



**St. John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter**  
Providing a Seasonal Warming Center  
411 St. John Street, Green Bay WI 54301  
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 April 2011

## GIVING THANKS FOR A MINISTRY TO ALL GOD'S PEOPLE

Although the name of the Shelter is "St. John's", it takes the efforts of many to make it a success. Two of those good friends of the Shelter are moving on. Pastor Paul and Pastor Sarah Johnsen of First United Methodist Church in Green Bay will be joining new churches in the Milwaukee area in July. Sarah has been involved with the St. John's Shelter from its beginnings, serving on the shelter board as First United also provided financial support.

Paul has been active as a chaplain at St. John's shelter. He stops in every Wednesday and says he's been amazed at how shelter guests open up to him and share their stories. Paul really enjoys taking a break from administrative duties during the week to come to the shelter to minister to the homeless. "It's a big deal to me to know their

names," Paul said. "They're not just homeless. They're Bob and Jan and Dave. They're real people. It's good for me to remember that."

Two years ago, the commitment grew even deeper when the Johnsens allowed First United to be used as a shelter for women on nights when St. John's reached its capacity. Sarah said their church quickly responded to the call for volunteers. Those volunteers have to be ready at a moment's notice since St. John's staff doesn't know until early evening when its number of guests might exceed its capacity.

The Johnsens have also been instrumental in organizing the "Gathered In Faith Together" or GIFT program. The ecumenical effort brings different Green Bay faith communities together for prayer gatherings, including Thanks-

giving and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. GIFT is also a strong supporter of the Shelter at St. John's.

"When I think of Paul and Sarah, I will remember them as doing what is right, loving goodness and walking humbly with God," said Deacon Paul Umentum. "They are great people and we will miss them in our GIFT community."

While the shelter community deeply appreciates the Johnsens dedication, the feeling is mutual. "I've been really surprised by the passion and dedication of the volunteers and the hours they put in," Sarah said. "It just warms my heart and I like to tell other people about it, both in the church and in the community."

Paul said he's been amazed how the St. John's staff keeps it a place of peace, despite having 50 people together, who may not always get along.

Sarah's involvement with the shelter has helped her to see how important it is for the church to open their eyes to see who's outside their doors.

The Johnsens will be truly missed, as Dan Robinson, Shelter Board of Trustees Chair explains, "Reverends Sarah and Paul Johnsen have




*The people of Green Bay have been very blessed to have Pastors Sarah and Paul Johnsen in our midst, providing strong leadership and vision for our community. God be with you!*

been such a blessing to St. John Shelter, but also to the entire Brown County community. Their leadership and spirit have helped make it possible for all of us to answer Jesus' call to house and feed him through his brothers and sisters in need. No greater compliment can be given pastors of the Christian community than to say that they have led people to express the love of Christ, and that's what the Johnsens have done for all of us."

While the Johnsens are moving on, they're not moving away from helping the homeless. Paul's new church is also involved in housing homeless families on a rotating basis.

Best of luck to the Johnsens and many thanks for making such a big difference for Green Bay's homeless. You've left a lasting impression.

  
**Please Join Us for the 4th Annual  
Shelter Community  
APPRECIATION**  
**Thursday, May 5 4:30–6:30 p.m.**  
*A time to connect with staff, guests,  
volunteers, and supporters  
to affirm the good work of the  
2010-11 shelter season*

## HELLO FROM SHELTER DIRECTOR, MARY KELLY



Greetings all!

As we enter the final month of our current season, we do so with concern. The high number of individuals that continue to enter St. John's doors and lay on mats spread out on the floor is disheartening. The need for shelter is the highest that I have seen over the past several years.

As of March 25<sup>th</sup> we have served a total of 224 individuals. This is compared to 258 for the entire season last year and 276 the previous year. The shelter is bursting at the seams on many nights but we have not turned anyone away.

We couldn't help them without each and every one of you. You are helping people stay safe, well-fed, clothed, showered and clean. God's presence shines through all of you that care for others with each gift of clothing, blan-

kets, food, boots, financial gifts and your physical presence through volunteering. You are our guests' caregivers and survival.

The reasons for homelessness are varied and complex. Education about the high need for shelter, mental health care, alcohol services, and assistance for those re-entering society from prison and jail is needed. Too many in our community are suffering with few options available to them and many are judged harshly. People that do not have a connection with shelters, know poverty, or interact with the homeless in the Green Bay area find it very difficult to believe that there are so many in need.

St. John's serves those with the highest need. Depression with little hope for a better future can be paralyzing. Only through support and love can individuals move forward. Thank you for providing it to our guests.

Staff continues to work hard to assist those searching for services, jobs and housing. Some will receive help and move forward, but some will continue to struggle. Pray for them please.

Thank you for your expressions of love to our guests. Believe me; they love you for caring and so do I.

Mary Kelly  
Executive Director



### *A Special Word of Thanks to Our Volunteers:*

Words are not enough to thank you for all of the support that you have provided to staff and shelter guests this season. Many of you have gone above and beyond to help fill in whenever we have had shortages. Your talents, time and presence are a treasured gift to all of us. You are a blessing and so very necessary for us to serve our guests. We could not do it without you. Thank you for your spirit of giving and care for others. ~Mary Kelly

*The Shelter remembers the families of Mary Ellen "Mel" Marchant, Volunteer Coordinator and Fr. John Girotti in the recent loss of their loved ones.*

*Mary Ellen's father passed away on Friday, March 25th.*

*Fr. Girotti's mother passed away on February 24th.*

*May our thoughts and prayers be a support and comfort to them at this time.*



## VOLUNTEER USES TALENT TO SERVE SHELTER - BY LAURIE LAURENT-HYLAND

We want to thank Jeff Bielinski for the wonderful woodworking project he did for the shelter. Jeff installed a much needed dutch door and side window for the men's locker room. A dutch door is a door that allows you to open the top half while keeping the bottom half closed. This is where the shelter's male guests store their belongings during the day. Jeff's door allows the guests to keep their belongings in a secure place.

Jeff has been a wood worker for close to fifty years. He began at the age of eight learning a great deal from his dad. While his father was his first teacher, Jeff learned more and more on his own.

Jeff received his mechanical drafting degree from the technical college in

Wausau. He worked part-time as a drafter and then took a job with the postal service for 32 years, retiring in May, 2009. Jeff continues to do wood working as a hobby even though it is a very loud hobby, according to his wife, Jan.

Jeff and Jan are active members of the Deaf Community at St. John the Evangelist Church. Even though the woodworking is loud at times, Jan doesn't mind it because she always knows where he is then! Jeff told me how much he loves working with wood and he has made tables, entertainment centers and lawn chairs. Once again, we thank Jeff for sharing his time, his skills, and his great talent with our shelter.



*Jeff Bielinski stands by the new locker-room door he recently installed.*

Homelessness had been a foreign word to former St. John's Shelter guest Joel. He grew up having a middle class childhood in Sheboygan with a father that always had a good paying job. This allowed his mom to stay home with the family. Joel had been working since he was seventeen and before that, even had a paper route.

His life changed dramatically three years ago. The Sheboygan restaurant he helped manage for fifteen years closed. Joel decided to move to Appleton to get his commercial driver's license at Fox Valley Technical College to become an over-the-road truck driver. That's when he started running into financial problems, had no place to stay, and ended up at a homeless shelter for the first time in his life. When Appleton's shelter filled up, Joel came to Green Bay. He stayed first at the N.E.W. Community Shelter before coming to St. John's.

"It's very scary, very scary," Joel said. "In the beginning you think, 'I've got this plan and as long as I stay on track, I can get out of that situation'. The reality is once you get into that situation, it's overwhelming to try to get out. Depres-

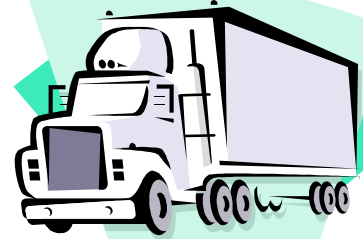
sion and hopelessness set in and then the cycle begins, because (at some shelters) you can only stay there so long and then they ask you to leave."

Joel said being on the move from shelter to shelter made it hard to find a job because employers would wonder why he moved so much. He remembers walking the street all night when he was between homeless shelters, wondering how it could all have gone bad so quickly.

It was when Joel arrived at St. John's that he says he found the help he needed.

"Out of all the shelters I went through, this place was the one that did it for me," Joel said. "They were the caring ones who took the time, the one-on-one, the personal attention. You weren't just a manila folder. They took it to a personal level."

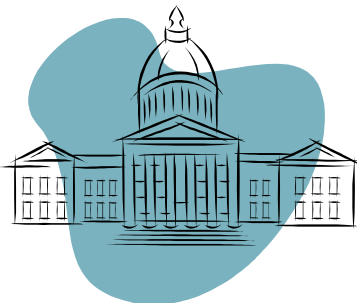
Last spring, Joel says people at St. John's helped him find stable housing and with that worry removed, Joel said he could finally focus on his original goal of returning to school to pursue his truck driving dream and a chance at never being homeless again. He's now enrolled at Fox Valley Technical College and begins classes in June.



In the meantime, Joel stops back at St. John's and is now involved with a group called Community Voices In Action (C.V.I.A.) They help with meals, talk to shelter guests and are involved with other projects in the community. Joel said he enjoys letting shelter guests know there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

"It's awesome to give back to the ones that gave to you," Joel said. "The feeling you get -- you can't describe. It's so humbling."

Good luck to you, Joel, as you pursue your goals, and safe travels on the road!



## Contact your Legislators:

To find out who your State Legislators are, go to:

[legis.wisconsin.gov](http://legis.wisconsin.gov)

To find out who represents you on the federal level, go to:

[www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)

[www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

Each website allows you to search using your address to find your legislators.

## BUDGET ALERT

At our core, St. John's exists out of the belief in the dignity of every human being. We affirm each person's right to basic needs. As we provide shelter, food and clothing, we also stand in solidarity and "advocate in partnership for the needs of our homeless guests." (Shelter Mission Statement)

Faced with the proposed state and federal budgets, our mission as a Shelter Community calls us to consider the impact these budgets will have on the daily lives of our shelter guests. Listed here are just a few of many areas of concern for the homeless:

Looking at the State Budget:

- Proposed cuts in funding available for public transportation (accessible bus service is key for our guests)
- Proposed cuts in Badgercare
- Proposed cuts in funding tech colleges
- Inequitable burden on poor to balance budget rather than shared by all

Looking at the Federal Budget:

- Cuts in funds for affordable housing (HUD)
- Cuts in Job Training (**proposed legislation would close local job centers, end services to dislocated workers, and end the local offender re-entry program**)

These severe cuts would greatly limit or totally eliminate services to our shelter guests who need assistance with housing and with jobs searches.

Here are some helpful questions offered by the Wisconsin Catholic Conference.

- Does the budget recognize the equal dignity of human persons and thereby strive to reduce excessive economic and social disparity?
- Does the budget foster solidarity among all our people by asking all to share in any sacrifice that may be necessary?
- Does the budget prioritize the needs of those who are poor? Does it mitigate their sacrifice even if it means asking more of those who are better off financially?

Contact your legislators today and discuss your concerns about how the budget will impact the homeless.

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT — JOANNE SMITH

In 2006, I was looking for something to do as a replacement for a volunteer "job" I was doing at the time. I decided that maybe St John's Shelter was just what I might want to do. It only worked out for me to volunteer once that season, so the next year when the shelter opened, I signed up for every Tuesday evening. Having the same time to volunteer every week helped me remember when to "show up". That worked out great.

Because I really enjoyed my time at St John's, being and talking with the guests, I decided to sign up for every Thursday evening too. There were evenings that I did not want to leave as I was really enjoying this volunteer "job". The success stories were wonderful. I would run into former guests out in public and if they approached me and wanted to talk, they would tell me how good they are doing, and how things are going for them. It's so great how they would thank the people at St John's for all that each one of the staff did for them.

Then, as luck would have it, I was at the shelter one day waiting to ask a question.

The staff were making out another work schedule and one said "We should hire another really part-time person". So I raised my hand and kept it up until they noticed it.

This is my fourth season at St John's and I still love it. Now, I work mostly mornings, getting up at 4 a.m. Other than going out in the cold, I love my job. I know that what I do at the shelter is also very important to the everyday operations.

My favorite thing about my job is still listening., listening to each and everyone who wants to share their story with me. Something I don't think our guests know is that I have learned a lot from them. They have given me the gift of listening and learning not to give advice, feeling joy for them when they have successes, and compassion for them when there are failures. There for the grace of God go I. I could be one of the guests at St. John's.

During the summer months, I go back to volunteering. I do the mail each Tuesday



*Staffperson Joanne Smith holds a votive candle at a Memorial Service to remember those who died while living on the streets.*

morning. Again, I love doing this as a lot of current and former guests stop in to get their laundry done, to talk to a counselor, get their mail or maybe just to chat awhile.

I may be old and gray, but I hope that I can be at St. John's Homeless Shelter for many years to come.  
~ Joanne



**MANY THANKS TO  
THARIO BUILDING SERVICES,  
OWNERS ROGER THARIO & DIANE ELLIOTT  
FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT AND TO  
THEIR EMPLOYEES, JODI AND NICHOLLE,  
FOR ALL THE HARD WORK THEY DO  
EVERY WEEK TO KEEP THE SHELTER  
CLEAN AND BRIGHT.  
WE REALLY APPRECIATE YOU!**



Students from Marie Pauffall's class at Resurrection School in Allouez donated \$400 from their recent Bubble Gum Machine fundraiser. Each time a student wanted a gumball from the machine, they could ask their teacher, "May I make a donation to St. John's Homeless Shelter?" With the teacher's permission, they made their 25 cent donation and received their gumball. Now THAT'S A LOT of gumballs! And a WHOLE LOT OF BUBBLE BLOWING! Great job Resurrection. Your donations will be a big help to the Shelter so that we can continue to serve all who come to our door.

# THOUGHTS FROM OUR SHELTER GUESTS

Thank you for the services you provide. The staff and volunteers make our lives less stressful and a lot more bearable. Everyone is so friendly, courteous and helpful. I hope to volunteer myself one day.

To the people who donated money for my bus pass, Thank you SO very much. I really appreciate it and needed it badly.

After 2 1/2 months at the shelter, Mary Marks helped me find a place to stay. This is the biggest relief I've ever felt in my life — to not be homeless any more.



Volunteer Mary Schall dons one of the pairs of woolen mittens she made in a workshop she offered for shelter guests. Mary volunteers often. Sometimes, she will pull out her knitting while visiting with guests, which has an amazingly relaxing effect on all of us!



Happy Birthday to Marion Skelton as she shares her celebration with the Shelter community. Marion, her five daughters and two of her sons-in-law are pictured here serving up the meal. Thank you for sharing your big day with the Shelter!

## A SPECIAL BIRTHDAY DINNER

One Green Bay family has started a special tradition. For the third straight year, Marion Skelton's family has celebrated her birthday with her by taking her "out to dinner" at St. John's Homeless Shelter.

Marion told her kids, "No gifts. Instead, everyone come and do a meal together at the Shelter."

And that's just what they do. They cook up a wonderful dinner with everyone pitching in. The occasion is a time when the family honors their mom with an act of service and outreach while having a wonderful time being together. The kitchen is filled with jokes and stories reminiscing back to all the times they've shared. Once they've finished serving the guests for the evening, everyone goes back to Marion's house to finish



out the celebration with cake and ice cream. Thank you Marion and family for your generous and joyful spirit. Happy 78<sup>th</sup>!



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## **SHELTER WISH LIST — THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS !**

Rain Ponchos with hoods	Backpacks
Mens' Footwear (all kinds)	Women's athletic footwear
Decaffeinated Coffee	Fruit juice
45—49 gallon garbage bags	Large freezer bags
Paper hot/cold cups	Disposable Soup Bowls
Disinfectant Wipes	Bike Locks
	Bug Spray

(For a complete listing of needed items, please visit our website.  
Drop off times for donations are: 9:00 a.m. to noon Monday—  
Friday and 4:00—6:00 p.m. on all days up to April 30th. Starting  
May 1st and through the summer, the drop off time is Tuesdays,  
9 a.m. to 4 p.m. If this time is not convenient, donations can be left  
on the St. John parish office porch up until 9:00 p.m.)

## **Contact Us:**



Mary Kelly, Executive Director  
Mary Ellen Marchant, Volunteer Coordinator  
Jan Katers, On-Site Coordinator & Donations

Phone: (920) 436-9344  
[www.StJohnHomelessShelter.org](http://www.StJohnHomelessShelter.org)

