



# GMC NEWS

The Newsletter of the Georgetown Ministry Center



## Thirty Years of Growth and Service



*Gunther outside of the GMC day center*

In 2004 the Mayor of D.C., Tony Williams, produced a bold plan to end homelessness in 10 years. Ten years later in 2014 we had as many homeless people on the street as in 2004, maybe more. We have watched over the years as the numbers ebbed and

flowed, but a substantive solution to homelessness has yet to reveal itself.

This year, 2017, is the 30th anniversary of Georgetown Ministry Center. We started in the small space under the entrance to Grace Church in 1987. We have been expanding ever since, thanks to generous support from our community. First we crept into the Sunday school room. Each Friday the lone Lutheran volunteer and I would push our desks into a corner to make room for Sunday school. Eventually we were given the entire space. Still in those days we were not able to offer the bathroom to any of our guests; they had to find a public bathroom nearby. We offered basic case management to people who had fallen through the cracks of the mental health system.

In 2001 we began to look for a bigger space in the community. We had outgrown our existing space at Grace Church. We hoped for space that would allow us to provide bathrooms and showers along with case management. In the end, a novel idea to expand into the basement and mechanical room in the rectory of Grace Church prevailed. We moved into our new digs in the fall of 2003. We had a shower, laundry facilities and three bathrooms.

With the improved facilities there was increased demand. By 2010 we were thinking about ways to improve our space again. We realized we were not going to find another space for our program but maybe we could find space for our administrative staff nearby, leaving more room for programs.

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## Watching the Snow from Inside



*Kenneth holds the key fob to his new apartment*

Never sleep in the woods. Sleep near others, or at least take extra care if you're sleeping alone. Use the "pouch system" -- multiple sleeping bags and a comforter -- on cold nights. Rely on prayer and don't lose faith.

These are just a few of the lessons that Kenneth learned during his 25 years on the streets of D.C. Originally from North Carolina, Kenneth found himself homeless and spent years sleeping behind the police headquarters and in a gazebo in Montrose Park.

But now, Kenneth is adjusting to a new life in a condo. "It's really nice and everything is new," he says of his new living space, a brand new building with units for veterans and homeless individuals. In his new home, he can keep up with his favorite shows. Transitioning from living outside to life in a new apartment is quite an adjustment. "It's nice," he reports, "but your mind and body have to adjust to the new situation." He still goes outside and moves around so that his new place doesn't feel too small and confined. But watching the snow from inside definitely beats sleeping out in it -- Winter Storm Stella is the first snow storm he saw from inside.

Kenneth credits GMC with getting him started on the road to housing. He's known about GMC since it was a single room with no showers, laundry, or bathrooms. Before coming to GMC, Kenneth didn't have any of the identification needed to get housing. GMC assisted him in getting a birth certificate, ID and SSI benefits, and then referred him to our partners at Miriam's Kitchen for a housing placement. After 25 years of homelessness, Kenneth was able to get into housing in only 2.5 months. "You guys started the process," he says of GMC. "If it hadn't been for y'all I wouldn't have anything. So thank you so much."

— Sarah Hartley & David Finnegan-Hosey



With some donated professional services from HOK Architects, we came up with a plan to open up the Center so that it really began to feel like a place for our guests to belong. Meanwhile, administrative staff moved to nearby office space. The Center was now so nice and welcoming that our numbers increased and people who came in, stayed. We were often standing room only.

This year a generous donor is helping us overhaul the space once more. An ingenious idea will move the mechanical room into another area of the rectory, opening up space in our Center. Moving the reception area to one side we will have more unobstructed space for our guests, 2 washers, 2 dryers and a more efficient hot water system for the showers - all desperately needed. We hope to open this new space in the fall at the conclusion of our 30 year anniversary celebration. While I continue to have hope that we will put an end to homelessness in my lifetime, at least for the most vulnerable homeless folks with mental illness there will be a need for gentle, respectful services.

—*Gunther Stern*

P.S. Want to learn more about what we've accomplished together? Our 2016 Annual Report is now available on our website.

## Winter Shelter: A Place to Let Your Guard Down



*Christmas dinner in GMC's winter shelter*

Going into her first full season with GMC's winter shelter, Case Manager Sabrina Burrell was nervous. "But after a couple of weeks," she says, "I was feeling really comfortable." Sabrina credits the supportive dynamics of the shelter residents, and the safe environment that staff, volunteers, and residents created together. The

residents "were able to talk about anything with me," Sabrina says, "not just as a case manager, but as a human being." Sabrina says she learned from the shelter residents, even as she helped care for them. Some began referring to her as "Mother Sabrina" because of her consistent care.

For the 26th year, the winter shelter once again provided warmth, safety, and community for 10 residents during the coldest months of the year. The shelter, which is hosted each year by a rotating group of Georgetown congregations, closed for the season on March 26. GMC's goal is to provide shelter for the residents during the winter months and to assist in moving them toward more permanent housing solutions.

To that end, Sabrina is excited by the number of residents who she was able to connect with services. In all, more than half were connected to a housing voucher or program by the end of the shelter. Sabrina notes that each resident has unique challenges to face in their journey towards permanent housing. Some residents are excited to

look for housing, while others are reluctant to seek government assistance. So Sabrina has the task of working with each unique person, encouraging, challenging, and supporting them. It's this personal touch that makes the GMC winter shelter so special. Volunteers and staff are able to interact and learn from the residents, and residents find not only physical shelter, but also a place to let their guard down.

— *David Finnegan-Hosey*

## Volunteering at GMC "An Experience of Community"



*Carmen Fitzsimmons*

"It was an experience of community," says Georgetown University Catholic Campus Minister Carmen Fitzsimmons Rosenblatt of her time volunteering at GMC's day center. Prior to Georgetown, Carmen worked with high school students, connecting them to service opportunities in the city, which shaped her understanding of service: "I think it's important for

institutions to make commitments to organizations that don't go away when students go away."

Carmen volunteered with GMC this past winter through Georgetown's "Fill the GAP" program, which connects faculty and staff with organizations that usually rely on student volunteers but are short on help over school breaks. Her conversations with our guests and staff led her to think about ways to deepen her students' connections with their community. GMC's laundry program caught her attention right away: "The students are always talking about their experience living in residence halls, and what a hassle the laundry rooms can be," Carmen recounts. "And I thought, 'What if the students helped get new washers and dryers for [GMC's day] center? That's a specific need that actually we all have.'"

After talking with GMC staff, Carmen facilitated a conversation with Georgetown's Office of Campus Ministry which led to the decision to donate the university Christian community's Lent offerings to GMC for new washers and dryers. This generous donation will help GMC significantly increase our capacity to serve our guests. Just as importantly, for Carmen, this was an opportunity to show students that generosity doesn't have to wait for a future date. Students were able to show their generosity "from Georgetown, to Georgetown." Says Carmen, "We're grateful to be able to build this community with people we share a home with."

GMC is grateful for Carmen, and for all our volunteers who take the time to build community with our guests. And we are grateful for Georgetown University's Office of Campus Ministry's generosity and support!

— *David Finnegan-Hosey*





## 5k Race Brings Community Together to End Homelessness



*Georgetown 5k Race Against Homelessness*

On March 26, hundreds of runners, walkers, and supporters gathered on the historic campus of Georgetown University for the 2017 Georgetown 5k Race Against Homelessness.

Organized by the Georgetown Ministry Center and the Center for Social Justice at Georgetown University, the race raised funds for the work of Georgetown Ministry Center and shed light on the issue of homelessness in the Georgetown community.

“Our partnership with the Center for Social Justice allows Georgetown Ministry Center to provide refuge and support for homeless individuals who are often overlooked,” said Gunther Stern, GMC executive director, who also participated in the race. “This race is both a celebration of our partnership and an opportunity to grow our capacity to serve the most vulnerable members of our community.”

In addition to the 5k run, the event included a family-friendly 2k walk and a post-race celebration, which featured food, games, and music performed by Georgetown University student groups. The event raised \$18,000 for Georgetown Ministry Center.

This event was generously sponsored by Georgetown University’s Office of Campus Ministry, Cox Graae + Spack Architects, Ri Ra Georgetown, 3D Xplosive Performance, and Washingtonian Magazine. Race prizes and in-kind items were donated by Saxbys Coffee, Trader Joe’s, Dog Tag Bakery, Launch Trampoline Park, Lilly Pulitzer, SoulCycle, Boating in D.C., Down Dog Yoga, Balance Gym, & Pizza, Orangetheory Fitness and Chaia.

## Board of Directors

*Christ Church, Georgetown* - Richard Johnson  
*Dumbarton United Methodist Church* - Jennifer Whatley  
*Epiphany Roman Catholic Church* - Chris Rowe  
*First Baptist Church, Georgetown*  
*Georgetown Lutheran Church* - Connie Baker  
*Georgetown Presbyterian Church* - Pat Davies  
*Georgetown University* - Ray Shiu  
*Grace Episcopal Church* - John Graham, Ex Officio  
*Holy Trinity Catholic Church* - Ron Castaldi  
*Kesher Israel, Georgetown Synagogue* - Amy Kauffman  
*Mt. Zion United Methodist Church*  
*St. John’s Episcopal Church* - Jocelyn Dyer  
*St. Paul’s K Street* - Jeremiah Cassidy  
*St. Stephen the Martyr* - Laura Wilson

### From the Community

*Citizens Association of Georgetown* - Page Robinson  
*Georgetown Business Association* - Elizabeth Webster  
*Georgetown BID* - John Wiebenson  
*Georgetown Clergy Association* - Mary Kay Totty  
*Treatment Advocacy Center* - John Snook  
*Other Community Representatives* - Page Evans, James P. Jordan, Dorothy Preston, Sara Lemke-von Ammon, Carol Cooke, Nancy Taylor Bubes

### Officers

**President** - Alexander Bullock  
**Vice President** - Jeremiah Cassidy  
**Treasurer** - John Lange  
**Secretary** - Page Robinson

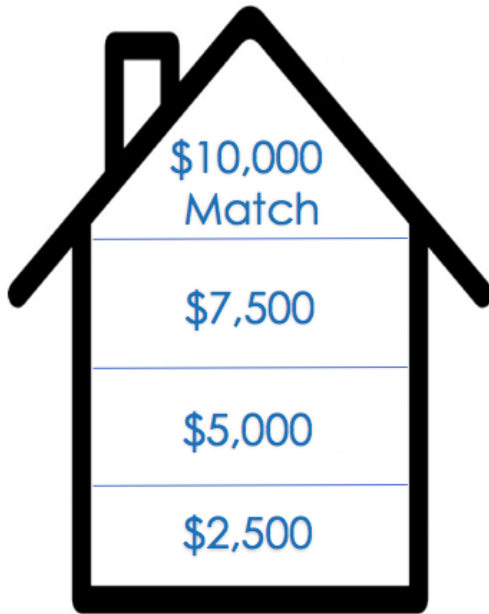
### Staff

**Executive Director** - Gunther Stern  
**Case Manager** - Sabrina Burrell, MSW  
**Program Manager** - Ashley Lane  
**Program Coordinators** - Titilayo Adegoke, Will Jay, Tanisha Turner  
**Volunteer Coordinator** - Melissa Bernard  
**Development and Communications Manager** - Sarah Hartley  
**Communications Coordinator** - David Finnegan-Hosey  
**Human Resources Specialist** - Dymenn Venzor  
**Accountant** - Catherine Payling

### Consulting Physicians

*Psychiatry*  
 Ron Koshes, M.D.  
 Ross Goodwin, M.D.; Psychiatric Resident (*GWU*)  
*Family Practice*  
 Catherine Crosland, M.D. (*Unity Health Care*)

## Calling for a Rematch



Let us begin by saying...thank you! Last year you helped us raise over \$10,000 to qualify for a \$10,000 matching grant from the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation.

Are you ready for a rematch?

Between now and May 31, we are once again working to raise **\$10,000** to receive a matching \$10,000 grant. Please help us meet the match by making a donation and asking a friend to do the same. We will track our progress by "filling" the home on the left.

Your gift makes a difference to the people we serve, and this is your chance to double your impact!

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