

# Hands of Hope

*News from the Franciscan Center*

**Spirit of Giving  
alive during holiday  
season because of YOU**

**– our Donors,  
Volunteers and  
Supporters**

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**Franciscan Center**

*A Ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi*  
Sharing Dignity and Hope Since 1968

Dear Friends,

I hope that everyone stayed warm and safe during this recent winter weather. No matter where you live in Maryland, you felt the brunt of the recent blizzard. Unfortunately, in Baltimore City there are people who couldn't stay warm and comfortable due to lack of resources or housing. There are many families who can't afford to heat their homes or cook a hot meal. Please keep our neighbors in need in your thoughts and prayers. This time of year really shows the importance of the Center's work in the Baltimore community, like helping with utility bills, having access to emergency groceries and providing a hot meal. The Center is a warm and welcoming sanctuary for people in crisis. In fact, the need has grown to the point that we are not able to assist everyone who comes to us because we lack resources in critical emergency programs. This is where you can help!

The Center asks all of our friends to consider the best way that they can help the Center – whether it's through their time, talent or treasure. In the following newsletter, you can read about one special couple who volunteers their time and talents to serve those less fortunate. You can also read an inspiring story of how the Center has helped a family, and in particular their new born child, with the tools needed to respond to emergencies and build a sustainable living environment.

Please take note that throughout this newsletter, we have shared information about how you can partner with us in service to our neighbors in need. I hope you will consider getting more involved with the Franciscan Center in the months ahead. This is a very special place, and we need the community to be the driving force behind the work that we do. If you don't know where to start, feel free to reach out to me at [cmetzger@fcbmore.org](mailto:cmetzger@fcbmore.org).

Peace and All Good,



Christian J. Metzger  
Executive Director



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### **Fundraise for Souper Bowl of Caring through the end of February!!**

There's still time to be a winner *off* the field! Our Souper Bowl of Caring 2016 continues through the end of February – and funds raised will help feed hungry men, women and children in our community. Remember, every dollar counts! Our top 2 teams will each receive 10 tickets to a preseason Ravens game – and *all* teams are invited to a post-season celebration that includes a “behind-the-scenes tour” of M&T Bank Stadium.



#### **SPONSORS**



**Franciscan Center**  
101 W. 23rd Street  
Baltimore, MD21218  
(410) 467-5340  
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# Holidays a happy time for all at Center

By Adrian Martin  
Development &  
Marketing Coordinator

The holiday season is always a warm and festive time at the Franciscan Center, and during the 2015 holiday season you made sure that Christmas spirit was felt by all. For the second straight year, the Center partnered with the Hyatt Regency Baltimore and Target for the “Hyatt Blankets Baltimore” project. The Hyatt Regency Baltimore pledged to collect 1,000 new, warm blankets throughout the holiday season and donate them to poor and struggling men, women and children of Baltimore. The Hyatt began collecting blankets the day after Thanksgiving and continued through New Year’s Eve, surpassing their goal by collecting 1,069 blankets!

The Hyatt donated more than 500 of these blankets to the Franciscan Center, and members of their staff were on hand to help hand them out during the Center’s Christmas celebration for our guests on December 22nd. Each guest received a warm blanket, along with the Center’s regular Christmas gift bag that included a scarf, a hat, a pair of gloves and full-size toiletry items. The volunteers could not help but share their holiday cheer, singing Christmas carols as they handed out the gift



Volunteers from *Giving Back, Linda's Legacy* unload a truckload of donations on Christmas Eve.



Our group of volunteers from the Hyatt Regency Baltimore, Target and MCVET who helped distribute blankets, toiletries, hats and scarves to more than 500 men, women and children in need on December 22nd.

bags.

“We are honored to partner with our friends at the Hyatt Regency Baltimore in service to men, women and children in need in our community – not just during the holiday season, but throughout the year,” said Meg Ducey, the Franciscan Center’s Director of Development and Marketing. “Hyatt staff are regular volunteers at the Center, and they have truly blessed us with their kindness!”

Our guests were also treated to a delicious Christmas dinner of ham, broccoli, potatoes and a dessert. The Hyatt donated the remaining blankets collected in “Hyatt Blankets Baltimore” to the Maryland Center for Veterans Education and Training (MVET), New Vision House of Hope and



A member of the Hyatt Regency Baltimore staff spreads cheer to a guest of the Center.

other charities around the city.

On Christmas Eve we had a visit from our wonderful friends from *Giving Back, Linda's Legacy*, who shared cookies and Christmas carols with our guests in the dining room – and brought a *truckload* of donations of new and gently used warm winter clothing, blankets, hats, gloves and scarves. What an amazing blessing!

The Center’s annual Giving Tree project was launched in October, and SO many wonderful organizations and individuals responded! The third floor of our building was literally *overflowing* with donations of new clothing and toiletry items for men, women and children. We were also blessed to have many groups of volunteers help sort the clothing by size and gender.

“The spirit of giving was truly evident from our supporters and thank God for everyone who gave,” said Angela Hall, Volunteer & In-Kind Coordinator for the Center. “The drop in temperature and our first winter storm are why I am so appreciative of the enormous amount of hats, gloves, scarves and warm undergarments included in the abundance of compassion poured out upon us this year in our annual giving tree.”

We can’t thank all of you enough for supporting the Center during another successful holiday season of giving. Your kindness each and every day makes our mission possible!

# An unexpected challenge that became a blessing!

By Meg Ducey

Director of Development & Marketing

Looking back over the past year, all of us at the Franciscan Center have a great deal to be thankful for and some extraordinary stories to share! The final months of 2015 were a particularly eventful time, as we encountered something we have never before experienced – evidence of bedbugs in our clothing room.

The Center receives donations of gently used clothing from throughout the Baltimore community. In fact, thanks to the kindness of our generous donors, we are the area's largest supplier of free, seasonally-appropriate clothing for men, women and children in need. When evidence of bedbugs was found in donated clothing, we acted quickly to avoid an infestation and ensure the safety of our staff, volunteers and guests.

We spent the first few weeks of November clearing out the Center's clothing sorting room and treating it, salvaging as much as we could. At the same time, we consulted pest control specialists and others to learn more than we *ever* wanted to know about bedbugs.

Due to our quick action, inspections by both human and canine inspectors pronounced the Franciscan Center bedbug free. Imagine our surprise to learn that the most accurate inspection is one conducted by a bedbug-sniffing *dog!* A wonderful canine named Nemo visited the Center in late November and inspected every room. Check out his photo at right.

We also put systems in place to insure that we will never experience this type of “challenge” again, installing two industrial dryers that we will use to heat all clothing donated to the Center to 160 degrees for at least 30 minutes before sorting and distributing it. Special thanks to the Greater Chesapeake Charitable Foundation and United Way of Central Maryland, whose generous support helped make this possible.

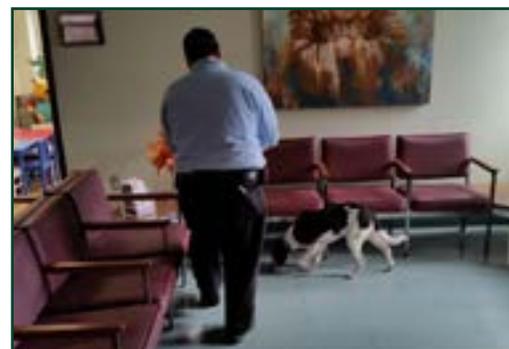
All things truly do work together for good, as the Bible says! In the end, this unexpected “challenge” has given the Franciscan Center an opportunity to restructure our clothing department so that it is among the safest and best organized in Baltimore. What a lovely blessing!

December's unseasonably warm temperatures were also a blessing, since our clothing

department remained closed during this process. We reopened on January 4th.

Words cannot begin to express how grateful we are for our generous friends in the community. You really stepped up in this time of need, and we are overwhelmed by your kindness! The Center received an **abundance** of both new and gently used clothing donations during the holiday – so great an abundance, in fact, that we've asked our friends to hold off on sending in donations of gently-used clothing until we are able to process what we have in-house. Thank you so much for your help and understanding!

We're privileged to partner with you – our wonderful friends and supporters – in service to Baltimore's most vulnerable citizens. May the months ahead bring you *many* blessings!



Meet Nemo, a dog specially trained to detect bed bugs. Nemo visited the Center in November and found no evidence of bedbugs anywhere!



Thanks to the generous support of Greater Chesapeake Charitable Foundation and United Way of Central Maryland, the Center installed two industrial dryers that will prevent any further issues with unwanted pests.

## Special thanks to the following Foundations for their generous support in 2015

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|--|--|
| The Abell Foundation, Inc.                   | The Marion I. and Henry J. Knott Foundation        |
| Anonymous Friends                            | John J. Leidy Foundation, Inc.                     |
| The Archbishop's Annual Appeal               | Morton and Sophia Macht Foundation, Inc.           |
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| Stephen and Renee Bisciotti Foundation       | Loretta A. Snell Charitable Trust                  |
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| The Drescher Foundation                      | United Way of Central Maryland                     |
| Foundation For a Better Tomorrow, Inc.       | The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation         |
| The Greater Chesapeake Charitable Foundation | Wells Fargo Foundation                             |
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| The Zanvyl & Isabelle Krieger Fund           |  |



# What's YOUR story?

**“Each one of us has a story; a story of grace, a story of sin, a story of journey, many things. And it's good to pray with our story.”**

*Pope Francis*

With these words, Pope Francis shared the essence of what it means to be Franciscan - the spirit that animates the Franciscan Center's ministry of service to poor and hungry citizens of Baltimore.

Each person whose life we have touched with this ministry throughout the past 47 years has his or her own special story – and each one has become a part of *our* story. St. Francis of Assisi challenged each of us to “preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary, use words.” Clearly, our stories are our most profound prayers.

We'd love to hear *your* story. Please take a moment today to share how the Franciscan Center has touched your life and what that has meant to you. As we approach our 50th year of service to the Baltimore community, we're starting a book of memories from past and present clients, volunteers and staff – the story of love that is the Franciscan Center. From time to time, we may also share some of these stories in our quarterly newsletter, website and social media sites.

Please contact Meg Ducey to share your story at (410) 467-5340, Ext. 117 or [mducey@fcbmore.org](mailto:mducey@fcbmore.org). We won't use your name unless you want us to.

**Bless you for the many wonderful ways in which you've shared our story! We look forward to hearing from you!**

## The Franciscan Center needs YOU!

Every day here at the Franciscan Center, as many as 700 men, women and children in crisis find dignity, hope and comfort in the warm smiles and the welcoming spirits of the Center's dedicated volunteers and staff. The Center is truly a community supported organization, for on any given day there are as many volunteers working in the building as there are paid staff. We simply could not do what we do without their help!

As demand for our services continues to grow, so does our need for volunteers. Please consider sharing your time and talent at the Franciscan Center in service to our brothers and sisters in need. Volunteers serve from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Monday through Friday throughout the year. Perhaps you can share your time once or twice a month, or even on a weekly basis, like the Willes (pictured to the right). The Center has a wide variety of volunteer opportunities available, so there's something for everyone! We even offer several evening and weekend volunteer opportunities.

Come into the Franciscan Center on any random Thursday during lunch, and you will see Toni and Fred Wille.

Retirement can open the door to so many different opportunities, whether it's traveling, moving to a warmer destination or spending time with the grandkids. For the Willes, their fulfillment comes from spending time with their three children and six grandchildren, but also from giving back to the community. Over the past two years they haven't missed a Thursday at the Center, placing warm, nutritious food on plates and handing them to our hungry and thankful guests.

“We live in Harford County, so I didn't think I'd be committed to a Thursday, but I do not mind at all,” Fred Wille said. “We really look forward to coming down.”

The Willes were connected to the Center through their son, Kevin, former President of the Franciscan Center Board of Directors, on which he served for seven years. He urged them to volunteer at the Center when they expressed a desire to give back.

“I've been wanting to do this for years,” Toni said. “After my mom passed away, we were then able to donate our time. We come from a different world, so for us to come down here and help the people that truly need help, it's extremely rewarding. When you see the looks on their faces and how appreciative they are, it really makes your day.”

In addition to serving meals, the Willes also donate hats and scarves that Toni knits during the winter.

The Center is incredibly grateful to the Willes for the service and smiles they bring to our guests, and we look forward to many more Thursdays with them through 2016 and beyond.

Please contact our Volunteer and In-Kind Donations Coordinator, Angela Hall, to schedule your volunteer service. Angela can be reached by phone at; 410-467-5340, ext. 113, or by e-mail at: [ahall@fcbmore.org](mailto:ahall@fcbmore.org)

We look forward to partnering with you in service to our most vulnerable neighbors!



**TONI AND FRED WILLE**

# SAVE THE DATES

*Franciscan Center's 21st Annual*  
**Charity Golf Tournament**

Tuesday, July 12, 2016



Register at [fcbmore.org/events/](http://fcbmore.org/events/)

*Franciscan Center's 5th Annual*

*Voices from the  
Heart Gala*



25% off ticket price before July 1

## Johnson grateful to Center for assistance

Michael Johnson loves his first family deeply, but it's his second family who has helped keep the first one going.

Johnson has been coming to the Franciscan Center for the past six years. He's a very familiar face to the kitchen and clothing staff members on the first floor, and the responsive services staff on the second floor. The staff has also gotten to know Johnson's 5-year-old son, Michael Jr., who has benefited from the Center's many services since he was born.

"They provided my son with clothing, pampers, milk and a birth certificate," Johnson said. "I've always been able to come here and get what a child needs in their first stages. My son has been truly blessed by the Center. Every Christmas, they offer him a gift and like me, he knows the staff and the people we engage every day."

Johnson and his wife have struggled to make ends meet, as they are both



**MICHAEL JOHNSON** disabled. Suitable work has been scarce as a result, and that's where the Center came in. Whether the Johnsons needed eviction prevention, energy assistance, a warm meal or just someone to listen, he always had a place to go where he felt welcome.

"I'm a community person, so not only do they help me, but I see the help they give others," he said. "The Center being here and the services they offer, it's a great thing. You come in here and

they're always so nice. They're spiritually based so sometimes I come in just for a good conversation."

Now that Michael Jr. is entering school, the Center has provided him with the supplies he needs through its Christmas in July program.

The Johnson family moved into new housing just after New Year's, and Johnson said his son is transferring to a new school as a result. The family is hopeful the transition will be a good one, but the Center will remain an outlet for them if they need it, and if not, Johnson will still drop by with Michael Jr.'s old clothes as he's done each time his son has grown out of them. Given all the uplifting support he has witnessed at the Center over the past six years, he wants to pay it forward.

"I'm here however they need me and they're there when I need them, so I feel real close and special to the Center," he said.