

Happenings

"I am proud to have been part of this evolving ministry."

- Sister Peg Spindler, CSA, PHJC

After 23 years—which began at the founding of Sojourner Truth House (STH) in 1997—Sister Peg Spindler, CSA, is retiring as executive director.

She and Sr. Joan Fisher, PHJC, originally developed a modest program to fill the need for laundry services, referrals and low-income-housing resources for local women. When Missionaries of Charity established a homeless shelter for women and children—with help from the Diocese of Gary—Sisters Peg and Joan offered to do case management for their clients.

"We've been doing case management and programming for the women and children of that shelter ever since, and now, for single women at the Lydia House (a shelter run by the Lutheran Church)," Sr. Peg said. "We added the food pantry and clothes closet very shortly after we opened, going from the convent to purchasing the present ministry building and renovating it slowly over the years into what it is today. The mission of STH has grown and deepened beyond our wildest expectations! I am proud to have been part of this evolving ministry for 23 years."

Now, after lots of thought and introspection, she thinks it's time to give someone else a chance to



lead the ministry. Sister Peg will be volunteering with the Continuum of Care Network of NWI, (of which STH has been a member for years), to continue her ministry of passion for the homeless, and to develop a system to open new channels—and funding—for getting more homeless into housing.

You may still find her helping in the STH food pantry—or promoting local environmental causes. "It will be very hard to walk out the door on the last day when someone has been hired and mentored and my work here is done, but I leave STH in the hands of a very competent staff and Board. Please keep that in mind and continue supporting the good work of STH as a new person takes over."



"Please...continue donating to the good work of STH as a new person takes over."

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23 Years of Service, a Lifetime of Memories

*Sister Peg reflects on the People and
Moments that Shaped Sojourner Truth House*



The wonderful, too-many-to-mention volunteers who give time and talent and deep, deep commitment to the mission of STH.



Our driver, Chris McClure, the kindest, most thoughtful man, who died while a member of STH staff.



The many "key dances" we've done when women sign their leases and flash their set of keys.



Star, with whom we worked for more than a year because she did not know where she was born, nor was she ever issued a Social Security number. I'm proud that we stuck with her until we found her birth certificate, got her a Social Security number and assisted her in getting her first ever apartment—at age 62!



Our current staff who work so hard each day to make sure our clients have a clean place to be, good furniture when they move into their apartments, good advice and support along the way, nutritious food to nourish them on their journeys, and some fun mixed in.



The groundbreaking and open house for the Village of Hope, the permanent supportive housing project we were instrumental in getting built, and to which we have referred many of our homeless clients.



Way back, I remember Susie, a client whose brain tumor had grown to the inoperable stage due to her crack addiction, but whose terminal illness brought reconciliation with her family through STH.



It Takes a **Community** to Survive a Pandemic

Three days a week, food insecure families wait in long lines of vehicles to receive boxes filled with a week's worth of food and personal items at STH's drive-through food pantry. In late 2020, the unemployment rate in Gary was still hovering at more than 14 percent—the highest in Indiana—and Feeding America's post-pandemic projections showed nearly 19 percent of Lake County residents were food insecure.

Vulnerable families share with us that they're living on such limited budgets they can't afford food. We've heard stories of intense worry and concern from many people whose situations are not improving but are worsening.

But in 2020 **YOU** and the following foundation and church partners responded to this need:

- **Lake County Foundations** (Legacy Foundation, Crown Point Community Foundation and Foundations of East Chicago)
- **Geminus Community Partners**
- **Lake Area United Way**
- **Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes**
- **Service League of Northwest Indiana**
- **Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority NAP Tax Credit Program**

- **The Westerman Foundation**
- **St. Maria Goretti Parish**

As of mid-December, more than \$81,000 was given for COVID-19 relief, which included food, personal protective equipment, and personal hygiene items. A \$5,000 COVID-19 match from First Merchants Bank also generated 57 donations totaling nearly \$5,690!

Your support to STH's food pantry program—Gary's largest—is making a difference for thousands of families. Between April 21st and December 3rd, STH staff and volunteers distributed more than 271,000 pounds of food to 7,594 families—4,048 of which had never sought help at STH before.

You also helped 33 families and individuals remain housed during this COVID crisis. And, during a unique situation in 2020 created when local homeless shelters could not take in new clients, you helped pay for 23 hotel stays to keep homeless families and individuals off the streets.

THANK YOU for being part of our community and helping thousands of Northwest Indiana residents survive the pandemic in 2020.



Thank You

to Our Foundation Partners

The following grants were gratefully received during the second half of 2020:

- **John W. Anderson Foundation**
- **Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes**—funding for Community Connection Workshops
- **Father Brunner Peace and Justice Fund (Society of the Precious Blood)**—funding for Sojournerpreneur classes
- **NIPSCO and The Citizens Savings Foundation**—to insulate/winterize/air condition the STH pole barn
- **The Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities**—funding for the Child Enrichment Center

Community Connection Workshops will be offered to Gateway Supportive Housing clients to help them build skills in self-care, safety, relationships and home management.

The Steel City Boxtown project includes an educational component to help clients build business skills. Called "Sojournerpreneur," this program helps prepare clients to run their own small businesses in Boxtown.

Our modified drive-through food pantry program is now able to operate out of our storage building in ALL weather, thanks to funding from The Citizens Savings Foundation.

The STH Child Enrichment Center provides the children of our clients with a safe, positive, nurturing environment close to their Moms, who can then focus on improving their life situations and obtain housing for their families.



SAVE THE DATE

Saturday | June 12, 2021
8-11 a.m. CDT

Join us for the 22nd Annual STH Walk for Sojourner Truth House & Virtual, too!

For more information—or to register as a walker or team leader—go to walkforsth.org. You can also link to the event's Facebook page from the home page at sojournertruthhouse.org.



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