



Parish Kitchen

Celebrating

years

Dignity Respect Affection Attention Hospitality



Summer 2024

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Community Gathers at Parish Kitchen to Celebrate 50 Years

By Carol Branch, Volunteer

Guests, volunteers, current and former staff, and community leaders gathered at Parish Kitchen recently to mark 50 years of providing daily meals to those in need. More than one hundred individuals attended the open-house style event at 1561 Madison Avenue, which has been home to Parish Kitchen since it relocated there in 2020. Attendees toured the building, sampled favorite casserole dishes, and viewed the gardens, which in addition to featuring beautiful flower beds also boast raised vegetable beds for fresh produce that is incorporated into meals.

At the event, Monsignor Gerald Reinersman, longtime board member of Catholic Charities, opened with prayer. Jim Woeste unveiled an engraved garden stone and plaque in memory of his cousin Tom Rawe, who passed away in April. Tom was a board member of Catholic Charities and devoted volunteer of Parish Kitchen who was instrumental in building the garden beds and gazebo. He dedicated his life to the service of others and was a "tremendous and wonderful man," said Monsignor Reinersman, a longtime pastor at St. Joseph Parish in Cold Spring where Tom was an active member.

Covington Mayor Joe Meyer was on hand to deliver a proclamation declaring June 17, 2024, "Parish Kitchen Day" in the city. Catholic Charities Executive Director, Chris Goddard, offered remarks and thanked the community for its support of Parish Kitchen. Several attendees at the event have been volunteering since the early days.

Most Reverend John Iffert, Bishop of the Diocese of Covington, concluded with remarks and a prayer. He said that Parish Kitchen is an example of the "wonderful mission" Catholics are called to live out as directed in the recent doctrinal declaration approved by Pope Francis entitled "Declaration 'Dignitas Infinita' on Human Dignity." The declaration states that *every human person possesses an infinite dignity, inalienably grounded in his or her very being, which prevails in and beyond every circumstance, state, or situation the person may ever encounter.* (Continued on page 3)



Mayor Joe Meyer presents proclamation to Bishop Iffert

The Mustard Seed That Became the Parish Kitchen

Written by: Chris Goddard, Executive Director, Catholic Charities

Fifty years ago in Covington, a mustard seed was sown when caring parishioners gave sandwiches to five hungry neighbors from the back porch of the Mother of God rectory. This seed took root, and the act ultimately led to the establishment of the Parish Kitchen ministry in the basement of Mother of God Church. After over 40 years of operation at the corner of Pike and Russell Streets, the ministry relocated to Madison Avenue in 2020 to better accommodate the increasing need to feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty.

The Parish Kitchen has grown into a large, living bush where guests can gather, and enjoy a hot lunch, a cold drink, and a kind smile – all without judgment – 365 days a year. We now serve an average of 180 hot lunches a day, totaling over 65,000 meals annually. With the new location, we have expanded our services to include necessities like socks, health and hygiene products, and sleeping bags and blankets during winter months. We also offer wrap-around services such as on-site nursing care provided by St. Elizabeth Healthcare and access to our newest service, Pickett's Corner, a bike ministry. Dedicated volunteers collect and repair gently used bikes to donate to our patrons who need basic transportation to access work, the grocery store, their healthcare provider, and other social services.

As we look to the future, we will continue to provide the same essential services with love to meet their physical needs. Additionally, we will seek opportunities to become transformational in our work – for ourselves and those we serve. Transformative charity means creating opportunities to engage more deeply with our guests by joining them when welcomed—eating and praying alongside them. It also involves providing opportunities for our volunteers to reflect and share their experiences, recognizing where they encountered Christ in their work and in the people they served. Sharing a meal offers the perfect opportunity to build relationships with those we encounter, accompanying guests on their journey. Through listening and sharing, we create a community where we all benefit spiritually and emotionally, leading one another closer to Christ. We look forward to creating new opportunities to engage with our guests and offer new volunteer opportunities to serve in the coming months, both at Parish Kitchen and across all Catholic Charities' many ministries.

As I write this article, I can't help but reflect on a powerful example of the tangible transformational work of a dear friend to many and a 14-year Catholic Charities volunteer, Chick Meyn, from whose Mass of Christian Burial I had just returned this afternoon. Chick volunteered in both prison ministry and at the Parish Kitchen. While attending the men's Saturday prayer group at St. Joseph Cold Spring the Saturday following Chick's passing, I heard multiple stories of his humility, acts of love, and ability to see Christ in others. St. Joseph Church was at capacity for Chick's funeral Mass, serving as a testimony to the countless lives he touched and undoubtedly transformed through his work within the community.

I will close by sharing my conversation with a father and his 7-year-old son at the Parish Kitchen open house on June 17, celebrating our 50th anniversary. The father, a volunteer at Parish Kitchen, brought his son to help him just a few weeks ago. He shared how moving it was for his son to have the opportunity to clear and wipe down tables. The young boy, joy still beaming on his face, recounted his experience with me, expressing how much he especially enjoyed speaking with the guests and how he looked forward to volunteering again. I am sure the guests were equally touched by the young volunteer's kindness. His desire to serve and engage a stranger without judgment serves as a small but powerful witness of Christ's love.

The seed that was sown 50 years ago has grown into the beautiful ministry of Parish Kitchen and will certainly continue to grow and flourish for generations to come.

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Parish Kitchen Returns to its Birthplace in Thanking God for 50 Years of Blessings

Written by: David Cooley, Diocese of Covington

The 50th Anniversary Celebration Mass for Parish Kitchen took place June 21 at Mother of God Parish, Covington. Bishop John Iffert was the main celebrant with Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys; Father Mark Keene, diocesan vicar general; Father Michael Comer, pastor, Mother of God Parish; Father Gerald Reinersman, retired, concelebrating. Deacons Jim Fortner and Scott Folz assisted.

Catholic Charities and Parish Kitchen staff, volunteers and benefactors were present to give glory to God for 50 years of feeding the hungry and welcoming the downtrodden in the heart of Covington.

"Right here in this parish, 50 years ago, people decided, at least for part of their lives, they would turn their hearts to make sure that those who didn't have enough to eat would have some security and food; that those who didn't have enough to drink would have someone to offer them a carton of milk or a glass of water or lemonade to quench their thirst; and that those who were alone and isolated had a community that would reach out to them with accepting, neighborly affection," said Bishop Iffert during his homily.

He thanked all who have contributed to Parish Kitchen in any way and encouraged them to continue to put their trust in God and guard their hearts from pursuing worldly securities.

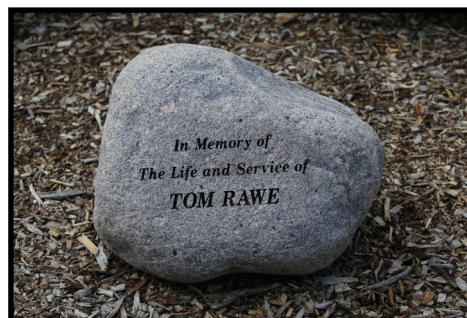
"Let us set our hearts on the things of the kingdom of God. ... Let us set our hearts on the will of God the Father and be His mercy for others. That is the health of the human heart as the Bible understands it," he said. "... Let us pray to God, that he will call us to greater perfection in the way that we invest our hearts."



Community Gathers at Parish Kitchen to Celebrate 50 Years

(Continued from page 1)

"That human dignity should guide every action that we take in the world, actions we take as a community, actions we take as a church, actions we take as individuals. ..." Bishop Iffert explained. "That principle has been witnessed here at Parish Kitchen for 50 years. ...50 years of acknowledging that principle and living in service of it. Thank you to Parish Kitchen, to all of you [present], to Catholic Charities, to Mother of God Parish, to the whole community that is part of witnessing to that truth."



Garden Stone in memory of long-time volunteer Tom Rawe

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Siblings Show Spirit of Service Since Founding Days of Parish Kitchen

By: Carol Branch, Volunteer

As Parish Kitchen celebrates 50 years this year, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington recognizes a pair of siblings who have demonstrated a special spirit of service from the start. Melanie and Betty Trenkamp, lifelong members of Mother of God Parish, began volunteering when Parish Kitchen was in its infancy stages, operating out of the parish as the vision of its then Pastor Father Mertes, who saw the need to help feed the hungry in Covington's urban core.

"People came together. It was amazing to see," said Betty, 69, recalling the humble beginnings of Parish Kitchen, which relied 100 percent on volunteers and donations. Added Melanie, 75, "Those who came through the doors were never asked anything other than, 'Are you hungry?' If they were hungry, we gave them food."

Melanie was twenty-five and Betty nineteen when they first started volunteering with Parish Kitchen. They recalled serving simple soup and sandwiches in the early days. "It was truly grassroots," explained Betty. "We put soup in a pot and served sandwiches. We had no idea how many would come." The first meal they served, there were five guests. In six months, time, there were 30 to 50 people coming regularly for an afternoon meal. The number of guests would keep growing as word spread in the community and the needs of the disenfranchised increased. As donations also increased, soups and sandwiches were replaced by more substantial, nutritious dishes. Many of those recipes are still used today.

When Catholic Charities took over the administration of Parish Kitchen, the sisters said it "helped secure things," so the worry of relying entirely on volunteers or donations was no longer there. The seeds of Parish Kitchen were planted at Mother of God Parish in 1974. In 1981, a three-story building at Pike and Russell streets a block from the church that formerly housed a bar was leased and renovated. It was later purchased and further renovated and would also become home to Welcome House. This location would serve as the longtime home of Parish Kitchen until the move to its current, more modernized location at 16th and Madison in Covington in July 2020.

Melanie and Betty helped prep and cook meals and were on a serving team originally on Mondays. Over the years, nieces and nephews would join them in the prep work, peeling potatoes, helping stir the pots, or folding silverware in napkins. Even great nieces and great nephews became involved.

Betty said it was a "no brainer" getting involved in Parish Kitchen and staying involved over the years, as "it is what we were called to do. I attribute that to our parents," she said. "Our parents were really good people who taught us to be givers. When you have more, you give, and that is what we do."

Their parents' example was strong. They described how their dad, who owned a grocery store, would give odd jobs to poorer children in the neighborhood and pay them or give them food. He also fed the garbage man lunch every day. Their mom would freeze gallon milk jugs filled with water in the summertime and set them out for the garbage men, so they would have cold water to drink on hot days.

Melanie is retired from Remke Markets, where she worked for 46 years. Betty is a retired principal from the Diocese of Covington. The pair recalled a few favorite Parish Kitchen memories. One was Friday gift-wrapping sessions during the Christmas season spearheaded by longtime (1987-2010) Parish Kitchen manager Molly Navin. Another was when a guest informed them, he would no longer be coming to Parish Kitchen for meals because he had found a job and could afford his own food now that a paycheck was coming in.



Melanie and Betty Trenkamp

Asked what they are most proud of about their involvement, Betty was quick to explain, "I feel blessed to have been a part of this. For me, this has been a religious experience. And that is more than pride. I think the blessings I have received may be greater than the blessings going out the door. I was very shy as a child, so getting involved and volunteering opened me up to putting myself out there and gave me skills I could use to help others," she said.

Shared Melanie: "I'm most proud of the fact that I actually volunteered to get involved and started with this to try to make a difference in the community because there was such a need. As an individual you can't do that on your own, but to be part of a team and be able to carry out something this enormous, I'm very proud of being one of the beginners. I'm grateful to have been part of such a wonderful team of volunteers who helped get this idea off the ground."



Parish Kitchen through the years—a guest enjoys a hot meal

The siblings' spirit of giving at Parish Kitchen has spanned five decades. And while they are no longer preparing meals or serving on the food line, Melanie and Betty still give back, donating baked goods and treat bags for guests to enjoy.

Are they surprised Parish Kitchen has lasted so long? "A little bit," Melanie replied. "There's always that question when you start something this big that relies on volunteers, is it going to be able to sustain itself, or is it going to be so overwhelming that we can't keep up with it. You wonder if people will still continue to support it. I'm grateful it's still around for people because now, more than ever, the need is so great." Added Betty: "I'm not surprised. I know the poor will always be here, but I also know that there are good people committed to serving others who will always be here, too."

For 50 years, Parish Kitchen has nourished countless stomachs and spirits and brought people from all walks of life together. Following are words from the closing statement of a written history of Parish Kitchen from the Catholic Charities archives. They sum up Parish Kitchen perfectly. *"The adventure with the Holy Spirit has been worth every hour of struggle and work and worry. It has united volunteers and parishes of various denominations into one expression of charity. For all these years, the Parish Kitchen has been a symbol of the presence of Christ in our community, and, in its continued record of service, we have a living witness to the Gospel."*

Parish Kitchen through the years



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Thank You to Our Donors for the Celebration Treats

During the week of our 50th celebration, we had some wonderful treats for our guests! We are incredibly grateful to all our donors who made this 50th celebration special. It truly takes a village of supporters, volunteers, and staff to continue serving those in need. Thank you all!

Monday, June 17th: We kicked off the anniversary day with a delicious meal from McHale's Catering—ham, scalloped potatoes, green beans, and rolls, topped off with birthday cake. Huge thanks to Chuck McHale for your ongoing support!



McHale's meal



Bill Tepe delivers Snappy Pizzas

Tuesday: Bill Tepe from Snappy Tomato Pizza in Burlington, KY, treated everyone to Beast pizzas. The guests loved it and enjoyed more birthday cake!



Father hands out McDonalds Apple Pies

Wednesday: An anonymous donor surprised us with McDonald's Quarter Pounder sandwiches, French fries, and apple pies. The guests, especially the little ones, were thrilled!



John & Eric Giesen

Thursday: Izzy's Restaurant delighted us with their world-famous Reuben sandwiches and potato pancakes. Thank you to John Giesen and his son Eric for their generosity!

Our volunteers are what make Parish Kitchen who we are. Thanks to the volunteers who went above and beyond during the week long celebration:

Larry Andrzejewski	Dana Gradel	Marc Muench	Candace Stallmeier
Lisa Arlinghaus	Denise Korzenborn	Nick Reece	Pete Stark
Carol Branch	Jorja Kremer	Charlie Saalfeld	Jim Woeste
Gina Dierig	Larry Kremer	Susan Schlachter	Lisa Zeller
Cara Dorning	Dan Meier	Ken Schlachter	Mark Zilliox
Gary Enzweile	Sue Meier	Keira Schneider	Pat Zilliox
Julie Fortner	Pat Metzger		

Blessings Abound

Written by: Jennifer Abdrabbo, Institutional Advancement Associate

We announced to the Parish Kitchen community our special 50th Anniversary Campaign of raising \$500,000 in the last newsletter. We thought we'd give you an update on where we are and the next step in our Anniversary journey. Our contributions to date are \$54,865 which is enough to get started with the first item on our list which is updating our fire suppression system. Upon completion of that project our multi-purpose garage will be next on the list.

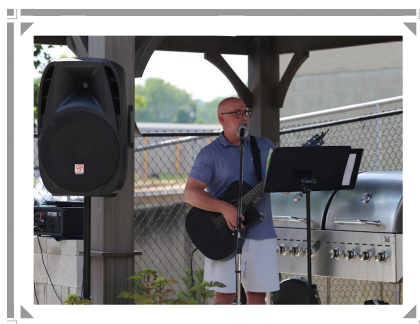
Our current fire alarm system meets basic safety requirements but isn't set up to be able to communicate with the fire department to expedite their response time. Our guests rely on us to be there daily for sustenance, and we can't take the chance of something happening to the building where Christ is working daily through our staff, guest and volunteers.

The essential addition of a multi-purpose garage will shelter our Catholic Charities box truck, ensuring its longevity and safety. Additionally, the garage will offer much-needed storage space and a dedicated area for volunteers to work on bikes during Pickett's Corner clinic days. Our Executive Director, Chris Goddard, is currently working with Don Knochelman, the Diocese of Covington's Director of Buildings & Property, on the specs needed so that we can begin approaching vendors for pricing. Our goal is to raise enough funds to cover the cost of the multi-purpose building by Spring of 2025, when we hope to break ground. Beginning in September we will begin reaching out to major donors, foundations as well as applying for grants to help us complete Phase I of our anniversary projects. More to come on Phase II in a future newsletter.

As we count the many blessings that have come to our attention throughout our 50th Anniversary celebration, we hope you know that we count you as one of those many blessings. If you haven't sent anything in to support our special 50th Anniversary campaign, please prayerfully consider doing so. No gift is too small. Your support—whether through a one-time donation, a recurring contribution, or a planned gift—will make a profound difference in the lives of those we serve, where together, we can ensure that Parish Kitchen remains a beacon of hope and hospitality for generations to come. Your contribution will leave a lasting legacy of compassion and care. To make a secure donation scan the QR code or visit www.parishkitchen.org.



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