

GMC NEWS



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GEORGETOWN MINISTRY CENTER

SPIRIT OF GEORGETOWN

The Spirit of Georgetown was held Thursday, Oct. 14th in honor of the Rev. Stuart Kenworthy, rector of Christ Church, Georgetown, for his many contributions to the community and for his support of the Georgetown Ministry Center for so many years. There were special thanks for Fran Kenworthy and their children, as well as a special toast to Frida Burling on her 95th birthday!



*Stuart and Fran Kenworthy
Courtesy of The Georgetowner*

The event took place at the wonderfully restored home of Niloo and David Howe, which has served as a hospital during

the Civil War, General Ulysses Grant's coach house, a stop on the Underground Railroad, and finally the home of a former Miss America, Yolande Fox. The high ceilings and large windows provided an elegant atmosphere, and the open living room area was packed with wonderful people and kind sentiment. Hard downpours throughout the morning of the event dampened hopes of a high turnout, but miraculously an hour before the event, the sky cleared up, revealing a beautiful dusk light and allowing guests to roam the lush backyard and admire the pool.

Stuart Kenworthy gave a humble speech, surrounded by many of his dearest friends and fans, as well as his whole family. Flowers were given to Stuart and Frida, as well as in appreciation to our co-hosts Melissa Overmyer, Heidi Scanlon, and Christine Rales. Janine Schoonover of Serendipity3 was recognized for donating the catering for the evening.

The event raised over \$50,000 in funds that will go directly toward GMC's work to end homelessness. We are grateful for our supportive community and the many wonderful people who gave generously through this event.



Heidi Scanlon, Fran Kenworthy, Melissa Overmyer, and Christine Rales

—Malini Suri

FULL CIRCLE: THE WRONG WAY

Mental illness, like arthritis, is never cured. Sometimes it goes into remission, but it is not cured. Medications can treat the symptoms and enable the patient to live as near normal a life as his or her circumstances allow.

Tom led a very normal life for his first 17 years. His parents and sister were proud of his accomplishments. He became a competent musician and played in a band. He played tennis and excelled in school, filling his parents with hope and expectations. But sometime in his 17th year he began to withdraw.

For the next 25 years he regressed to an animal-like lifestyle. He lived in the woods, ate out of trash cans, and only occasionally would seek out a soup kitchen for more wholesome foods. He frustrated his family and the many case workers trying to get him treatment and even more basic help for decaying teeth or applying for disability income.

Ten years ago he came to our shelter. Our psychiatrist, Ron Koshes, offered Tom one of the newer medications. He stayed a few days, then disappeared. He came back a week later and stayed a week while taking the medication. He disappeared for a few days. He came back a week later and this time he stayed the winter. He was a challenge. His hygiene was deplorable, but we worked with him. At the end of the winter we were able to make a connection with a transitional shelter in Montgomery County, where Tom grew up and was familiar with the people and terrain. Within months, he was offered housing through a county program. There Tom lived with lots of help from case managers and social workers and doctors. His personal hygiene and smoking continued to be a problem. He was moved from place to place. He was threatened with eviction but he lasted these many years and, through it all, he remained an amazingly charming and self-deprecating resident. He would chastise himself for not being able to follow the simple rules. He would offer that he deserved whatever punishment he received.

Before I tell you the outcome of this case I want to tell you something I have learned over the years of working with mentally ill homeless people. There is a limit to their capabilities. Their brains are often so disorganized that they cannot plan something as simple as cleaning their room, even with effective treatment. Each element of the process is filled with frustration: "Where do I begin?" "What do I do with this?" And then staying on task. The first piece of trash disposed of, then maybe, "What was I doing?" Or worse, the task at hand forgotten. "Tom! Remember what you

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2010 FANNIE MAE MINI-WALKS

Grace Church

This year we combined all the mini-walks into a single “Fun-Day” on the lawn of Grace Church on Sunday, October 17th from noon to 3:00. The weather that day was fantastic, and families happily lingered around for the festivities. We had a moon bounce, face-painting, botchi ball, and hot dogs and popcorn, while Grace Church provided delicious vegetable soup and coffee. GMC Treasurer John Lange played and sang popular bluegrass ballads, followed by Bill Hepler and his band. Although we didn’t get as many sign-ups as we had hoped, the event was great fun for all who attended. We hope to continue this event with more people next year.

Hyde Elementary School

We would like to thank Jessica Tzucker, Assistant Principal, for all the work she did helping to put together the mini-walk. We received over 250 signed forms and \$1,000 in donations! This year, Hyde combined its fall festival—where the kids dress up in Halloween costumes—with the HTH walk. The kids looked great parading around the block dressed as monsters and ballerinas, and holding signs such as “scare away homelessness!” It was nice to give meaning to a day when the kids are just thinking about candy!

Stoddert Elementary School



Thanks to all the teachers and especially Hiam Muhawi at Stoddert for coordinating a smoothly run (and quiet!) mini-walk. It was wonderful to see all the kids and staff wearing the same t-shirt at once! We are still waiting for a tally of the signature sheets, but we believe this year we will get close to 100 percent! Thanks!

—Malini Suri

VOLUNTEER AT OUR SHELTER

Shelter Dinner

Organize a group of your friends or co-workers (6 to 8 people), then call us and get a date when volunteers are needed. Plan on cooking for about 20 people including you and your fellow volunteers, staff, and residents. The meal should include a main course, two vegetable dishes, beverage, and dessert. Call for suggestions. Plan on arriving at 6:30 p.m. and leaving by 9 p.m.

Shelter Overnight

Bring your sleeping bag and pillow. Hang out with the residents while the meal is being prepared. Enjoy dinner while socializing with residents and other volunteers. Assist the shelter staff person as needed, then get a relatively full night’s sleep on one of our cots. In the morning you help the shelter staff person prepare breakfast. Plan on arriving at 7 p.m. and leaving at 7 a.m.

20 YEARS AGO TODAY . . .

November 2nd was my 20th anniversary with Georgetown Ministry Center. It has been a thrilling ride.

When I started, GMC was located in a little cubby under the stairway to the sanctuary at Grace Church. The space seemed temporary and in many ways it was. There were room dividers that separated our space from adult Sunday School space. There were racks of clothing taking up much of the space, mostly suits which few participants were interested in. GMC was two years old then. I had one helper, a Lutheran Volunteer just out of college with limited life experiences but lots of enthusiasm.

It has been a long journey. GMC now has its own space with a shower and laundry program, psychiatrist, medical doctor, and much more. The Center has grown and I have grown. For better and worse the Center has become as much a part of my life as I have become a part of what it is. I think what keeps me here is seeing, magnified, my own deficits, in many of the people we see each day. The struggle I have had throughout my life to pay attention to details also allowed me an insight into the struggles that many of the participants of our program face in trying to function in a world that moves ever faster in the 21st century.

I cannot express how lucky I feel to have had this amazing opportunity.

—Gunther Stern

TASTE OF GEORGETOWN

On October 14th, crowds gathered in Georgetown for the 17th annual Taste of Georgetown, a fall food festival featuring sample dishes prepared by 30 of the area’s top restaurants, paired with wine tastings on the lawn of Grace Church, and topped off with live music from local talents. Wisconsin Avenue was closed to traffic between M and K, and lines of tents were set up along both sides of the road. Sponsored by the Georgetown Business Improvement District, the event benefits Georgetown Ministry Center.

What started as a few boiling pots of local fare on the lawn of Grace Church has become one of the area’s most anticipated events. The weather was warm and sunny, and people were ready to eat and drink; the turn-out was massive. This year was a great success.

Every year the cuisine is more diverse and the dishes

increasingly creative. Some of the winners of this year’s contest include: chorizo corn-dog with shrimp slaw by J. Paul’s, beef brisket ravioli with dolcetto wine and crimini mushroom sauce by Filomena Ristorante, and fire-grilled sweet chili wings with cool cucumber mint sauce by Fahrenheit.

Manned by over 70 volunteers, the Taste of Georgetown is a great event that brings together the community and offers local restaurants and musicians a chance to show off their talent. A day of fun and food, all in support of GMC’s work to help the homeless in Georgetown.

—Malini Suri



Taste of Georgetown

(cont. from front page)

are doing.” Frustration. Anger. Then, “I need a cigarette!”

The disorganized brain does not disobey rules; the disorganized brain is not capable of following rules. I have watched people with schizophrenia try to follow directions. They might be able to do it for a few minutes, but then it trails off. With a gun to their heads they could not follow simple directions; long and complicated directions are out of the question.

So back to Tom. He received notice that he would have to leave the house he had lived in—the house where he had developed meaningful relationships with the other residents—because he could not keep his room clean or organize himself to take his cigarettes out on the back porch to smoke.

Tom was offered a placement in a house with 24-hour supervision, but he turned it down. This is what our society has come to. They offered a man, profoundly disabled from schizophrenia, operating on the emotional level of a six-year-old, a choice less desirable than his current situation, and when he turned it down they walked away satisfied that they had done the best they could. But Tom is clearly not capable of making this decision. He has limited insight into his illness. He cannot keep his room clean. Can we really let him make this decision?

It is immoral to turn someone like Tom out on the street. This is why homelessness still exists. It will not end until the people who make the rules fix this kind of problem.

—*Gunther Stern*

Here is what has happened since the article was written.

Dear Gunther;

My Mom read me your beautiful article (she hasn't learned to forward yet!). You captured the circumstances of Tom's life perfectly and with great sensitivity.

God was with us. Knowing, with his declining health, Tom wouldn't survive the shelters in Montgomery County, I made many frantic phone calls until I found the president/CEO of a supported housing program with locations in Frederick, Howard, Carroll, and Washington Counties.

This gentleman was very responsive and surprised at the Montgomery County Core Services Agency's reasoning about not following the rules. He asked if Tom was violent. I said I can't defend his behavior, but he is absolutely docile and not violent at all. He was surprised that a sibling was taking interest. I explained he's the best brother in the world and neither I nor his Mother would ever desert him.

He said he would have a Frederick County program intake coordinator call me, and if they didn't have beds she'd refer me to Hagerstown. Things moved quickly after this, though I was frustrated by the lack of cooperation from the Montgomery County program. Mother and I did every bit of the leg work and followed up with Core Services about his application.

The Hagerstown intake workers liked Tom very much at his interview. My brother (as you so aptly stated in your article) confessed to every infraction. They accepted him, and we are so grateful. And Tom gets credit too, because as always, he is so easy to like.

He's calling all of his friends to let them know where he is. So I know you were at the top of his list.

Thanks for all you've done, through the years.

Carol

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THE GIFT OF GIVING

The holiday season is upon us. It is the season of searching endlessly for the perfect gift for a cousin, a friend who simply has everything, or your sister who really does want nothing.

This year we offer you a unique opportunity: *The Gift of Giving*.

We've made it easy for you—combine a gift to loved ones along with a gift to GMC by making a donation in their names. Send the donation to Georgetown Ministry Center, 1041 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20007, or go online to www.gmcgt.org to pay by credit card or PayPal. Then simply cut out the gift card below to send to your honoree! Best wishes from all of us here at GMC.



To: _____

I GAVE A GIFT IN YOUR NAME TO THE **GEORGETOWN MINISTRY CENTER** TO HELP END HOMELESSNESS, ONE PERSON AT A TIME.

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