



Parish Kitchen

Celebrating

years

Dignity Respect Affection Attention Hospitality



Spring 2024

Chris Goddard

Catholic Charities,
Executive Director

Parish Kitchen Staff

Jim Wendeln

Parish Kitchen Manager

Amy Bauer

Assistant Manager

Mindy Garcia

Parish Kitchen Associate

Weekend Staff

Lisa Horney

Chris Meyers

Erica Sellman

Clare Vetter

Jim Young

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Show Mercy, be Jesus to Others

By Jill Walch, Volunteer Coordinator

At 5:30 pm on March 28, 2024, the Receptions Event Center underwent a magical transformation into a tranquil haven filled with exquisite table decorations, beautiful decor, and a delightful aroma floating in the air. The Appreciation event began with the room lighting up as familiar faces arrived, bringing with them smiles, laughter, and tears of joy. Each guest brought their own unique life experiences, connecting in a web of love shared by those who believe in the power of giving and receiving.



Volunteers enjoying Appreciation Dinner event

Sr. Fidelis Tracy, a dedicated volunteer from Catholic Charities, delivered a moving message about the importance of giving our gifts to others, no matter how big or small, and the positive impact it can have. She emphasized the significance of both being appreciated and appreciating others. Chris Goddard, the Executive Director of Catholic Charities, spoke about the significance of showing mercy as taught by Jesus. He stressed the importance of treating others with kindness and compassion, as if they were Christ in disguise. This includes helping our neighbors in their time of need, both spiritually and physically. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of spreading the message of evangelization.

Bishop John Iffert reminded everyone that “we *all* experience poverty in some form” and encouraged us to “invite people to be Jesus to others.” If we all remember to aid our neighbor, the ripple effect will have the world looking at the change and non-Christians saying, “look how those Christians love one another!”

The event also included a special tribute to Rosalie and Dick Hentz, who received the prestigious 2024 Marcella Strategier Angel of Hope Award, and The Rotary Club of Covington, who were honored with the 2024 Community Partner Award. It was a day dedicated to expressing gratitude to all the donors and volunteers for their continuous support and commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of others, not just on this day, but every day. *(additional photos on page 6)*

Dignity

Fifty Faces of Parish Kitchen

During 2024, we will be highlighting the “Fifty Faces of Parish Kitchen” and celebrating our volunteers and donors who have made our 50 years possible. We asked our guests, volunteers and donors what Parish Kitchen means to them, and we thought we would share that with all of our readers.



“What does Parish Kitchen mean to you?”

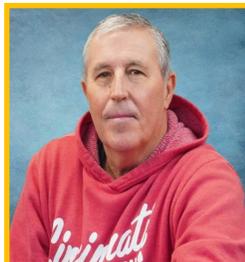
“Thanks, Parish Kitchen! You guys have filled a void in my life along with many others. Your dedication, friendliness and helping people like me has been many blessings throughout the past 50 years. Thank you all.” Yours truly, Jim



“Parish Kitchen is a blessing.”



“I can hardly remember a time when the Parish Kitchen wasn’t in my life! As a child I occasionally tagged along with my mom, grandma and aunt who volunteered every Tuesday. As a college student I subbed as needed, and I finally joined the Tuesday crew in 2003. You can imagine that I’ve seen many changes (especially the move from Pike St.) and met a variety of people, including staff (Molly, Jim, Troy, Maria, Jim, Pip, Sr. Carlene, Drew, Amy and Mindy) volunteers, and guests. The common thread has always been the loving attitude of everyone in the room. I tell anyone who asks that I get more out of my visits than I ever give. My own problems feel much smaller when I leave than when I arrived and the camaraderie lifts me up. I also enjoy the quizzical looks of my family and friends when I’m greeted by name, by my homeless friends in Covington! I love being part of this community.”



Affection

Attention

Hospitality

Respect

Respect



Hospitality



Attention



Affection



Dignity



“What does Parish Kitchen mean to you?”

“Parish Kitchen means so much to me and the community. They have always been a warm, friendly face that helps the community. My favorite meal is tacos. It’s wonderful to have Parish Kitchen.”

“Parish Kitchen is a place that only has five loaves of bread and only two fish but they manage to feed everyone from 11:30-1:30 everyday and even on the holidays. They do not take a day off. They are a miracle to me and I know I can get a little something in my belly everyday. I’m glad I found Parish Kitchen. Truly doing God’s work.”

“I come here to eat. Social security pays rent. That means I don’t have anything else to live on.”

“Parish Kitchen means a lot more than food, it means friends and family.”

“What Parish Kitchen means to us is a place to get a warm meal, warm clothes and a warm place from the cold.”



The Generosity of Spirit and Treasure

By Karen Kuhlman

The generosity of spirit and treasure of those who see a need and fill it by simply extending a hand can change the lives of many they may never meet.

That impact is an enduring testimony to the generosity of spirit and treasure of Father Bill Mertes and the parishioners of Mother of God Parish. Fifty years ago, they saw a need and began to fill it by first opening their hearts and then by preparing and serving meals to the hungry in the church undercroft. Five decades later, the Parish Kitchen continues to be an incubator of hope for those with few options for their daily bread. Kitchen managers Molly Navin, Dan Nolan, Troy Gerard, and Maria Meyer each brought their own gifts to Parish Kitchen over the decades. Today, Jim Wendeln shares his gifts as he carries forth their ministry as the manager of Parish Kitchen.

Alan Pickett, former Executive Director of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington, said, "Since 1974, the remarkable commitment and dedication of the volunteers throughout the history of Parish Kitchen is a testament to the faith. People see a need, feel called to respond, and lend a hand. It is particularly moving when you can see an immediate impact: someone comes in hungry, and leaves filled. That's not always available in some ministries: you plant seeds but sometimes wait weeks, months, or years to see the results of your ministry. It is almost a privilege to assist the hungry and suffering, giving them dignity and respect by inviting them into the dining room and offering them a meal. We have been honored to know so many who come to enjoy and depend on our daily meal."



Although the mission had not changed, a few years ago, the steady transformation of Covington suggested that relocating Parish Kitchen would better serve those who had come to rely on Catholic Charities for a daily meal. There were several elements to consider as the city transformed: much of the less expensive, tenement -type housing was being demolished to make way for new residences, and the people we served had to move. The Pike and Russell location was no longer the center of a large, robust neighborhood with many residents.

Providence lent a hand, and the new Parish Kitchen location has turned out to be a wonderful place to serve the guests and provide opportunities to collaborate with other ministries and social service agencies. The Life Learning Center, the Kentucky Career Center, the Samaritan Car Center, the Lord's Gym, the Rose Garden Mission, and Madison Avenue Christian Church form a corridor of outreach services less than a mile away from each other. There is a crossover of those we serve, and we are happy to be good neighbors working together for the common good. The camaraderie and mutual support between Covington agencies and Catholic Charities' Parish Kitchen is very special.

Alan Pickett said, "We never ask questions, qualify our guests, or count the meals we serve daily. But we count the number of meals we have served since the beginning of Parish Kitchen. The fact that we've been there for whoever needs a meal, that we've served over two million meals in less than half of a century, is pretty remarkable.

We never know how many people will show up on any given day, but we always commit to serving everyone who comes to our door. It is a huge blessing for all involved in the ministry to say that they've fed the hungry today. The ebb and flow of the stats are not important, but they do put an exclamation point on the two million meals served in less than half a century, on the impact we have had, with the volume of food we have served to those in need of a meal: the poor who are always with us.



Indispensable are the scores of volunteers who ensure that Parish Kitchen guests never miss a noonday meal, regardless of facility problems, weather emergencies, or the COVID-19 pandemic that brought so much of the world to its knees, "We have always found a way to serve a meal to those looking for food. During a spell of bitterly cold winter weather, Kim Webb, Executive Director of the Emergency Shelter, called to ask if Parish Kitchen could feed the 25-40 people who had stayed the night to take shelter from the cold. They had nothing to eat, so we were able to assist them with food for about a week. "

Chris Goddard became directly involved with Parish Kitchen with his appointment as director of Catholic Charities in 2023, but his appreciation for the ministry began 20 years prior. As a *Leadership Northern Kentucky Team* member, he toured the Kitchen, and was impressed not only by the number of guests served daily but also by the equally important charity and dignity that the staff and volunteers extended to each guest.

Goddard said, "Those essential acts of kindness continue at the much larger and more beautiful location. Now that the ability to serve more guests has increased, we are looking for ways to provide additional wrap-around services. In the future, I am interested in engaging the guests of Parish Kitchen to discover how Catholic Charities can better serve them in ways by which we improve and transform their lives. How can we spread the joy and good news of the Gospel and demonstrate our love by providing a hot meal once a day?"



Notre Dame Sister Shannon Kriege, retired from a teaching career in Diocesan schools, is far from idle in retirement. Sister has been a Parish Kitchen volunteer for about three years and has worked at both locations. She likes this ministry and enjoys meeting and being with the guests. Sister Shannon said, "The people are so nice and friendly, and they are really grateful. Giving them lunch is very rewarding, knowing we are offering them what might be their only meal of the day. Just to be able to help our guests, to call them by name and respond to them, is wonderful. They thank you for everything. It is life-giving to me to welcome them in such a way that they don't feel embarrassed. And then to see their faces

after they receive a meal! This ministry is so important: When we see Jesus in the poor, when we help them as the Lord instructs in the Gospel, and when we feed his sheep, those are the most important things we can do. Everyone is a child of God and deserves our help, care, and love."



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Join the Journey of Parish Kitchen's Evolution

By: Jennifer Abdrabbo, Institutional Advancement and Development Associate

If you've spent any time at Parish Kitchen, you'll know it's not just a place for a meal. It's a beacon of hope, community, and compassion. As we approach our 50th Anniversary on June 17, 2024, we reflect on the impact we've made and the journey ahead. Our mission to serve those in need is more vital than ever, and we invite you to be a part of our continued growth.

The faces of our staff, volunteers, and guests reflect the love and kindness that Parish Kitchen embodies. Yet, we know there's more work to be done. Our obligation to the founders of this ministry and to the community compels us to extend our reach further.

Thanks to the generosity of donors and community partners, our current building is a welcoming space that provides comfort and nourishment to all who enter. Looking ahead, our focus turns to the next phase of development: a multi-purpose garage. This essential addition will shelter our Catholic Charities box truck, ensuring its longevity and enabling us to expand our services. Additionally, the garage will offer much-needed storage space and a dedicated area for volunteers to work on bikes during Pickett's Corner clinic days. It has come to our attention that we need to enhance the fire alarm system in Parish Kitchen to make sure our priceless building stays safe. The ever-increasing cost of food cannot be ignored. The extra funding we are seeking would help us to offset that expense.

But our commitment extends beyond mere infrastructure. We aspire to deepen our engagement with guests, addressing their holistic needs beyond a meal. This includes hiring a Care Coordinator to provide personalized support, connecting guests with resources for employment, housing, and other essential services. We're also exploring ways to enhance accessibility, potentially utilizing our second floor with an elevator for Bible studies, mental health sessions, and more.

As we embark on our 50th Anniversary fundraising campaign, we invite you to join us in shaping the future of Parish Kitchen. Your support—whether through a one-time donation, a recurring contribution, or a planned gift—will make a profound difference in the lives of those we serve. In the coming months we will be sending out a special mailing, where together, we can ensure that Parish Kitchen remains a beacon of hope and hospitality for generations to come. Your contribution will leave a lasting legacy of compassion and care.

Thank you for being a vital part of the Parish Kitchen family.

(cont. from page 1)



Rosalie and Dick Hentz receive the prestigious 2024 Marcella Strategier Angel of Hope Award



The Rotary Club of Covington, honored with the 2024 Community Partner Award

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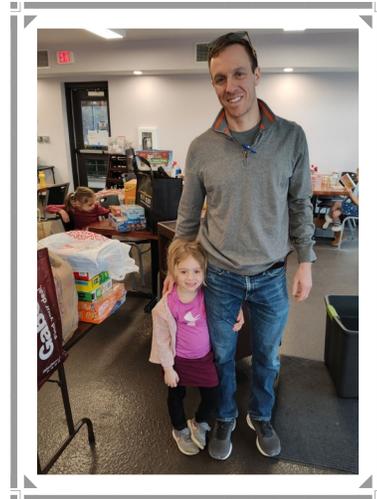
Respect

Thank you!



The Northern Kentucky Homeschool Hangout, coordinated by Lauren Anderson, helped students put together blessing bags. Thanks so much to Lauren and the students for the wonderful bags for our guests.

Brian Drapp and his daughter dropped off snacks and snack bags collected by St. Joseph, Crecent Springs Catholic Outreach Program.



Campbell Academy, a homeschool group, visited Parish Kitchen to assemble snack bags for our guests. Thank You McKenzie, Lilah, Amelia, and Eleanor for a job well done!



It was a soggy start to the 2024 bike season for Pickett's Corner. But the spirits were high as several bikes were taken home and others were fixed. We also received a wonderful donation from Judy Rouse celebrating the lives of her great nephews Chase and Cole. They loved to ride bikes, so this was a perfect way for them to be remembered. Thanks, Judy, for thinking of Pickett's Corner. Thanks so much to all involved in making this ministry successful!



Volunteer Spotlight



Jan and Tom enjoy being of service to people and the community. Jan started coming to Parish Kitchen helping her church group make and deliver desserts. After some time, she learned volunteers were needed to fill a few slots, so she signed up as a regular volunteer. Tom also started helping with dessert delivery. After retiring, Tom signed up to be a volunteer as a substitute while volunteers were on vacation. Sometime later he was able to fill a regular spot. Both are honored to serve and help at Parish Kitchen. Thank you, Tom and Jan, for your dedication to Parish Kitchen.

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SAVE THE DATE

Parish Kitchen will be celebrating it's



June 17, 2024

**Open House Reception will be
From 5:00-7:00 pm at Parish Kitchen
1561 Madison Ave, Covington, KY**