



McAuley Miracles

A Newsletter of McAuley Ministries

Spring 2009

Back on His Feet, He Helps Those in Need

Since before he'd even graduated from high school, Michael J. Perry worked. "Most of my life," he said, "I worked two jobs."



He worked in shipping and receiving, a hospital kitchen and, primarily, as a janitor. From 1986 to 2004, he was a cleaner for the Providence Public Library. Then he was laid off. As he sought work, he began struggling with advancing arthritis that made walking even short distances slow and painful.

The next few years were dark and difficult. "I survived as best as I could," he said. "I was just very low."

And then he found McAuley House. He lived near the meal site, and one day came for help and lunch. "It felt great coming here," he said. "Before coming here, I was really alone. Coming here, I felt I wasn't alone anymore."

As the staff grew to know

him, they asked him to volunteer. He now works as a hospitality volunteer at the front desk.

"Mike is a special person," said House Administrator Rev. Mary Margaret Earl. "He is patient and kind with every guest."

In 2007 Perry was approved for Social Security Disability payments. Though his income remains modest, he recently gave the House a \$1,000 donation. He still struggles financially, but feels happy to help.

"You've got to give back," he said. "I believe in that."

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Knitting for Love and Charity

The basket of handmade mittens with colored thumbs was nearly gone by January. Lucky children whose grandmothers, aunts and mothers shop at the Wardrobe in Central Falls had purchased them for \$1 a pair. But who is the mitten maker? Meet 91-year-old Arthur Brassard of Lincoln, RI.

"I love charity," says Arthur, and among his charitable works is the making of mittens – one per day for 20 years. Using yarn he collects from neighbors, churches and

friends, he makes 150 pairs a year (his quota) and donates them to various groups on November 1 (his production deadline).

The mittens at the Wardrobe came via Sister Mary Higgins of St. Jude's Church in Lincoln, where Arthur is a parishioner.

"My wife Diane taught me how to knit and up until a few months ago we did it together," he said. "Now I visit her at the nursing home and knit beside her every day."



Over the years Arthur and Diane, married 68 years, have received thank you notes, Valentine's cards and Get Well Cards from mitten recipients. These are always happily received and help keep those needles in motion. We salute the charitable spirit of the Brassards.



Jaziah, 4, enjoys a hot lunch at McAuley House

Giving From Sacrifice and Abundance: The Director's Message



Director's Message:

At some time in our lives, we've likely heard the phrase "The Widow's Mite" (or was it, "The Widow's Might"...).

The phrase comes from a parable in the Bible, which teaches us about giving to those in need.

At the time of Christ, the smallest, least valuable coins were Leptons, which eventually came to be

known as "mites." Luke's gospel relates Jesus' telling of a story of a poor widow giving two mites to the poor. This was a great sacrifice. She had so little to give, but gave what she had to help those who had nothing. It's a moving example about charity to those less fortunate than ourselves.

Such charitable gestures happen even in today's world.

A widow from North Providence for many years has supported McAuley Ministries. Several times a year, she sends us \$2 in an envelope. Sister of Mercy Margaret Wroblewski, our administrative assistant, always smiles when she opens this envelope. She calls it "the widow's mite."

This year, in trying economic times, we received another letter from the widow: She had increased her donation to \$3.

We at McAuley Ministries can see how the difficult economy is impacting

the lives of so many Rhode Islanders. We continue serving up to 300 hot meals a day at McAuley House, while responding to a fast-increasing number of calls for help with all manner of needs including rental assistance. Your gift helps us to respond.

At McAuley Village, your donations go to the education of homeless single parents so that they can learn to become financially independent and support themselves and their families. At the Warde-robe, your donations sustain a clothing ministry for the working poor.

We appreciate and thank all donors for their generosity, whether given by sacrifice, or out of great abundance.

Please help as you are able.

Thank you,
Don Wolfe

Featured McAuley Volunteer: Ann Lichtenfels of the Village

Ann Lichtenfels can't recall just how she learned of McAuley Village and the volunteer opportunities there. She does know, however, why she's stayed for more than 15 years.

"The mission is to help young women who are struggling to turn their lives around," Lichtenfels said. "At some time in life, everyone needs help."

McAuley Village is a two-year transitional housing program for homeless women and children. The Village has 23 apartments and an on-site child care center, and provides shelter, child care, supportive services, advocacy and guidance to homeless families.

Every Wednesday afternoon, she is the Village receptionist, greeting



Long-time McAuley Village volunteer Ann Lichtenfels at the front desk.

guests, answering the phone, and alerting residents to visitors.

"Ann is a remarkable individual who year-round, and for so many years, has graciously given us her Wednesday afternoons," said Village Administrator Kathy O'Hare. "She welcomes

residents, staff and visitors with home-style hospitality. In addition, her volunteer efforts have saved McAuley thousands of dollars. She is a warm and friendly presence at the Village and in all our hearts."

Lichtenfels, a retired architect, recalls a time in her own life when she was at a crossroads and her parents were able to assist her. She knows that many of the young parents entering McAuley Village don't have that kind of support.

She wants to be part of the safety net holding them up—and likes seeing young parents and children safely housed and moving forward.

"What they do here," she said, "has value."

Art Show Celebrates McAuley Guest Talent



On February 12th and 13th, McAuley House displayed the artwork of guests struggling with homelessness, addictions and mental illness at their third annual

“From the Heart” art show. More than 200 community members, including Providence Mayor David Cicilline, attended the free event at the House at 622 Elmwood Avenue.

Visitors were able to view and purchase the art created by guests of McAuley House in a class taught by local artist Kathy King. Paintings, poetry, pastels,

photography were available for sale.

The event featured music from Community MusicWorks, food from RISD Caters and Johnson & Wales School of Culinary Arts, as well as flowers from Blooming Mad Florist.

The show was made possible in part because of a grant from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts.

“The arts are a wonderful tool for expression and for recovery,” said Elizabeth Keithline, project grants manager for RISCA. “We honor the important work of this program and the opportunity that it offers to McAuley Houses guests.”

Artist and McAuley guest Richard Jacobellis said the event helped him to feel good about himself. “For once in my life,” he said, “I was able to prove I could make people happy.”

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Remembering Faithful Friend Richard Barrett

A Sister of Mercy introduced Richard Barrett to McAuley House in the early 1980s. The introduction sparked a relationship spanning a quarter century, including 5 years as board president, a kitchen renovation, and 25 Christmas trees.

“He just had such a passion for McAuley House. He found a lot of peace there,” remembered his daughter, Emily DiIuro. “There was a lot of love when you walked in that door.”

Barrett, of Warwick, died unexpectedly on March 13 while visiting Siesta Key, Florida. He was 59.

Barrett, who had owned and operated Barrett Building Company Inc., was a key supporter of the House, serving as board president from 1986-1991. At the time of his death, he was a trustee

again. “Richard had been asked to return to the Board in 2006 to help us chart a new course,” said current board Chair Kathryn Shanley. “Richard’s kindness and compassion for the people we serve was evident at every Board meeting. We are grateful for all that he has done for McAuley Ministries and will miss him.”

McAuley House outreach worker Sr. Joan Rokicki remembers how Barrett completely renovated the small, inadequate kitchen at the old House on Niagara Street. He installed a dishwasher, new cupboards and sinks. But it wasn’t just his work that caught your attention, she said.

“You would never forget him,” she said. “There was something about his spirit—so kind and caring and sincerely enthusiastic. Richard loved McAuley House, and we love him.”



McAuley trustee and friend Richard Barrett.

Barrett for 25 years provided the House with a Christmas tree in December. “Whenever we got our Christmas tree, we had to get the McAuley House Christmas tree,” his daughter recalled. When fire laws forbade a real tree, he provided one last gift: A beautiful artificial tree to last forever.

*Planned giving is a way of expressing your support for McAuley Ministries into the future.
For more information, contact Executive Director Donald Wolfe.*

McAuley Miracle: Robert Williams

In November 2007, Robert H. Williams left his urban camping spot to pick up canned food at a nearby drug store. Returning to his home—a tent hidden amongst trees—he slipped on wet leaves and hurt his ankle. He crawled to his tent and waited until morning. Then, he crawled back to the roadside, where a passer-by saw him and called 911. Williams later learned he'd broken his ankle in three places.

That grim morning became a catalyst for changes in Williams' life.

"If I'd stayed out in the woods another year," he said, "I don't know if I would have made it another winter."

A Rhode Islander, the 54-year-old Williams survived for much of his life on odd jobs and as a laborer. He worked as a roofer, a sign installer, and unloading fishing boats in Galilee. For more than a dozen years, he was a live-in handyman in buildings undergoing renovations. When the work was complete, and with nowhere else to go, Williams in 2005 moved into the

woods. He also began visiting McAuley House, and found a hot lunch and friends. At night, he slept in the tent and cooked over an open fire. "I'm an Eagle Scout," he said. But after burning his leg in the campfire, Williams began drinking to numb the pain, and he developed skin cancer. Then he broke his ankle.

While he was hospitalized, McAuley House worker Brienna Caparco began visiting Williams, and advocating for physical rehabilitation and veterans' benefits (Williams had briefly served in the Air Force before earning an honorable discharge.) "She was more of a help than I can be for me," he said. "I knew she had me in her prayers."

House workers helped Williams receive his ID and a monthly bus pass. Eventually, he was given veterans' benefits including medical coverage, and after physical rehab he

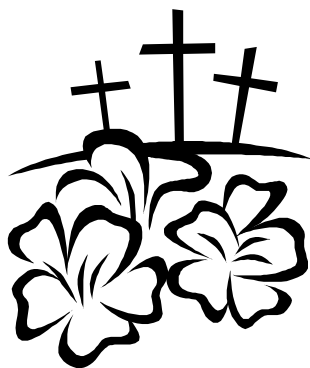


Outreach worker Rev. Matott and Bob Williams.

moved into the Bristol Veterans' Home. Now, cancer free, sober and healing, he stays in touch with the House. "It's been a blessing the whole time I've known it," he said.

And he is a blessing too, said the Rev. Michele Matott, an outreach worker.

"If one ever doubts a new life is possible, one only needs to look at Bob," she said. "Bob is a walking testament to the reality of Easter, and an inspiration to all."



Ways to Help this Spring at McAuley Ministries

Cribs for Babes in Need

The Child Care Center at McAuley Village was built

in 1990 to support the families who are working or in-school as they transition from homelessness to permanency. The cribs in the infant care room require upgrading, and due to safety regulations we need to get specific types to fit the need.

A gift registry has been set up at Babies R' Us to make donating a new crib easy.

Go online or visit the store and call up registry number 79440071. Purchase a crib and they will ship it right to the center. Thank you.

Spring Clean and Donate to the Wardrobe!

Our clothing ministry is always looking for good quality clothing for men, women and children. Small household and decorative items are also welcome.

Donations can be dropped off at either the Wardrobe at 1286 Broad St. in Central Falls 11am - 2:45pm Wednesday - Saturday—telephone 729-0405—or at McAuley House at 622 Elmwood Ave. on weekday afternoons by calling 941-9013 ext. 302.

Join in our "Pretend Dinner"

Donations sustain our work. We hope you will consider supporting our annual Lenten fund raiser – the Pretend Dinner.

Participating is easy and fun. Sit down, relax and "pretend" you are at your favorite restaurant, jot down your order - an entrée, salad, appetizer and maybe dessert. Then total up your "bill" add a tip and send the balance to: McAuley House, PO Box 73195, Providence, RI.

Enjoy the nourishment of compassion and sharing what you can with others in need.

McAuley Ministries is Sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy—Northeast Community

"Lunch on Us at McAuley" and Other Fundraising News

Planned Giving

A whoop was heard in the upstairs offices. A letter had arrived with unexpected news. A friend had remembered McAuley House in their will. The lawyer involved explained that the donor wanted to share part of his legacy with those in need. He trusted McAuley House to use the gift wisely.

"Bequests like this ensure our work can continue and are really appreciated," commented Donald Wolfe, Executive Director of McAuley Ministries.

"Last" gifts can take many forms including life insurance designations and IRA distributions (which are not taxed as income when given out to a non-profit). We welcome confidential inquiries about "last gifts." Please contact Wolfe at (401) 941-9013 ext. 303.

Lunch on Us Launched in Year 2

"*Lunch on Us at McAuley House*" is going strong in its second year. Sponsoring organizations include Citizens Bank Foundation, Carter Family Trust, RI Greyhound Owners Assoc./Twin River, Delta Dental of RI, St. Mary Academy Bay View; Blue Cross & Blue Shield of RI and Collette Vacations.



Delta Dental CEO Joe Nagle serves lunch to guest, Manuel

Annual Appeal

Thank you to everyone who supported the Annual Appeal. Despite the economic times, our loyal donors came through at about the same level as the previous year. A few checks arrived in the New Year (after Christmas and holiday expenses were absorbed). If you had intended to make a contribution to the 2008 Annual Appeal we welcome it anytime. Thanks!

Tax Time

Need a tax letter? If you need a letter documenting your tax-deductible donations, please let us know and we will send you one immediately. Send an email with your name and address to cjsweetser@mcauleyri.org or call Cindy Sweetser at 401-941-9013, ext. 308.

The Journey from Tenant to Teacher

Miriam Melgar was 18 when she came to the United States from Guatemala 20 years ago. She had one goal: Helping the younger brothers and sisters she'd left behind.

When Melgar was 7, her mother died. So she cared for her younger siblings. "I felt that I was the mother," she said.

When Melgar arrived in Providence, staying with cousins, she worked 60 to 70 hours weekly. In 1990, she met the man who would become father of her own children. Seven years later, while she was recuperating from back surgery and unable to work, Melgar's partner died. She was left alone with three young children. "I had no money," she said.

Melgar moved in with family. Eight people crowded into the three-bedroom apartment. "There were too many people," Melgar said.

Then she heard of McAuley Village, a two-year transitional housing

program aiming to help single parents move forward.

In 1998, Melgar moved into a three-bedroom Village apartment, nicer than any she'd had before. "When I moved here," she said, "I felt nothing (bad) was going to happen to me because I felt very safe."

The Village arranged for Melgar's son—struggling since his father's death — to have a Big Brother. Melgar and her children participated in Village programs, and she began attending school. She earned her GED, and completed training to become a day care worker.

In April 1999, Melgar was hired as an assistant teacher at the McAuley Village Child Care Center. This month marks her 10-year anniversary. Child Care Center Director Lisa Perron said Melgar is a star employee. "She's dependant and reliable," Perron said. "She's wonderful with the children and with the



Assistant teacher Miriam Melgar reads to a toddler at the Day Care.

parents."

Melgar now lives in permanent housing, and her oldest two children attend college while her youngest is in high school. The Village remains a special place in her heart.

"This," she said, "is like my second home."



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**Feeding Rhode Island's neediest
 women, men and children**



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Address _____

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- I'd like to donate:
- \$25 towards weekly bus fare for someone seeking work
 - \$50 to feed 30 people breakfast
 - \$125 for two life-saving prescriptions
 - \$300 to help three families pay a security deposit
 - \$500 to provide lunch for a day for 250 people
 - \$1,000 to provide new security equipment at McAuley Village

Check enclosed Please charge my Visa, Mastercard, American Express or Discover (circle one)

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Card Number _____ Exp. Date (month/year) _____ Amount \$ _____

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On-line donations can be made at www.mcauleyri.org

This gift is tax-deductible to the extent provided by law

