



# PEACE HOUSE COMMUNITY

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## Mission:

The goal of Peace House Community is to offer a non-violent, welcoming and inclusive community for poor and marginalized women and men who are seeking companionship, safety from the streets and personal affirmation. PHC provides a platform for expressing beliefs, hurts, desperation, hopes and fears too long hidden in so many bruised and broken hearts. Community members are affirmed through mutual sharing, respectful listening and appreciation of each person's value and worth.

# SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER

## BUILDING REOPENING!

July 1, 2021



After more than a year of providing all our services in our parking lot, Peace House Community reopened its building to the community! On July 1st, we welcomed about 50 community

members with our daily meditation time and a cookout as we celebrated the safe reopening of our building.

## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Rob and Ed have been coming to Peace House Community for years. Ed started coming about the time PHC moved to its current building in 2013, but Rob is an old timer who knew Sister Rose Tillemans, PHC's founder. He says he was only 16 when he first came through the door of what was then "the living room on Franklin Avenue." Living on the streets means moving around a lot, which makes it difficult to stay in touch with people and places. So what was it about PHC that kept the brothers coming back through all the years? Rob answers first. "The atmosphere. Even though we bump heads sometimes, for the most part it's a safe haven. It's kind of a place you can relax here and get away from the daily chaos." Still living on the streets at the moment, Rob often stops by PHC to get some sleep and catch up with his friends.

Ed, who has had his own place for the last year, visits PHC almost daily. "I like coming back here because it gets me out of the house to interact with other people I know that come here," he explains, pointing out that life isn't all smooth sailing just because he has a place to sleep. "Peace House just gives me a few hours away from what I be going through. Even though I got my own place, if I get stressed out, I know I can come here and relax a little bit."



Rob & Ed

Ed still remembers the value PHC brings to those without homes too. "Especially for the homeless people", he explains "It's a place they can hang out for a few hours and get away from the issues that they're dealing, and then move on with the rest of their day."

But can't the community members get that from other social service agencies? "Peace House is a lot smaller than other places," says Ed. "It's more family orientated because pretty much everybody knows each other. It's pretty much the same people every day. Everybody pretty much gets along because everyone knows everyone else." It may seem like a silly question, but will Rob keep coming to PHC once he gets his own place? "Yeah," he says emphatically. "I'm here for life." And with a little luck, Rob will be in his place quickly. He was recently approved for SSI and will begin an apartment search, with help from another social service agency, before the end of summer.

# DIRECTOR'S CORNER



For months, community members and volunteers asked me when we would reopen the building. We were all looking forward to that day. Reopening would show that PHC had truly weathered the pandemic and that we were getting back to the ministry that Sister Rose envisioned all those years ago.

When we finally opened the building on July 1 I experienced a mixture of pride and apprehension at how things would run. Of course, I had a mental image of what would happen: we would have difficulty convincing everyone to wear masks inside, community members would be excited that we were bringing back the meditation time, and we would learn how best to share our building space with Loaves and Fishes.

Nothing went as I had expected, because everyone stayed outside. The entire community was happy to have the building open, but even in 90 degree weather we found the outdoors more pleasant than being cooped up in a building.

To be honest, I'm more bemused than disappointed with this turn of events. For years a portion of the community has preferred sitting on our porch to coming inside, and we haven't done a great job of reaching them because we have thought of our ministry as the activity that happens in the building. I often encouraged volunteers to spend more time outside, but they were always worried about missing something inside. Now that everyone has decided they want to be in the same place, we are seeing new friendships develop, and we are learning to be more flexible in our understanding of what PHC is and does. Undoubtedly as the weather cools later in the year and the community starts moving inside we will adapt again, gaining even more insights into our own ministry. While Covid has inflicted untold hardships on our society, it has also uncovered new opportunities for all of us (and for each of us) to connect with those around us. I don't know if that benefit will ever outweigh the pain that we have experienced, but at least we can know that the suffering was not completely in vain.

In the end, PHC will be richer for having survived the pandemic.

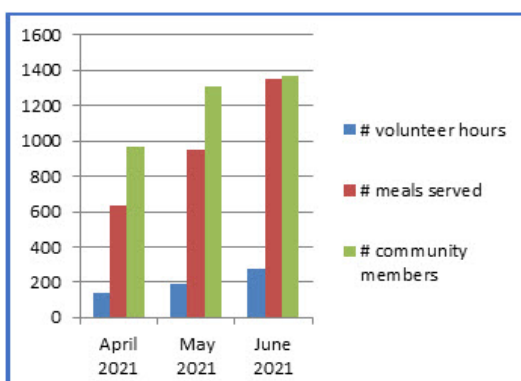
## VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Mary Robinson and Marti Malby have been developing a robust volunteer training program for both new and long-time volunteers and Board members. Recently Marti led a discussion on the aspects of homeless culture to help volunteers better understand the behaviors of some of our community members. Participants asked questions, shared stories and advice on how to better communicate and learn from our community members. Future topics will include recognizing and respecting personal boundaries.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The PHC Board of Directors – David Scott (Chair), Tim Sheehan (Vice Chair), Jim Reetz (Treasurer), Bill Cullen, Jane Murphy, Patrick Messmer, Jen Vetter, Rachel Kennedy, Deborah Dapkus (Secretary), Catherine Mamer (Honorary Member) and Marti Malby (Director) – have been tackling the issue of how the Board balances providing both operational direction and strategic planning for PHC. Areas of focus and discussion include careful recruitment of volunteers and Board members; the need to support fundraising and volunteerism; advocacy, especially within the PHC neighborhood; and continuing to provide a safe and nurturing space for the community members. We thank the Board for their dedication and hard work.

## THE NEED IS GREATER THAN EVER



As this graph shows, the need for what the Peace House Community provides is growing. In fact, for the last three months we have broken our own records in number of meals served and community members welcomed. As the weather turns colder and the eviction moratorium nears the end, the community members will need our support more than ever. By financially supporting PHC, you help us meet the social, emotional and physical needs of the community. In addition to monetary donations, you can donate daily necessities such as hygiene products, socks, underwear and more. These items can be purchased through the PHC Gift Registry on both Target and Amazon websites. We sincerely thank you for your continued generosity and support.