3097



One fine day this spring a group of willing workers arrived from the Renaissance Academy in Phoenixville. These fine students were there to do their Senior Project by weeding and mulching our new plantings on Emmett St. They worked assiduously for the

most part and loaded the bags of weeds into our truck for later disposal. With some of the Home Depot Gift Cards I had purchased 30 bags of mulch to be added to our ground cover area to curtail the growth of weeds. At this writing things look pretty good out there and we thank these one-time lawn workers. They did an excellent job!



## Memorial



On May 4th, we held a small ceremony at the Shelter. About 40 of our Board Members, Sisters, Volunteers, Consortium Partners and others gathered to dedicate our Dining Room in Memory of Sr. Emma. In song and prayer and shared recollections, we placed a plaque to commemorate Sr. Emma's nearly twenty years of dedicated service to St. Mary's. Sister always produced the best meals, the most attractive decorations and the warmest welcome to our clients in that same Dining Room. It seemed altogether fitting that we formalize our intention and inscribe her name there. The next time you stop at the Shelter, ask to see our modest effort. Sr. Emma knew that we had these plans in mind. We think she would be happy with the result. She inspires us still.

## I Can see Clearly cont.

Valentine's Day (1996). I answered the door and received the specially prepared dinner. The cook told me that she worked three part-time jobs to make her own ends meet, and that if one piece of that edifice collapsed, she might be knocking on our door for admittance not for meal presentation. You should have seen that dinner, simple but lovingly prepared. She had purchased a flower for each parent in the house. She had made a heart shaped cake for dessert. She had cooked beef stew and she had heart-shaped potatoes and carrots in there having chopped them with a miniature cookie cutter. A lot of love and thanks went into that dinner. She was thankful for what she had and she shared that gratitude with us. We were thankful for her hard work and thoughtfulness and the delicious result. I guess that an atmosphere of gratitude and generosity makes for good seasoning, because our meals are delicious and appreciated by staff and volunteers and residents, night after night.



## Honor Roll of Schools



St. Aloysius..... Pottstown  
 Villa Maria Academy .....Malvern  
 St. Basil's Bread for Life..... Kimberton  
 St. Ann's Confirmation Class .....Phoenixville  
 Our Lady of Perpetual Help .....Morton  
 Mary, Mother of the Redeemer .....North Wales  
 St. Basil's Grade 6 .....Kimberton  
 St. Joseph's PREP .....Downingtown  
 Our Lady of Mt. Carmel..... Doylestown  
 St. Teresa of Avila .....Norristown

St. Agnes CCD ..... West Chester  
 East Pikeland School..... K Kids  
 Presentation BVM .....Wynnewood  
 St. Cornelius.....Chadds Ford  
 Holy Saviour..... Linwood

Phoenixville Area Middle School  
 Phoenixville

Barkley School - Girls on the Run  
 Phoenixville

Middle grade Sunday School  
 St. Peter's Pikeland



## Needs List

Large cans/ bottles of Juice

Mac'n cheese mix

Individually wrapped snacks for lunches

Cold cereal

Iced tea mix w/lemon and sugar

Clorox Wipes

Gift cards from:

Giant Home Depot Wawa Staples



NON-PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PHOENIXVILLE, PA  
PERMIT NO. 12

ST. MARY'S FRANCISCAN SHELTER  
209 EMMETT STREET  
PHOENIXVILLE, PA 19460