



GMC NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GEORGETOWN MINISTRY CENTER

INSPIRING TRUST

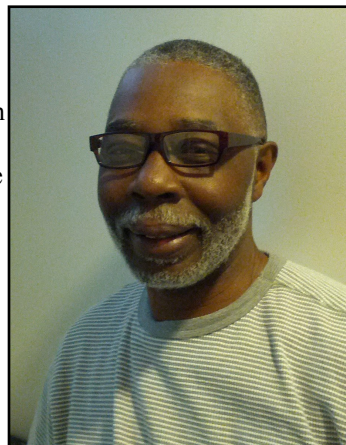
In August, Judy received the keys to her own apartment. In September, Doug moved into his own place. In October, we put keys into Mike's hands. On our blog, we wrote a little bit about each of their stories. None of these successes would have been possible without Roy Witherspoon, our Outreach Director.

One of Roy's talents is making connections, whether he is reaching out to someone or connecting one person who needs help with another who can help. With Mike and Doug, Roy connected them with the Department of Veterans Affairs, through which they received HUD-VASH (VA Supportive Housing) vouchers and met caseworkers. For Judy, who had turned down housing twice before, Roy contacted Dallas Williams, who is in charge of the Housing First Initiative at the Department of Human Services, and pushed for Judy to receive a voucher due to her age, medical conditions, and years living on the street.

One might think that core service agencies and teams of caseworkers completely take over once we refer guests to them. However, Roy does not stop there. He identified an experienced realtor, Anna Sumpter, who was open to working with people with housing vouchers and set up visits for Judy, Doug, and Mike. And, just because we were able to house them doesn't mean that Roy's job is over. Though all three have their own caseworkers at core service agencies, Roy is still a main point of contact for them and for the housing management company.

The most difficult part of the process, Roy says, is "working with our guests and keeping them motivated and willing to participate in the process. There is a lot of frustration when paperwork gets lost in the shuffle and prolongs the process." But, in the end, the waiting and many phone calls were worth it.

However, that doesn't mean that Roy's job is done just because these three guests have their keys. Roy is still dealing with the



Roy Witherspoon

(Trust, cont. on page 2)

CITIZENS ASSOCIATION MEETING

Georgetown Ministry Center organized a panel of experts on homelessness and mental illness for the September 27th Citizens Association of Georgetown meeting. Part of our mission is to provide community education and share our experience with the



CAG members watching poignant video

community. Our presenters included Brian Stettin of the Treatment Advocacy Center, Ronald Koshes, GMC's consulting psychiatrist, and me, Gunther Stern.

If you haven't heard of the Treatment Advocacy Center you should really visit their website at www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org. They are proponents of outpatient commitment for people who have a history of non-compliance with treatment and are coming out of the hospital. Brian Stettin penned the original Kendra's Law. Of course there is much more than that but see their website.

Ron Koshes has been working with the Georgetown homeless population for 19 years. He has taken a personal interest in the lives of the individuals we see in Georgetown and has gotten to know most of the people we see on the streets and in our Center. As a psychiatrist, Dr. Koshes has the power to involuntarily hospitalize someone when needed. Of course he is very thoughtful about the application of this procedure, called an FD12 in DC.

As the Executive Director of GMC, I have been working with the people who live on our streets for more than 22 years. I have become frustrated over the years at how difficult it is to move the most vulnerable and profoundly disabled within the homeless population

(Meeting, cont. on page 2)



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OUR SHELTER FAMILY

GMC kicked off its winter shelter at Epiphany Catholic Church on the first Sunday of November, and not a chair at the dinner table was empty. Our shelter is different from any other in the city not only because it is a traveling shelter and rotates among the various congregations in Georgetown, but also because our shelter becomes a family. The ten people we invite to join our shelter in November stay through the entire season, and they become friends. We've observed the younger residents helping the elderly female resident with her bags, walking with her and slowing their stride to match her pace. They all share stories, tips, and snacks with each other in our Center and jam with each other on their guitars.

The shelter family is not limited to just the residents. Our shelter staff is a dedicated group that has been with GMC for a long time. From Charles, who's been with the shelter for a few years, to Malissa, who's been working at the shelter for nearly a decade, to Delores, a GMC shelter veteran of twenty years, our staff shows up at 6:30 every night to sleep alongside the residents, waking up at the crack of dawn to set up the breakfast bar. This year, we are welcoming Tracy to the team, and we know that he too will become part of the shelter family.

And the shelter family doesn't stop there! Every night, volunteers cook dinner for our residents and sit down to eat with them. The atmosphere is always warm and friendly. First there is silence as everyone is enjoying the meal (always delicious and filling), followed by lively conversation spanning topics such as where people are from, current interests, sports, and what's on the Millennium Stage at the Kennedy Center. Our shelter volunteers remember the residents and occasionally stop by the Center months later to check on them. This bond and relationship building makes our shelter a truly special place and allows trust to form, which is one of the most important steps to housing a homeless individual.

—Stephanie Chan

(Trust, cont. from page 1)

housing management company and is following up to ensure that the heat and hot water are working and that the guests understand the terms of their lease. Our guests have come back to GMC to speak to Roy because they trust him so much. "One of the most important things that we do," Roy says, "is to build relationships with people who are on the streets. Once you connect with them and engage them, there is a level of trust, which is a big issue on the street. Whenever there is a problem and they don't understand how to deal with it, the first thing they'll do is reach out and contact the person they trust the most."

If you are wondering what you can do to help, Roy urges you to "reach out to all of our elected officials and be a voice for our population, because they are people too." Write a letter to Mayor Gray telling him not to cut funding to supportive services. Call the Hypothermia Hotline (1-800-535-7252) or 911 if you see an individual who looks like he or she needs help. Sign petitions, attend community meetings, and voice your concerns. With your help, we can make an even greater impact in the lives of the people we serve.

—Stephanie Chan

CREATIONS IN THE CENTER

We're sure you know about our knit and crochet group. What you may not know is that it has grown in size, with dedicated members who wait eagerly every Monday morning for Pat, who leads the group, to come. You may also not know that we have accumulated many items for sale, ranging from potholders to golf club covers to teddy bears to large afghans. We have sold them at Grace Church's Music on the Lawn concerts, as well as Georgetown

Presbyterian's Christ Market (Christmas charity market). Shortly, we should have pictures of all the knitted and crocheted items on our website, but we are always seeking



Pirates and bears

venues to display and sell these wonderful works of art.

GMC is also creating a Health and Wellness program, which so far includes a fitness class and a substance abuse alternatives workshop, and hopefully soon, a smoking cessation group. A few GMC members recently became certified in CPR and AED (automated external defibrillator) alongside staff. The hope is that this is just one of the many skill sets we can help our members gain, although we also hope that this particular skill will never have to be put to use. Your continued support will ensure that programs like Health and Wellness can find a permanent place in our Center.

—Stephanie Chan

IN APPRECIATION

Thank you to Walker & Dunlop for their initiative, efforts, and financial support of the Help the Homeless community activity that helped us achieve our fundraising goals for this program. Also, thanks to the Georgetown BID for their sponsorship of the youth walkers and to our Anonymous Foundation which has sponsored us for many years with a very large contribution. You know who you are. But don't think we don't appreciate everyone. There are many more names that could be here if we had the space. GMC is proud of its grassroots support from the community.

—Gunther Stern

(Meeting, cont. from page 1)

because of their inability to understand that they have an illness. The consensus of the three presenters is that we need to find a better way to respond to the people with mental illness who populate our streets. Letting them choose to languish on the street is immoral.

How better to present the dilemma we face than with real-life examples. We presented two homemade videos (Tom and Greg) Both videos are available for viewing on our website (www.gmcgt.org). The meeting transcript is available on the CAG website (www.cagtown.org).

The audience stuck with us as we went way past our allotted time.

I just have to say: Thank you for caring, Georgetown!

—Gunther Stern

We are grateful to Wisey's for providing food and drinks. The food was outstanding. The strawberry/lemonade drinks were pure nectar. Eat lunch at Wisey's when you get a chance and tell them thank you for us.

SPIRIT OF GEORGETOWN

The Spirit of Georgetown was a warm and upbeat event this year. It has become a must-attend event for prominent Georgetowners including D.C. Council Member Jack Evans, who posed for pictures with our honoree and good friend, Nancy Taylor Bubes, her husband, Alan, and our hostess, Amy Tercek. The Tercek house was beautiful inside and out. We were graced with good weather, allowing guests to enjoy the beautiful patio.

During a brief presentation ceremony, GMC Board President Jocelyn Dyer introduced GMC staff and talked passionately about the importance of the work of GMC. Board Vice President Dick Stoll presented the second Freddie award. The Freddie is an award for humanitarian commitment, and Alan and Nancy Taylor Bubes have earned that recognition for all that they do in the community, most importantly for the work they do in support of Georgetown Ministry Center.

The event raised \$54,000 for the Center.

HELP THE HOMELESS WALK

Fall weather. Three miles. 500 Georgetown University students.

On October 20, Georgetown University held a 5K walk sponsored by Walker & Dunlop to benefit GMC and Woodley House, an organization that provides housing for the mentally ill. Back in July, GMC, Woodley House, and our fantastic sponsor Walker & Dunlop met to discuss where we would hold this walk.

This year it would be Georgetown University. Georgetown's enthusiasm for organizing this project was refreshing. Thanks to them, we were able to have a DJ and music at the event to get everyone excited for the morning walk!

Student groups, including Hoya Outreach Programs and Education, Alpha Phi Omega, GU Pride, The Corp Service and Outreach Committee, The Hoya, Georgetown Program Board, and the Senior Class Committee, helped plan the walk.

Through hard work by both Georgetown students and Walker & Dunlop, over 500 people registered. The day of the walk we handed



Walker & Dunlop team at Help the Homeless Walk

out shirts, bagels, and water, listened to music, and mingled with some Georgetown University students on a beautiful fall morning.

Walker & Dunlop showed up in droves walking through campus, taking pictures, and helping clean up afterwards. We couldn't have done it without them and are so thankful that they have been our sponsor throughout the years and have supported us continuously. We owe them a lot and are so happy we're able to work with them! Thanks, Walker & Dunlop!

—Jessica Fitzgerald

Board of Directors

<i>Christ Church, Georgetown</i>	Catherine Ballinger Elizabeth Bluhm
<i>Dumbarton United Methodist Church</i>	Martha Dickey
<i>Epiphany Roman Catholic Church</i>	Susan Gschwendner Won Park
<i>First Baptist Church, Georgetown</i>	Vinette Saunders
<i>Georgetown Lutheran Church</i>	Connie Baker
<i>Georgetown Presbyterian Church</i>	Alexander Bullock Pat Davies
<i>Georgetown University</i>	Linda Greenan
<i>Grace Episcopal Church</i>	Drew Davis Kimberly Ludwig
<i>Holy Trinity Catholic Church</i>	Linda Formella Joe Ryan
<i>Kesher Israel, Georgetown Synagogue</i>	Jessica Ribner
<i>Mt. Zion United Methodist Church</i>	Essie Page
<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>	Eric Lobsinger
<i>St. Stephen the Martyr</i>	Laura Wilson

And from the community...

<i>Citizens Association of Georgetown</i>	Dick Stoll
<i>Community Representatives</i>	Pierre Moye Beth Neilsen
<i>Georgetown Business Association</i>	Elizabeth Webster
<i>Georgetown BID</i>	John Weibenson
<i>Georgetown Clergy Association</i>	John Graham

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Vice President	Dick Stoll
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Program Coordinator	Stephanie Chan
Shower Program Managers	William Jenkins Ameen Simmons Anne Kolar Lucane LaFortune

Consulting Physicians

Psychiatry	Ron Koshes, M.D.
Family Practice (<i>with Unity Health Care</i>)	Catherine Crosland, M.D.

Development Director Event Coordinator

Claire Spencer-Spears Jessica Fitzgerald

LESSONS FROM THE HURRICANE

For several days the dire warnings came regarding Hurricane Sandy. It could have gone either way but in the end we dodged the bullet. In the meantime we were terrified by the warnings. Metro pulled all its buses and trains off the streets for two days. We were warned to stay home. When I got up the morning that it was supposed to strike, everything was already closed but the weather was balmy. The scheduled staff were already stranded by the storm that had yet to hit.

It was quite easy for me to get into work. Given the stern warnings, rather than open up I gave people survival blankets and sandwiches (*Sharon, thank you so much for bringing the sandwiches in spite of the dire warnings*) and directed them to find shelter. I called the hypothermia/shelter hotline. What was the plan for the hurricane? They did not know. Their boss had not arrived yet and they did not have a plan. I was shocked. The Metro had closed the transit system and no plan had been made for the homeless?

By noon when I planned to leave, the Center was empty. People had heeded my warnings.

Several years ago, during Snowmageddon with no other choice, we let four or five homeless people into our Center without supervision. As it turned out, they did not need supervision. When we returned two days later, the Center was as we left it. Nearby volunteers brought in coffee, oatmeal, and chili.

We would like to find a group of volunteers in the close-by community who would be willing to come by and open the Center in case of another hurricane or blizzard that shuts down the city and in particular, transportation. If you can't get to the shelters they are of

little use. We are looking for volunteers to be on call. Maybe you will never be needed. I sincerely hope you won't, but if the need arises I would like to know that you are there.

—*Gunther Stern*

OUR 25TH ANNIVERSARY

GMC opened its doors 25 years ago in 1987 with a single staff person. In our earliest days we were literally a little hole in the wall in Grace Church. Today the Center serves 40 to 70 people each day. We give 20 showers and do 5 laundries and we could do much more if only we had the space for more showers, washing machines, and dryers. The need is unending. This year we have become more focused on significant outcomes. We are talking about how many SSI applications we can get in and how many people we can get housed. We hope with each month the answer will be more than the previous month, but that might not be realistic. There is a shortage of housing and housing programs for the people we serve. We were lucky last quarter and three people moved into their own places. What is clear is without pushing ourselves it won't happen. And so we push.

—*Gunther Stern*

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