

**Emergency Overnight
Shelter and Services**

831 N. Sycamore St.
(Corner of Oakland & Sycamore)
Lansing, MI 48906

Loaves and Fishes



Ministries

**Transitional Housing
and Services**

Zacchaeus House for women
with children
Luke's House for single men

Telephone (517) 482-2099 Fax (517) 482-6848

Spring 2017

The Gift of Service: Purposeful giving of time...as a Shepherd of His Sheep

By Jim Veurink, Co-President, Core Community Board of Directors

Most of us are experiencing times of stress and uncertainty, be it our personal concerns, financial worries, or the barrage of cruel words we hear relentlessly on radio or television. These are not easy times.

Sometimes through unfortunate times and circumstances, opportunities for light and renewal can enter our personal worlds and coarse culture. As we hear cruel words and see the breakdown of courtesy and civility, we may resolve to counter these trends with our own personal words and acts of kindness.



Recently, I had the opportunity to spend a morning with one of our shelter's volunteers, **Carol Wallace**, about the meaning of Loaves and Fishes Ministries and its impact on her life. She shared with me that, in contrast to these recent months, she makes an additional effort to share kindness in her sphere of friends and family. Moreover, she has resolved to "counter" the divisiveness around us by offering an even greater commitment to volunteer her time with our guests.

Carol often contributes an evening, shepherding an overnight shift. In so doing, she is comforted by knowing that our guests – *who are exhausted from their day's work or from trying to make it through the outdoor elements* – can sleep in safety and their bodies can rejuvenate for the day to come. In the morning, she loves making a hearty breakfast for our guests. ***Carol shared that, contrary to what many may think, volunteering during the overnight shift is a safe, secure opportunity to care for those who need a bed for the night.***

We are so grateful to Carol for her gift of service, and, may I add that L&F is in great need of people like Carol who would consider this act of giving. Overnight volunteering may intrude into hours taken away our favorite pillow or firm mattress, but the comfort of knowing that we are caring for – yes, shepherding folks who don't have that fluffy pillow or that good quality mattress to count on due to their personal circumstances – is a deeply gratifying experience.

Consider being the hands, the feet of Jesus and, yes, an evening shepherd of his sheep. Consider adding this act of giving as a way of bringing our Lansing community one step closer to the intentions of how the Light asks us to live amongst each other.

**To join our L&F volunteer team, contact Beth Young at
volunteer@loavesandfisheslansing.org**

Providing guests with warmth, comfort and love

By Jenny Leaf, L&F Director



Loaves and Fishes Ministries strives to provide a home-like atmosphere for our shelter and transitional housing guests every day of the year. Beyond delicious home-cooked meals at the emergency shelter prepared by volunteers with

love and culinary skills beyond my imagination, our 6-10 p.m. volunteers greet each guest with a smile and look forward to conversation and fellowship after meal clean up and the laundry is done. Our transitional housing guests know they have safe and affordable housing as well as a caring staff to turn to if needed while they seek more permanent and sustainable housing. Our brothers and sisters experiencing homelessness know they will be loved and accepted at Loaves and Fishes Ministries, a welcome relief from quite possibly a lifetime of being judged, looked down upon, and forgotten.

We work extra hard to make sure all of our shelter guests experience the love and warmth of the holiday, no matter their religion or belief system. Our donors, volunteers, Core Community Board of Directors and staff go the extra mile to tend to our guests' needs. Some of our guests are able to spend time with family and loved ones, some don't have family or friends nearby, and some have never had the experience of the holidays as a special, meaningful time. A few weeks before Christmas we begin receiving donations of gifts for shelter guests, stockings full of goodies, and let's not forget all of the rich, baked goods treats. Because of this generosity, we are able to give each of our ten shelter guests a gift bag on Christmas Eve. These gift bags contain items such as pajamas and slipper sets, hats and gloves (sometimes beautifully handmade), warm socks, personal needs items, and clothing items – all brand new, which is something we are not able to provide all the time. I have run into many guests the day after Christmas who have hugged me with grateful tears in their eyes. They are often shocked when I tell them that it was all donated, not one penny came out of our bank account. It is a joy for us to hear the laughter and glee as they talk about their Christmas meal, either at the shelter or with their family and friends. It's almost as if for one moment, they are able to let go of a little bit of the stress of experiencing homelessness, and just live in the love that surrounds them.

Our guests in our transitional housing programs, three families in Zacchaeus House and three single men in Luke's House, also are sure to have a wondrous Christmas. A few weeks before Christmas they are given wish lists to fill out, including clothing sizes, jacket size, and shoe/boot size. Our guests don't know what to think about this and usually turn in their wish list with one or two items, and staff has to return it to them with lots of prodding to add gifts for themselves. We usually hear responses such as, "I don't need anything," or, "I never get anything for Christmas so I don't know what to write," and, "I don't want to be greedy." There have been times when asking for gifts has been just too uncomfortable for the guests and I have to admit I have added gift cards to their list without them knowing it! The men in Luke's House often feel they don't deserve gifts. The women in Zacchaeus House just want to make sure their children receive gifts and are relieved to not have to set aside additional funds in their already stretched-to-the-limit budgets. This year we had the special experience of a Luke's House guest who was planning to move into his new apartment right after the New Year, and he was able to ask for, and received, lots of useful household items!

The generous friends who provided the Christmas gifts for all of our Zacchaeus and Luke's Houses guests are FAA employees of the Lansing Air Traffic Control Tower. See pg. 3 (column 2, bottom right) for more information about this wonderful group that makes sure our transitional housing guests receive the items on their wish lists! Because of them, our transitional housing guests also experience the warmth and giving of the season.

These gifts for our guests are so much more than just tangible items to unwrap and enjoy. Many of our guests feel they have been forgotten and are not deserving of love. It is always my hope that my brothers and sisters staying with us will always feel seen and cared for during the time they are with us, and that they will take that sense of self-worth and love with them when they leave. It is also my belief that we are able to do this...and only with the support and generosity of our donors and volunteers.

The reach of the gifts you bring to Loaves and Fishes Ministries and to our guests is far and wide, tall and deep. Thank you!

As community partnerships grow, So does the depth of our gratitude!

By Joan Tirak, Co-President, Core Community Board of Directors

If there is anything we have learned in the past 36 years since opening Loaves and Fishes Ministries, it is that "it truly takes a village" to compassionately and adequately care for the thousands of people experiencing homelessness who have graced our shelter. All of us are deeply moved by the generous caring and giving that continues to come from our greater Lansing community. *Whether you gave a \$1, \$5, \$10, \$25, \$50, \$100, \$500, \$1000...or several thousand, ALL are precious gifts that continue to make this critical work possible! Because of this, we are most happy to report that 2016 was the 1st year in a very long time that we were able to meet all of our expenses and have a modest surplus to begin the New Year. This is Miraculous!*



Elite Mr. Alan's In Feb Director Jenny Leaf was invited to attend a very exuberant grand opening for **Mr. Alan's**, a Detroit based sporting goods store with a new branch in Lansing (W Saginaw). While there, she was overwhelmed by their generosity...donating boxes of NEW sweatpants and shirts and fancy athletic shoes, as well as a \$500 check. They also committed to assist with a project, so Jenny is looking into getting help for replacing windows/screens. God bless you, Mr. Alan's!

Creative Wellness, East Lansing



On Nov 5, 2016 our friends at Creative Wellness hosted a fundraising benefit for Loaves and Fishes Ministries during which massage, Chiropractic and acupuncture services were offered to those who scheduled appointments during the 4-hr event. **All the proceeds totaling \$2,915.00 were donated to L&F!** We are so grateful to co-owners **Christine Reay** and **Irene Savoyat**, and to Marketing Director **Anne Subrizi** for initiating this incredible event and for coming to present this huge check to our L&F staff. We also extend our deepest gratitude to all the Creative Wellness practitioners who gave so generously of themselves to the success of this community benefit fundraiser!

Woody's Trowbridge & Woody's Okemos

Our two wonderful Woody's Oasis restaurants together collected **\$265.63** in donations from customers who gave \$1 or more when making food purchases. This is the 3rd year that they have partnered with our Holiday Helping the Homeless Fundraiser...for which we are exceedingly grateful!



Jim Booth Memorial Fund

Last fall we announced the sad passing of our longest life-time volunteer, **Jim Booth**, a former realtor who graciously helped us to find and purchase the current location of Loaves and Fishes Ministries in 1980. *Not only did Jim find our original house, but once we were established, he began to volunteer*

weekly, working the 10 pm to 7 am shift every Wednesday night...unless he was sick or away. Jim loved cooking breakfast for our guests, so he brought special sausage that he prepared at home. Guests loved Jim, and he loved serving them. When he died last August, **Jim's wife Kathy** designated L&F Ministries as a recipient of memorial donations, passing along Jim's hope that we could purchase better cooking equipment. **Since then, L&F has received \$9,520.00.** Director Jenny Leaf said, "I'm hoping to go shopping for new pots/pans and other supplies soon." Rest in peace, Jim!

Schuler Books - Eastwood & Meridian For the 2nd year L&F has done Holiday gift wrapping for Schuler customers. We worked in teams on several days, 2 to 4 hours. In gratitude, customers made free-will donations which totaled **\$953.77**. Many asked about L&F so we were able to joyfully share the good work that is done for our guests and invite them to join us as volunteers!

Lansing Air Traffic Control Tower Employees

Twenty-three FAA workers were involved with our 2016 L&F Christmas gift project. Five did purchasing, one of them brave enough to tackle Black Friday sales. Those unable to donate contributed by wrapping and helping with loading and delivery. **Julie Bazman**, who coordinated the project, said: "We are all very aware of how fortunate we are and that there are people who are struggling and really need help. It can be too easy to forget how blessed we are during the hubbub of the holiday season. The work we do for L&F reminds us how real the joys of giving are and that everyone can help make a difference in someone's life!" What an incredible group...and what an amazing gift to our L&F guests!



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