



Summer Storms

Probably each of us has a story of a lightning strike that took out a favorite tree or of the floodwaters that filled the back yard. Yes, this summer's storms have been frequent and powerful. Still, as the saying goes: "Tis an ill wind that blows no one good", and these words have proved true for me.

It was a Sunday morning and we had an engagement for the afternoon. We were home, leisurely drinking our morning coffee and thinking about cooking the eggs when the power went out. That quickly our lives had changed! Ours is an electrical household and so we could not cook the eggs. Our water comes from a well and so we could not take our showers or flush our toilets. We finished our coffee and drove to the Shelter to cook and wash and dress. We counted our selves lucky to have this back-up plan.

Later, fed and clean and dressed for company we reflected on our situation and how quickly we became so needy, not unlike our Shelter residents. Their lives are proceeding and sometimes an outside force has a very personal effect and soon they are on our doorstep seeking what help we can offer. And as with us, they thank God that there is some place to go in the emergency.

We feel blessed to be able to offer assistance and the Shelter exists and flourishes because many benefactors join us to extend a helping hand. Each year we ask the schools and parishes and Sunday Schools to consider doing a project, which will net us some dollars to help our cause. Many read our begging letters and send us a donation.

Some companies and offices remember us also and Christmas comes all year long, with office monetary collections and corps of workers to do yard work or painting, and even treats for the

helpers on staff. We are so grateful for all these many kindnesses and our residents are thankful too for the food and household goods that we are able to send with them to their next home beyond our doors.

Life's tempests may cause havoc, but when kind people roll up their sleeves to lend a hand, both givers and receivers benefit.

God bless us all!

Sept. 2009

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Case Manager's Report

One of our recent residents succeeded in finding another job similar to the one she lost before arriving to stay with us. She was assiduous in her search for employment and it paid off for her. Unlike some others that come our way, she seemed to know little or nothing of "public assistance" or "food stamps". She was used to making her own way and finding the breaks she needed. She and her daughter were very good residents. They did what we asked and as soon as they get set-up in their own place, we will be helping them with donated furniture and household items. They have returned to the independent life they have always known.

In our last Newsletter I spoke of our expected child. Well, he arrived and what a good new baby he was. He and the rest of his family moved on in early July, but we had occasion to see them again in early August. Mom was busy applying for jobs in her field and all the kids remembered us from their time in our Shelter. We are "waiting in the wings", to cheer for the great accomplishments we expect will come from this courageous woman.

Summer Fix-ups

As we usually do, we have closed to residents for the month of August. Some of the repairs planned for this 'down time' are:

1. Excavation and repairs of a broken sewer line beneath our driveway.
2. Construction of radiator covers for the resident's rooms.
3. Replacement of a damaged attic vent high on the front of the Shelter.
4. Enclosing the panels beneath the windows on the front porch.
5. Removal of old paint and refinishing of the back banisters in the Shelter.

In addition, we will be shampooing all the rugs, cleaning all the furniture and washing all the windows and curtains before the first new residents arrive after Labor Day. We have secured some grants to help pay for some of these projects, and some of the builders have promised a good price.

Welcome to New Readers

We say a warm welcome to our newest additions to our mailing list. We publish this Newsletter four times a year. If you are trying to reduce the contents of your mailbox, just let us know and we will cease sending this missive.

Phone - 610-933-3097

E-mail stmarysfs@verizon.net

New Face on the Weekends

We have a new part time person helping us to make the home for the Homeless these days, and if you bring something to the Shelter on weekends, you may meet her. She is Michele Cassada and as with our other employees, we seem to have found another careful generous person to assist us.

Welcome aboard, Michele!

Touring Other Shelters

As a Shelter provider we are required to post our openings on an internet page so that people that need our help can find us. All the other Shelter providers must likewise post their openings. We know the staff members in the other shelters because we see them at Chester County meetings and forums. We get a general idea about the other Shelters, but we never actually see their facility. This year we decided to visit.

We took advantage of the August 'down time' and made arrangements to visit two other Shelters, one in Pottstown and the other in Coatesville. Both of the Shelters were also family shelters, like ours.

In Pottstown, the Shelter is run by the Salvation Army, and it has twelve rooms, about double our capacity. The length of stay is also 8 weeks like ours. They have staff on duty and awake for 24 hours per day. They provide meals for their residents, which they purchase for the most part.

In Coatesville, the Shelter is CYWA, which stands for Children, Youth, & Women's Alliance. In Coatesville, single women as well as

families may stay there. Their length of stay is also 8 weeks. In the late evening, the receptionist leaves and so after a certain time, the place is locked and will re-open in the morning. The residents must get their own meals in the kitchen provided. They encourage their residents to cook together and provide for each other, but some groups do not accomplish this.

In general, we believe our Shelter is less institutional than the others. Since we all eat together, and share the duties of getting the table set and the meal on the table and cleaned up afterward, we believe it is more like home. Sometimes when I speak in public about our work, I say, "We make the home for the Homeless". After visiting other places, this thought has been confirmed.

In the early days of St. Mary's the two founding Sisters lived in the Shelter and they truly shared their home with their less fortunate brothers and sisters. Now our staff lives elsewhere, with their own family, but while they are here, they strive to make St. Mary's a welcoming place that is clean and orderly and open to those that need assistance.

Honor Roll of Schools



Appearing in this section soon will be the list of schools that sent us a monetary donation to help keep the Shelter operating. If you are involved in some school's staff, consider suggesting that they do a project to raise some money for us. If you need ideas or want to discuss options, call 610-933-3097. Your school's name belongs on our list!

United Way Number

Many businesses do fall sign-ups for United Way Donations. They take the money you designate out of your paycheck before you even see it. It is painless giving, in a way. We are a **Donor Option Agency**. This means that people must direct United Way to send all or part of their donation to us by using our unique number. Our Donor Option Number is **9208**. We deeply appreciate all the donations that come through United Way. It is another instance of joining hands to help the Homeless.



Needs List

Giant Gift Cards

Liquid Laundry Detergent

Plastic Wrap

Stamps

Aluminum foil

Regular Coffee

Individually wrapped snacks and juice cartons
for lunches

Cash for Cans

We are still collecting soda and beer cans, and we know that many barbecues and parties have been scheduled this summer. If that bag of cans is full now, bring them up to us. We accept them clean or unwashed, crushed or un-crushed. We will pick them up if call 610-933-3097.



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