



GMC NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GEORGETOWN MINISTRY CENTER

GMC TESTIFIES AT CONGRESS

GMC Executive Director Gunther Stern was invited to testify at a congressional hearing—entitled “*Where have all the patients gone?*”—before House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. The hearing was part of the subcommittee’s ongoing oversight examination of federal spending on research and treatments for mental illness. The panel has been examining the impact that the shortage of beds exerts on the seriously mentally ill throughout our communities, which is causing homelessness and increased involvement with the criminal justice system.

We are grateful for Congressman Tim Murphy’s commitment to the needs of people with mental illness. Mr. Murphy’s training as a psychologist gives him an understanding of the problems beyond most politicians. As Chair of the subcommittee, he has elevated this important issue to the level of concern it deserves. Gunther spoke specifically about the relationship of people with untreated mental illness who are homeless.

The panelists, who included a parent, a judge, a county sheriff and a mental health consumer, all echoed a similar sentiment: inadequate mental health care and policies only create a cycle in and out of the prison system and homelessness.

Links to the panelists’ testimonies and a webcast of the entire hearing can be found on our website. We also recommend www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org for a better understanding of the issue.

We’ll leave you with part of Gunther’s plea to our congressmen and to everyone in our community:

“What I want to impart here is that people who live on the street are real people with families and hopes and dreams, abandoned because of an illness that has robbed them of their competency. The other important takeaway is that almost all of the people I see on the street are there because they have refused treatment, not for a rational reason, but because the illness has insidiously robbed them of the insight to understand that they have an illness and that treatment can help them.”

MARION

About 20 years ago Marion Goldberg walked through our doors and asked if we had any volunteer jobs for her. She worked around the corner at the Trial Lawyers Association as the editor of their magazine, so it was natural for us to ask her to edit our little newsletter that goes out three times a year.

Marion became a part of our family. Staff never remembered that it was time to start working on our next newsletter. Marion did! We would get a phone call or an email saying, “Time to start working on the next newsletter!”

She was a gentle, thoughtful soul that the world needs more of. Marion cared deeply about the people around her and of the less fortunate around the world. Our newsletter meetings always turned into discussions of whatever was topical at the time, be it politics, war, or famine. She really cared about the earth, the people, and most of all, her children and grandchildren, because no meeting ever concluded without an update. And of course, Marion would never leave without asking for an update from each GMC staff person, remembering details from previous visits. She cared.

The last newsletter was the first newsletter we did without the benefit of Marion’s scrutiny. I remember pressing, as I debated Stephanie over an element of style in the newsletter, “Marion wouldn’t do it this way.” Marion’s spirit is all over this newsletter, and we hope to keep it that way.

Marion Goldberg passed away this past February after a protracted battle with ALS. We will miss her dearly.

— *Gunther Stern*

GMC BOARD LEADERSHIP

First of all, a heartfelt thanks to outgoing board president Jocelyn Dyer for her hard work over the past two years. She has been an activist president who has a vision for a stronger, better board and created the framework for our new board president, Pat Davies. Additionally, Alex Bullock is our new vice president. John Lange will continue to serve as treasurer. Our new secretary is Catherine Ballinger. We also want to welcome new board members from the community: Kathryn Cohen, Page Evans, James Jordan and Susan Weber.

We are looking forward to a dynamic new year!



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OUR HEROES

This past winter was the most brutal in recent memory. The City went out of its way to provide more temporary emergency shelter. Metro buses, dispatched to locations near where homeless people congregated, acted as makeshift warming stations on street corners around the city. We will never know how many lives they may have saved, but we do know of two heroes from among our members who helped save lives this winter.

Early in the winter Jason, who rides a bike around Georgetown discovered John passed out near the Georgetown Waterfront. Jason knew instinctively that weather conditions were dangerous and tried to rouse John. When John remained unresponsive, Jason called 911 and John was transported to the hospital. Our general practitioner, Dr. Crosland followed up with the hospital and learned that John was so close to death when he came in that he almost certainly would have died had there been any additional delay.

More recently, Ibrahim found Steve laying face down in our alley one Tuesday morning. Ibrahim recognized that this was an emergency. Through tears, Ibrahim later that morning told GMC staff that he tried to rouse Steve, who was stiff and unresponsive. Ibrahim called 911. Steven spent the next week in the hospital, much of it unconscious. Early on, the doctors were giving him a 50/50 chance, but as the week progressed, the prognosis became better until he was released without restrictions the following Tuesday.

We are proud of our members who have had the insight to get help for their brothers in a time of need. In both of these cases, the help came just in time. Heroism comes in all forms, all shapes and sizes, and we must recognize as we help our homeless neighbors, we must also celebrate their humanity and compassion.

—*Gunther Stern*

HOYAS SAVING LIVES

One would think that freezing temperatures severe enough to be dubbed a “polar vortex” would convince everyone living on the street that indoors is the place to be. However, that isn’t always the case. Often snow, rain and severe cold are not enough to persuade some vulnerable homeless individuals to go into a hypothermia shelter or warming station.

The stories of two near-deaths from hypothermia in Georgetown (see “Our Heroes” above) convinced us that we

needed to do something to make sure that no one dies from exposure in Georgetown. To do this, we reached out to the Center for Social Justice at Georgetown University to create a Hypothermia Outreach Team. These students, ranging from undergraduates to medical students, conducted street outreach for us at night on the coldest nights this past winter, checking under bridges, in alleys, and in the parks looking for people displaying signs of hypothermia and to distribute blankets and socks. The HOT volunteers also alerted people on the streets about which warming stations were open and



urged everyone they see to go inside. The goal is to prevent death from exposure and to convince as many people as possible to go inside. At the very least, we know that those on the street were aware of their options if the cold became too much to bear.

We have received some great feedback from this winter’s HOT volunteers, and we are excited to grow this program and volunteer opportunity next year. Let us know if you’d like to get involved!

—*Stephanie Chan*

COMMUNITY WARMTH

Though this winter was a cold one, we were overwhelmed by the warmth of our neighbors and supporters. Thank you so much to all of the local businesses who have supported us through donations, food, and clothing: Anthropologie, Athleta, Burton’s Opticians, Bank of Georgetown, Cafe La Ruche, Saxby’s, The Cappella Hotel and The Ritz-Carlton of Georgetown. We also have to give a special shoutout to Olivia Macaron, who started donating extra macarons to GMC right after they opened! It’s been such a special treat for our guests. And of course, we cannot forget Sir Speedy (21st and L), our printer who brought us sandwiches, cleaning supplies, and laundry detergent! And of course, the Georgetown BID has been a very supportive force in our community.

We’d also be nothing without support from our nearby schools and colleges. This winter, we received clothes and toiletries from: Sidwell Friends School, Georgetown Visitation, St. John’s Preschool (see article at the bottom of next page), and Little Folks. We’ve also had wonderful support in our center and in our winter shelter from Georgetown University; the Department of Mission and Ministry, Center for Social Justice, the Black History Month Planning Committee, and the Office of International Programs have all been a tremendous help.

—*Stephanie Chan*

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHTS

Each month parishioners from First Baptist Church Georgetown come to our center bearing lunch and a birthday cake to celebrate the birthdays of all born in the month. Following a prayer and an energetic singing of Happy Birthday, volunteers serve our guests with smiling faces and stay to chat. Not only that, but last month, they came with some much-needed new underwear, socks, and undershirts for our guests. Thank you!

Have you seen our new Facebook page, “Crafted by the Homeless?” Or, have you checked out our Etsy.com page? Both feature pictures of the beautiful crafts created by our knit and crochet group. These beautiful pictures were taken by Sarah Smith, a professional photographer and recent DC transplant. We have been blown away by her enthusiasm for this project. Check her out at sarahalice.net or on Facebook at Sarah Alice Photography.

While Sarah’s relatively new as a GMC volunteer, Jessica Cook has been with us for over a year and is another volunteer who has been putting her profession to work in our center. Roughly twice a month, Jessica, a nurse, comes in to our center to do basic health screenings. Occasionally, she also gives presentations on pertinent health subjects, including hypothermia, scabies and lice, and nutrition. She is kind and compassionate and always willing to offer a smile and kind words of encouragement to everyone who sees her. We are so grateful that she found us!

—*Stephanie Chan*

SHELTER RECAP

Not a day went by this winter where the residents in our small winter shelter were not thankful for the hot meal and a place to sleep, sheltered from the cold. So, first, thank you to everyone who helped make this shelter season a success. It truly meant a lot to our residents.

One comment we heard a lot from volunteers was that our groups this year were such a wonderful, polite and social crowd. We agree! Over the shelter season we sheltered fifteen individuals (four left early because they found housing). They were also a pretty international group. Two were from South Sudan, one from Iran, one from Senegal and another from Egypt. Dinners were a sharing of information, cultures and histories.

Aside from the four residents who left early because they were able to secure housing, we have been laying the foundation for the others to transition to a better place in their lives. We facilitated the process for one man to obtain his green card, an achievement that brings a huge smile to his face whenever he thinks about it. Dr. Koshes helped another man begin treatment, and almost instantly we saw a change in his demeanor; he started caring about his hygiene, became more lucid, and, best of all, should be housed soon. And of course, we continue to work closely with all of our shelter residents to ensure that they are working towards their goals.

Update: John, mentioned above, moved into Gift of Peace in April where he can stay for the rest of his life if he wants to.

—Stephanie Chan

PRESCHOOLERS GIVE TO GMC

When the students at St. John's Preschool discovered ten cots in the Parish Hall of St. John's Church in Georgetown this past winter they asked their teachers, "What are those cots for? They learned that the cots were for GMC's winter shelter.



They wanted to do something to help so they put on a bake sale and raised \$440! With these proceeds they bought socks, underwear, toothbrushes, hand sanitizer and tissues.

On April 8, they marched down to our center to deliver the

supplies. They told us about how they learned what it means to be homeless. We are so appreciative of their thoughtfulness! It is never too early to start caring about others.

Thank you so much to the children and teachers of the Rainey Room at St. John's Preschool.

—Stephanie Chan

Board of Directors

<i>Christ Church, Georgetown</i>	Elizabeth Bluhm
<i>Dumbarton United Methodist Church</i>	Martha Dickey
<i>Epiphany Roman Catholic Church</i>	Susan Gschwendtner
<i>First Baptist Church, Georgetown</i>	Vinette Saunders
<i>Georgetown Lutheran Church</i>	Connie Baker
<i>Georgetown Presbyterian Church</i>	Pat Davies
<i>Georgetown University</i>	Ray Shiu
<i>Grace Episcopal Church</i>	Drew Davis
<i>Holy Trinity Catholic Church</i>	Joe Ryan
<i>Keshet Israel, Georgetown Synagogue</i>	Jessica Ribner
<i>Mt. Zion United Methodist Church</i>	Deborah Owens
<i>St. John's Episcopal Church</i>	Jocelyn Dyer
<i>St. Luke's United Methodist Church</i>	Dorothy Preston
<i>St. Paul's K Street</i>	Jeremiah Cassidy
<i>St. Stephen the Martyr</i>	Laura Wilson

And from the community...

<i>Citizens Association of Georgetown</i>	Page Robinson
<i>Community Representative</i>	Kathryn Cohen
	Page Evans
	James P. Jordan
	Susan Weber

<i>Georgetown Business Association</i>	Elizabeth Webster
<i>Georgetown BID</i>	John Wiebenson
<i>Georgetown Clergy Association</i>	John Graham

Officers

President	Pat Davies
Vice President	Alexander Bullock
Treasurer	John Lange
Secretary	Catherine Ballinger

Staff

Executive Director	Gunther Stern
Outreach Director	Roy Witherspoon
Business Manager	Dymenn Sasser
Communications Director	Stephanie Chan
Development Director	Helen McConnell
Shower Program Managers	William Jenkins
	Lucane LaFortune
	Beau Stiles
	Emma Whitaker

Consulting Physicians

Psychiatry	Ron Koshes, M.D.
Psychiatric Resident (with GWU)	Michael Morse, M.D.
Family Practice (with Unity Health Care)	Catherine Crosland, M.D.

Save the Date!

5K WALK/RUN FOR GMC

Put this on your calendar right now: The Georgetown 5k Race for the Homeless will be on Sunday, October 19 on the Campus of Georgetown University. We are planning lots of exciting features for this year's run -- teams, pledges, a cookout and music after the 5k race and 2k walk, as well as a family fun day will include something for everyone, so there's no excuse not to sign up!

Start thinking about this now-- are you coming to run by yourself, or would you prefer to simply take a stroll with your family on a gorgeous Fall day? Perhaps you'll organize your co-workers, running buddies, or congregation to run as a team. Friendly competition is welcome. Why not have

your department at work or school challenge another one?

Maybe a 5k is a warm up for you, or maybe you need to start your training now... if that's the case, six months



should be enough time to work up to a 5k! And, if you really, really don't want to walk or run, you should at least come to cheer on Gunther. We'll try to make sure he doesn't get lost on the route this year. Watch www.gmcgt.org for updates or call us at (202)338-8301. Ask for Stephanie or Helen.

—Stephanie Chan

SPIRIT OF GEORGETOWN

The 2014 Spirit of Georgetown will be on Thursday, October 16 at the beautiful home of Debbie Winsor. This year, we are honoring Jocelyn Dyer for her long-time commitment to GMC and her active role on GMC's Board. We know everyone's Fall calendar fills up quickly, so save the date now! We look forward to seeing all of you in October.

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