



ON YORK STREET

Fall Newsletter : 2009

Helping women & children break the cycle of poverty since 1989

THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD

After a year and a half of intense reflection and process, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace prepared for the next chapter in their history by electing five of their members to the Leadership Team that would guide them into the future.



When Sister Kristin Funari, then Executive Director for the York Street Project, was called to serve as one of the members, she humbly

opened her arms to embrace God's will for this change in her life. She knew that this also meant another very important change—the leadership of The Project. A search committee was formed consisting of members of the Boards of Trustees and The Province and they quickly got to work to find the next Executive Director.

Weeks into the process, Sister Kristin was awakened with an idea! Early the next morning, she received a phone call from Susanne Byrne, inquiring about a phone number for a mutual colleague, to which Sister Kristin responded, "I have been up since 1 am thinking about you... Would you consider coming back to the York Street Project?"

Sister Kristin believed Susanne was a perfect fit for the position; she was uniquely qualified in that she had spent nearly 10 years growing at the York Street Project; first as an Administrative

Assistant at The Nurturing Place and then as the Caseworker/Advocate for St. Joseph's Home, before moving on to serve as Homeless Planning Coordinator for Hudson County.

"Susanne's efforts toward advocacy, first on an individual level and then on a systemic level are tireless and marked by a deep, objective and disciplined intellectual approach to social welfare policy issues affecting the lives of the poor in our city, our county and our country," she adds.

After speaking with her family, Susanne joined the pool of applicants for the position of Executive Director. Recognizing that The Project was at a critical juncture in its history, the Committee was diligent in its search. In the end, the choice was clear and Susanne was nominated unanimously by the York Street Project Board of Trustees to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. The Sisters officially appointed Susanne M. Byrne as the first lay Executive Director of the York Street Project and she began her tenure on July 20, 2009.

Susanne has hit the ground running and is turning over every stone to ensure our programs continue to serve our families and the community well. "There is much to do and the weeks go by so quickly," Susanne says, "but I welcome the challenge, and the opportunity, with open arms."

For a more intimate account of this transition, please visit our website and read our blog entry, *The Changing of the Guard*. ☺

Dear Friends,

I am honored to be writing to you as the new Executive Director of the York Street Project. I accepted this position without hesitation and with an understanding of how much faith as been placed into my hands by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, our Boards of Trustees, our staff, our women and children, and you, our donors. It is not a position I ever will take lightly. And, although I will be a different leader for York Street Project than Sister Kristin, for her shoes never can be filled, please know that I will lead with deference to those who came before me and great consideration and excitement for those who will come after me.

I welcome you to visit The Project at any time and ask that you share your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions on how I can be a good steward of your investment in our families as they begin their journeys to a newly independent life.

Sincerely,

Susanne M. Byrne
Executive Director



THE NURTURING PLACE

Sr. Barbara Moran, csjp | 201.413.1982

Our Loving Grandmothers

Working alongside our dedicated staff is a core group of volunteers who provide vital hands-on assistance every day. Amongst them are five Foster Grandmothers who are adored by the children: Grandma Lula and Grandma Mima (Carmellina) work with our Infant/Toddler group; Grandma Catherine works with our Pre-School class; and Grandmas Barbara and Mary work with both our Toddler B and Transitional Toddler Groups.

Fall Fieldtrips

In October, some of our children visited Farmer Frank at Hull-O Farms, located in the Northern Catskills of upstate New York. Hull-O Farms is a working farm, where for more than a decade, children have been able to experience farm life

first-hand. Each day, our children were able to milk the cows, feed the pigs and even collect eggs from the hens. While upstate, our children also visited an apple orchard where they picked 66 pounds of apples and a pumpkin patch, where they picked pumpkins fresh from the vine.

Halloween in the City

In contrast to our farm excursion, we experienced Halloween here in Jersey City with the help of many local businesses and corporations. Mack-Cali welcomed us to a homemade pumpkin patch at their Harborside Plaza V location and Leshaco and Bank of Tokyo invited the children for treats on October 30th, after the children marched in our annual Halloween Parade on York Street decked in their adorable costumes.

Preparing for the Holiday Season

Too numerous to list by name, many generous individuals, local organizations, church groups and businesses have contacted us for the upcoming holiday season. Baskets of food, clothing, storybooks, toys and gift cards are being collected. We are looking forward to sharing their generosity with the mothers of our children so they may spend these treasured days with their children. ☺



ST. JOSEPH'S HOME

Sr. Rosemary Coffey, csjp | 201.413.9280

Now in the midst of our 21st year of service, St. Joseph's Home is currently housing 21 mothers and their 35 children. Living at St. Joseph's is not easy and requires our women to sign an agreement prior to moving in, which outlines the guidelines necessary for a peaceful, functioning communal-setting Home.

Like many of the Housing programs throughout the United States, the Jersey City Housing Authority (JCHA) has no Section 8 vouchers.

A majority of the women are complying and are very motivated to become independent and successful. All of our families are involved in school, work or job training programs which help give them the tools needed in their journey

to independent living. Our children are busy in public school or attending The Nurturing Place while their mothers are involved in their daily activities.

Unfortunately, we are experiencing difficulty assisting our families who successfully complete the program to move into permanent housing. Like many of the Housing programs throughout the United States, the Jersey City Housing Authority (JCHA) has no Section 8 vouchers. Although we never have guaranteed a Section 8 voucher to our residents upon successful completion of our program, for the past 20 years we have been able to assist families to secure permanent housing. Various options have been researched and the probability of permanent housing does not appear to be remedied any time

soon, but for now 21 families have a place to call Home.

Our women and children are celebrating birthdays, taking walks to the waterfront, and enjoying their time here. We are eagerly anticipating the holidays—special days are planned by the families: there will be delicious smells wafting through the home, children laughing in delight and sisterliness among the moms. *Thank you for helping us make St. Joseph's a safe and loving Home for our families.* ☺



St. Mary's continues to be a diverse community that gives our women a safe and peaceful place to share wisdom, frustrations, job-seeking opportunities, bargains and activities.

Currently, we have 41 women living in The Residence, working in fields from security to sales, catering, business, education and nursing. The balance of professionals and entry-level workers allows for a unique living and learning experience. For example, a teacher who recently returned from Mission work and is transitioning back into her field helps a foreign-born



ST. MARY'S RESIDENCE

Sr. Harriet Hamilton, csjp | 201.432.6289

resident in her efforts to master the advanced English skills necessary to complete her degree from St. Peter's College. Work and school activity is the everyday life of many of our residents.

In the evening hours, we have begun a Sewing Circle, designed by a dear friend of The Project, Helen Haydon, to teach knitting and embroidery, while providing an atmosphere for a good old fashioned chat. Each Wednesday night she generously volunteers her time and talents with a group of women. Along the way, clothes also have been repaired and re-designed, but the laughter, relaxation, and good conversation have been a staple of these delightful evenings.

Over the summer, many of our women were able to transition to a new chapter

in their lives. Upon vacating for a live-in nanny position, one left a note expressing her deep gratitude that a place like St. Mary's would take her in. "I remember when I desperately needed a place to stay. I was lost and without hope, but God lead me to Saint Mary's...God Bless you and this peaceful place."

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We are blessed to have such a warm and loving family of residents and the donors who make our work possible. Blessings to you all for a safe and peace-filled holiday season. ☺

Everywhere I go I hear, 'Kenmare is an alternative school. What exactly goes on there?'

Each school day is alive; moving from class to class one will see students struggling with basic computation skills, being stretched to memorize problem solving techniques, measuring liquids and solids, learning about temperature and dosage, making clay impressions of fall leaves to understand fossils and taking a trip to a



KENMARE HIGH SCHOOL

Sr. Joan Repka, SC | 201.451.1177

local farm to gain insight into what we eat and how it's grown.

What does make Kenmare alternative in one aspect, however, is that our high school students are adults. That means they are between the ages of 17-30 and are working on attaining their high school diploma. So, one can also hear the discussion of the challenges of child rearing, health care and relationships, as well as see them participating in workshops with women from Goldman Sachs to understand the realities of the corporate world.

Kenmare's program is geared to helping women build on their academic strengths and improve their weak areas. Each student's path to graduation is guided by

her own academic strength and personal work ethic. No two students are alike.

Additionally, Kenmare's activities are geared toward bolstering her self-confidence and exposing her to areas of life she may not otherwise encounter. In the coming months, one will also see our students going on a field trip to the Museum of Natural History, developing a presentation on incorporating media and text by a published poet, taking a walking tour of NYC, and participating in a women's health initiative, positive parenting classes and a college/job fair with representatives from area schools and businesses.

Have a blessed season of giving and sharing knowing that your support gives women an *alternative*. ☺

ENGLISH GOES EDIBLE

Up and down, high and low, Edible English, who would know?

How could Edible and English go together you may wonder? Last April, our English teacher, Mary Ann D'Urso, who decided it was time for our literature class to go green, explains exactly how it does.

Neighborhood residents smiled as the garden took shape and the corner of Washington and York Streets got a little greener.

One day we were reading *Seedfolks* by Paul Fleischman, about an urban neighborhood in Cleveland which transformed a vacant garbage lot into a lush and fertile community garden. The next thing we knew, our hands were mixing potting soil with topsoil. The smell was like being stuck at a red light behind a garbage truck.

Most of us had never gardened before. As we started blending soils, we debated, is it still too heavy? Do we need more of the light stuff? Eventually, the texture grew silky. "When it comes to mixing dirt, I would compare it to baking a chocolate cake. The way you have to mix the dirt until all the lumps are gone and the mixture is nice and fluffy. Little by little, our garden is rising into a beautiful cake," wrote Cynthia Sanchez in her E.E. journal.

Faced with seeds, seeds and more seeds, it was hard to imagine how these ground pepper-like flecks or brownish grains that looked like rice would become arugula and mesclun mixes, tomatoes, amethyst basil, Greek oregano, cilantro and push beans. And so it all began...

We planted in classroom window boxes and outside, we transformed a cement ramp into a small garden with a raised bed and clay pots. A few people even donated decorative pots and purple, white, red, and pink Impatiens. Each day, we watched. And we watered. And we watched. And we watered. And then, WE HAD BEANS!!! Cilantro beat out basil, but once basil broke through the smell was delightful, outrageous and mouth-watering. The tomatoes took forever. We wondered if they would grow.

People walked by and noticed our sign — Kenmare Goes Green — which we



designed and painted in class. Curious, they started looking over the wrought iron railing to observe what was happening in the space. Often, neighborhood residents smiled as the garden took shape and the corner of Washington and York Streets got a little greener.

Near the end of the school term, we had enough herbs and salad fixings to share a meal together. We even had a few cherry tomatoes — what we thought we'd never see or taste — to add to our greens (some of which were bitter and, to Coco, peppery.) Malisa, who, is a salad fanatic — as are Mary Ann and Lourdes — was amazed that our salad, with all of its textures and scents, could compete with one you might eat at a restaurant.

Dana, one of our classmates, decided to make homemade sauce and pizzas. She made pizzas featuring goat cheese, mozzarella, basil and oregano from our garden. "I was really happy everyone loved the pizza with the fresh basil we grew. It changed the taste of the pizza and I was glad my classmates asked for seconds," Dana wrote in her E.E. journal.

Soil and seeds progressed with such speed it gave us a need to feed. Indeed. 🌱



GOLF OUTING

September 21, 2009 | Glen Ridge Country Club | Glen Ridge, New Jersey



This year's Outing at Glen Ridge saw the conflux of great friends, great weather and great golf for the benefit of our families. A special thank you to the Haydon Family for its continued and generous sponsorship of the Tournament, as well as the many devoted sponsors and golfers who helped us raise more than \$50,000 for our programs in memory of our dear friend Joe Denyeau.

CHALKFEST

July 30, 2009 | Exchange Place Plaza | Jersey City, New Jersey



On an unusually beautiful day in late July, more than 500 people descended upon the Plaza to help make ChalkFest 2009 a popping success! Thanks to Fidelity, our Title Sponsor for the fifth consecutive year, Challenger sponsor Pershing and many faithful sponsors and donors, more than \$30,000 was raised for the women and children of York Street.

COURAGE OF HEART

By Coco Barker, Kenmare High School student

Integrity. Intellectual Curiosity. Unlimited potential. Borrowed from High Tech High School in California, Kenmare students were asked to think about cultivating one of these “Habits of Heart” — core values that make each of us more accountable to ourselves and to others. Here, Coco’s essay expresses her belief that a person who values courage continues to demonstrate dedication, hope and spirit, despite her life’s circumstances.

You are not born with courage or without it. It’s something you have to build up in life and gain control of. For me, getting kicked out of school at the age of sixteen was a very difficult time in my life. At twenty-five, when I had my first child, I knew that I had to get myself back into school, even though I did not want to. I realized I had a child and I needed to provide for him the best way I could. So finally I got the courage to find a school that I could go to at my age. I thought it was courage enough just to start school. I was right. And I was wrong. I learned that I had to hold courage like my kids in my heart.

At the time when I was sixteen, I thought I showed a lot of courage by helping my sister in a fight at school, but it all led to me getting kicked out of school, which was not good. I could not attend any schools in Jersey City. And that was hard for me because I was losing out on a lot. I had found jobs here and there, but they never lasted. I did try to get back in school, but a G.E.D program was not for me. So what I did was hustle to make money to make ends meet, running the streets with no care about anything. As time went by, I was getting older and jobs that I wanted required a G.E.D or high school diploma of which I had none. What I thought was courage at the age of sixteen became a failure at that time.

Having my first child, then my second, really took a toll on me. Being a single parent, having to provide things for my kids, required a lot of courage, love and money. Without an education, there was no job. Without a job there was no money. It takes a lot of courage to raise two kids on my own. I would cry every night, asking for guidance, waking up in the



morning realizing that I still had two kids that needed me more than life itself. So I had gained enough confidence to go to the Division of Welfare to receive public assistance for my kids, until I received the proper education and job. But still, that wasn’t enough for me. I needed more. I asked my welfare case manager about getting back into school. I was embarrassed. But in my head, I saw my two kids who needed my love, help and support. I found the courage to get beyond my embarrassment.

Having the courage to do this project and write about my courage takes courage. You have to sit and think about things you don’t want people to know about you. You have to have courage, if you don’t have courage, you don’t have anything. Whatever your life requires, you need courage. I still feel nervous writing about this, but my courage surpasses my nervousness. Going back to school and supporting my kids made me realize in my heart that I built up enough courage in my life. You will still have troubles in life. But courage is like the never ending story; it never ends or fails you. The more courage of heart you have to build on, the more you gain control of it in life and beyond. ☺

A RENEWED VISION

If you’ve visited yorkstreetproject.org recently, you may have noticed a new look! If not, please log on today. You’ll find photos of our women and children, the full story of *The Changing of the Guard*, and Susanne’s vitae among other interesting tidbits.

Truly a labor of love, the project to re-design our website was a collaboration of many dedicated and generous individuals who donated their time and talents to make it happen. A special thank you to David Yun and Geordie Pace of Turn Thru Creative for donating countless, and we mean countless, hours to the design and functionality of the site. Additional thanks to former employee and project leader Marc Cicero, our intern Theresa McGarrigle, technical advisor James Ogden, and our communications team Joanne Hixson, Peter Mazurczyk and Michelle Masi at Fusion Design for being an integral part of this endeavor.

We hope you’ll visit often to read the latest blog entry, look up one of our event dates, or to find our current wish list items!



And be sure to send friends to the site where they can watch our video (another labor of love, but that’s for another article) or learn about the people and programs that inspire you to give, or read more stories like Coco’s. ☺

MAKE A SPECIAL GIFT TO THE YORK STREET PROJECT

Your gift will play a vital role in helping meet the needs of our economically-disadvantaged women and children. Each and every dollar received by the York Street Project goes directly to our program services, providing families with the resources needed to break the chains of poverty and forge ahead to a new level of independence. Please give as generously as you can!

Mail Contributions to:

York Street Project
89 York Street
Jersey City, NJ 07302

For additional information or to charge your gift, please call our Development Office at 201.451.8225, or visit www.yorkstreetproject.org



Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Enclosed in my check made payable to York Street Project in the amount of:

\$1,000 \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 other \$ _____

Please charge my contribution of \$ _____ to my Visa MC AMEX

Charge card #: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Signature: _____

Please distribute my gift among your programs as needed.

Please designate my gift to the York Street ministry of my choice:

Kenmare High School St. Mary's Residence St. Joseph's Home The Nurturing Place

***Don't forget to obtain a matching gift form from your employer to multiply the value of your gift.**



'TIS THE SEASON

By the time you read this, all of our women's and children's Christmas needs have been met. The toys, clothes and storybooks already are being collected by groups from schools, churches, and local organizations, just waiting for eager hands to unwrap them. But what about the day after Christmas? And the day after that? Please consider one of the following alternative ways to make a difference this holiday season:

"Stock"ing Stuffer

Donating your appreciated stock is a great way to help our families. If you have stock that you have owned for more than one year, you can save on the capital gains tax you would owe if you sold it yourself by donating it to YSP. And, you will be entitled to an income tax deduction for the full current market value of your gift, to the extent allowed by law. *Call Jen Mehr in the Development Office at 201.451.8225 to find out how.*

Gifts That Keep on Giving

During this holiday season, do you need a gift for someone who has everything? How about giving a gift in their name to

someone who needs more? Your loved one will receive a customized card acknowledging a gift has been made in their name and the sender will receive an acknowledgement letter for the amount tax deductible by law.

We also are registered with other venues that "give twice". Designate YSP and shop online through **iGive.com** and we get a percentage of your purchase or use **GoodSearch.com** powered by Yahoo! as your search engine with York Street Project designated as "your charity" and we get a donation for every search you make. The percentages are small, but they add up quickly.

Make Christmas Last All Year

If you prefer not to send a check or cash, **gift certificates** to stores such as Shop-Rite, Pathmark, A&P, BJ's, Costco, CVS, Dollar Tree, Michael's, AC Moore, Toys R Us, Babies R Us, Kmart, JCPenney, Kohls, and Target enable us to purchase expensive, but basic necessities, including meat and fresh produce, or other essential items as they are needed.

So, this holiday season, please share what you can with our families.

We are unable to accept any gently used toys, clothing, or furniture at this time of year. ☹

We are:

Kenmare High School

An accredited alternative high school for women (17-30) that offers education as well as practical training in job and life skills.

St. Joseph's Home

A safe and structured living environment for single mothers and their children that guides and supports them as they transition to new independent lives.

The Nurturing Place

A child development center for children, 4 months to 6 years of age, who live in our Home or whose mothers attend our High School.

St. Mary's Residence

Affordable housing and support for working women with limited incomes.

Sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace



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Helping women & children break the cycle of poverty since 1989

