



Good News

St. Ben's Community Meal

"A day wasted on others is not wasted on oneself." – Charles Dickens

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St. Ben's Community Meal is a ministry of the Capuchin Province of St. Joseph and a 501(c)(3) ministry. All donations are tax deductible as allowable by law.

Donations of cash, food, blankets, hygiene products, new socks and underwear always appreciated and accepted Monday-Friday during business hours.

New Life & New I.D.'s For Homeless

Recovering crack cocaine addict finds help in new ways at St. Ben's

"Too many losses," Joe sighed. He had come in to get help applying for an ID as his was lost when he was robbed. Joe is homeless and he said that he had been using crack cocaine for 20 years. "I stopped using crack last summer while serving a term in county jail. It has just cost me so much," he said.

Joe started to list everything he had lost to his crack habit. "I lost my family, my job, my friends and now my marriage. Going through de-tox in jail was terrible, I endured five days of hallucinations without any medication. I started drinking alcohol as a child and using crack in my 20's but now I have been accepted into a treatment program."

"I count on St. Ben's," Joe continued, "and they have always helped me. I have received bus tickets, clothing, regular meals and now an ID!" Josh Hren, Volunteer Coordinator and Meal Chaplain, explained how the program works, "St. Ben's Community Meal helps homeless people get their ID's as without them they can't get into a shelter, apply for GAMP (medical benefits) or find work. The ID's cost \$28 so

we contribute \$19 and ask the guest to bring a co-pay of \$9."



Above: : Josh Hren, St. Ben's staff helps Joe with his ID application.

Josh added, "the DMV requires a birth certificate, social security card and other documents that homeless people normally don't have with them. So St. Ben's helps them to assemble these forms as well." He continued, "then we give the homeless person a voucher for their ID and send them to the DMV which is 7 blocks away."

Br. David Schwab, Capuchin said, "We used to process 10 people at a time. With Josh's help we are processing ID voucher requests one at a time now. This gives us time to learn more about each guest's individual needs and make referrals to programs that will help them get off the street." Josh smiled and added, "And we always make sure we end our time together with a prayer."

Someone had donated a case of new wallets. Joe was already looking through them for one to keep his new ID in once he had finished at the DMV. He also smiled and said, "I am lucky my father, brother and girlfriend have been encouraging me to continue being sober. And St. Ben's has been a great help!"



Spring Cleaning and Wedding Bells

In the recent past St Ben's Meal has taken a week off in the spring and fall to allow the staff time to do a thorough cleaning of the Meal Hall and kitchen. In considering this, the staff has decided to discontinue this practice, in order to not disrupt the meals and service to the hungry and homeless guests. Instead, we are turning to volunteers to make sure that we have clean areas for this service.

Toward this end we were blessed with two service groups recently. On April 19 a group of Marquette University students came and worked to clean all of the tables and chairs, plus the kitchen area. They did this as part of "Hunger Clean-up" and did a wonderful job!

Then, on April 26, a former Cap Corps volunteer, Katherine Valentyn, and her fiancé, John Jones, came with their family to wash all of the windows in our friary and administration areas. This service replaced the traditional "wedding shower" and was an outstanding contribution to St Ben's.

We welcome other groups who want to enhance our space, while helping us keep the flow of meals going for our guests. Blessings on our "hands on" volunteers who made our space sparkle! - *Br. David Schwab, OFM, Capuchin & Executive Director*



Back To School Supply Drive Starts!

The days are counting down and this school year is over or nearly over but the St Ben's Community Building Committee is counting the days until August 23rd, the day of the annual Back to School Event for our children. There are ways that you can help to prepare the children for the fall semester; send donations to purchase school supplies (indicate the Back to School Event), volunteer, or donate "new and gently used" children's books.

We have a particular need for books for middle school age children. It is a great opportunity for your children to learn to share and teach them the joy of giving. This event is always jam-packed with activities, special guests, food, school supplies, and happy faces! - Barbara Messerknecht, Chairperson, Back to School Drives



Homeless and gone . . . but not forgotten

*By Jim Stingl, Columnist,
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

When Robert Weber's name was called at a memorial service for the homeless, Charlie rose from his seat and lit a candle in his friend's memory. In all, 26 names were spoken aloud Tuesday afternoon at St. Benedict the Moor Church in downtown Milwaukee. That's 26 candles glowing on the altar.

The annual service is held to remember homeless or formerly homeless men, women and children who died in the past year. About 60 people showed up to pray and sing and to show with their presence that these souls didn't die alone or forgotten. "Me and Bob go way back," said Charlie, who himself is homeless and didn't want to tell me his last name.

By going way back, he means they lived on the streets together, most nights choosing to stay outside rather than in a shelter. "We slept in trailers. We slept in sheds. We had tents. We'd even stay out in the middle of winter," Charlie said.

He wasn't with Weber the night he drowned in the Milwaukee River. Weber, 44, was drinking with another man the night of July 14 on a steep incline near the river at Plankinton and St. Paul. "The decedent apparently fell into the river while going to the bathroom," the medical examiner's report says. Passer-by Trent Mielke jumped in the water to try to save Weber.

Another name on the memorial list was familiar to Charlie. Larry C. Wilson, 42, who was found dead in the snow on March 24. He was lying in a small wooded area near 25th and St. Paul. This was his home. He died clutching a leather briefcase that contained most everything he owned. A sister in Texas said Wilson had mental and alcohol problems his entire life.

I asked Charlie, 48, how he managed to avoid the same fate as his friends. "I'm lucky so far," he replied. It's a

hard life, but one he's chosen these past seven years or so, he said. Sometimes he is able to stay with friends. At the memorial, he greeted Jeanne Lowry, a Red Cross worker who has helped him in the past. Many of those in the pews Tuesday work with the homeless. "You need to come see me," she admonished Charlie.

A candle burned for a woman who was born with HIV and died in November at age 20. And for a 47-year-old man with a host of medical problems who collapsed and died in the parking lot at St. Ben's Clinic on June 25. And for a 52-year-old man who died in August after smoking crack cocaine at his friend's house.

And for another 52-year-old man who was pushed down the steps by an irritated man outside a homeless shelter in February. And for a guy who was beaten to death last April by a vagrant with a walking stick in MacArthur Square, where they were living. And for a 2-year-old boy starved to death by his mother in August. They had lived for a time in a homeless shelter.

Next year another memorial will be held, said organizer and St. Ben's social worker Bill Mullooly. And more names will be added to the Book of Life that was started in 1989. Charlie said he's afraid he's going to know more of those names.

I doubt that's true for most of us. But when I went to St. Ben's for the service, someone standing in line for the meal program called out my name. It was someone I knew as a boy growing up. We talked a little, and he asked if I could spare a couple bucks.

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Left: St. Benedict the Moor Parish celebrated its 100th Anniversary in April with a Mass and party for parishioners, alumni and friends.

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Save The NEW Date!

Thursday, July 24, 2008 St. Ben's to sponsor 5K Run/Walk to Germanfest.

Germanfest has selected St. Ben's to be the charity sponsor of their 5K Run/Walk this year. They also have changed the date of the Run/Walk to Thursday, July 24th at 7:00 PM.

Br. Dave Schwab, Capuchin said, "Even though it is a new date we will offer runners and walkers a wonderful time at the start of Germanfest. All participants will receive water along the route, snacks afterwards and a runner's bag provided by our corporate sponsors."

Bill Michaels, Sportscaster for WTMJ Radio 620 AM will emcee and participate. After the Run/Walk is concluded all participants with their families and friends may enter Germanfest for free. Bill will host the awards program and announce the raffle winners.

"This year runners and walkers can register online," said Br. David. "Just go to:

www.stbensmilwaukee.org/germanfest and anyone can use their credit card to register. You will receive a confirmation email and we'll have your shirt waiting at the registration table. I hope to see everyone there!"



The Run/Walk To Feed the Hungry is run on a USATF certified course and is a CARRS managed event.



P.S. Are you, or do you know of, a man aged 18 - 50 who you think would make a good Capuchin friar? If so, please contact our Capuchin Vocation Director, Fr. John Holly, at (920) 915-4400. He's waiting for your call!