

Happenings

She knows she's not
worthless because
**people like
you care**



“

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*Steel City Boxtown is a combined
business training/marketplace project
underway at STH, funded through Legacy
Foundation's John S. and James L. Knight
Foundation Donor Advised Fund.

Burned out from all the trauma and hardship she witnessed over the years as a supervisor at a Chicago homeless shelter, Dotty decided to do something positive and make a job change. People change careers all the time, so she never imagined the impact this one, simple decision would have on her life. She never imagined that she wouldn't find another job, or that she'd eventually lose her apartment and spend years living in a tent under the Wilson Bridge in Chicago—but that's what happened.

Dotty survived five winters under a pile of blankets. Every morning, she and others experiencing homelessness had to pack up everything they owned and head to the beach so they would be invisible. There were many mornings when area teens taunted them to “Go get a job!”

“I kept looking for work,” she says, “but no one wanted to hire someone who is homeless.”

So, Dotty began making jewelry, a hobby she enjoyed in her youth. She sold her pieces at elevated train stops and made a little money. Then a daughter

who lived in northwest Indiana invited her to move in—but that didn't go well. With nowhere else to turn, Dotty ended up at the Missionaries of Charity homeless shelter in Gary, which partners with Sojourner Truth House (STH). One day she made another simple decision—and got in the van to STH.

“The classes, case managers and even the atmosphere at STH helped me recognize the issues I needed to work on,” she explains. “I finally got help for PTSD/ADHD and I'm learning through counseling that I am NOT worthless like I was told when I was younger. I'm learning how to release that negative message.”

Dotty now lives in permanent supportive housing near STH and is part of the first Boxtown* cohort of clients learning entrepreneurial skills to turn her jewelry-making into a small business that will help her remain in her home. She has another daughter living with her, fresh out of an abusive relationship, and they are learning and healing together—and realizing what precious jewels they are.



Angela Curtis

our new Executive Director!

"I am for keeping the thing going while things are stirring. Because if we wait till it is still, it will take a great while to get it going again."

- Sojourner Truth

Things were certainly stirring at Sojourner Truth House, as a new era of leadership began July 1st with a familiar face. The Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ chose Angela Curtis to succeed Sister Peg Spindler, CSA, and to "keep things going" as the day center's new Executive Director.

Angela came to STH in 2014 as an intern, then joined the staff in 2015 as a case manager who worked closely with clients to help them accomplish their goals. She holds master's degrees in social work, business administration and human resource management, and a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration. She also has nearly 20 years of pre-STH office and administrative management experience.

In her prior positions, Angela especially enjoyed helping people. "At STH, I feel joy when you can see a difference in the ladies, when they keep coming back to work on their issues and on themselves," she said. "We have a great team that takes our mission to heart, and that makes it very enjoyable to do this work."

Her move from case manager to executive director was inspired by a longing to have more of a voice in



Sister Peg Spindler, CSA, gives STH's new Executive Director Angela Curtis a hug during the 2021 Walk for STH in June)

nurturing the growth of STH services and programs. Her vision is to focus more on the problems of generational poverty—multiple generations of mothers, daughters, and granddaughters who continue to seek help at STH, and to be proactive.

"I think STH can do a lot of things; we're on the right path. But if we don't offer more services for youth now to offset the things they're going through in their families (homelessness, witnessing substance abuse by adults, food insecurity), then they're going to grow up to be at STH, too," she said. "We need to give them an outlet and a voice to express what they're going through."

"STH has really relied on your generosity to faithfully support our women and children," Angela said. "I want to encourage you to visit us occasionally for Coffee & Conversation so that I can share with you how much your support helps. Your support allows us to continue to serve and grow our mission. Thank you!"



Walk for Sojourner Truth House

2021

Thank you to our dedicated and generous walkers, teams and sponsors! Because of you, the 22nd annual Walk for STH on June 12th exceeded the goal of raising **\$115,000**! As of June 30th, more than **\$130,000** has been donated! That means we can serve more women and families with educational and support services, and help obtaining housing and meeting basic needs!



Mayor of Gary and Walk Grand Marshall Jerome Prince honors Sr. Peg, who retired as STH's executive director on June 30th, with a key to the city in gratitude for her 24 years of service working with women and children experiencing homelessness.



On the route: Walkers during the 22nd annual Walk for STH



Poofed: Enjoying the "color war" in Froebel Park



During the Walk, STH clients who completed a 16-week entrepreneurship class were featured in a Boxtown Pop-Up Market under blue awnings.



Watch Our Garden Grow

Feeding America projects that 1 in 6 people (50.4 million) in the U.S. could be food insecure in the wake of the pandemic—up from 1 in 9 people (35 million) in 2019.

Did you know there is a variety of fresh, organic produce growing in STH's backyard?

The Community Garden is a great example of how empty, urban lots can become lush sources of life. Our garden belongs to our community and helps build community through the common efforts of our clients, staff, and volunteers as they tend it together. Last year, through the efforts of 54 volunteers who donated 2,655 hours, the garden produced nearly 700 pounds of produce! Most of that was distributed to food-insecure residents through STH's modified drive-through food pantry program.

This year, thanks to several large donations, we are expanding the Community Garden!

"Since we are dreaming big, I included some fruit trees and bushes (in the plans)," said Kristy Olsen, STH's Volunteer Coordinator. "We're also adding some dedicated raised beds for our clients, who do not have access to this type of healthy, nutritious food. There is great potential to teach them about health benefits and how to prepare and use produce in their daily meals."



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Sojourner Truth House is sponsored by the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ.