As we celebrate sixty years of carrying on the work that Brother de Paul started, I can’t help but reminisce about my thirteen years of being involved with House of Charity, first as a board member and the last five years as the Executive Director. Yes, the organization has grown, the funding resources have changed, and yet, the need continues. Need for affordable housing, accessible health care, education, and jobs. Most importantly, though, is the need to feel connected to our fellow man.

I had the opportunity to visit with Brother de Paul before his passing and I asked him what he thought was the most important thing that House of Charity did. His answer: “to touch those who need help.” Every day each of us can take some time to give words of encouragement, give a hug, or say hello. The world is a very busy and at times chaotic place; we can make a huge difference in someone’s life with these simple gestures.

I want to thank everyone that has made it possible for us to do the work we do over these sixty years. Thank you to our community partners, volunteers, board, staff, and donors. Thank you for making a difference and helping us continue the work that Brother de Paul started. As the lyrics from a song made famous by Diana Ross say – “Reach out and touch somebody’s hand. Make this a better place, if you can.” Thank you.

—Bert Winkel, Executive Director

Fall 2013
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Words of Wisdom
“Yesterday’s the past, tomorrow’s the future, but today is a gift. That’s why it’s called the present.”
—Bill Keane

Two Minutes With...
Michael Bennett, Director of Outreach & Volunteer & Outreach Services

Mike has worked at House of Charity for over ten years. His current title is Outreach and Volunteer Director, but he started as the Food Service Manager. Over the course of a decade, faces and programs have changed, but the need for assistance, sadly, is stronger than ever. “Ultimately, the goal of any agency which provides basic needs is to hang a sign that reads ‘closed, due to lack of customers’” Mike states. “If that sign were to be hung here, that would mean we don’t have people who need food, housing, or treatment. Sadly, we haven’t hung that sign in the ten years I have been here, nor the sixty years we have been an agency.

When looking at ten years with one agency, the question of what keeps you coming back isn’t uncommon. “For me, it’s the tangibility” Mike answered. “Take the Food Centre for example, you can look at the meal count and see that 422 people ate lunch today because of their contribution.”

While he has run the Food Centre in the past, Mike’s primary job function now is to be a voice in the community as to how House of Charity provides assistance to those in need. “I do a lot of presentations at businesses, civic groups, churches, and to our volunteers. I do my best to present realism to our stakeholders, and explain that the issues of homelessness, hunger, and need are as strong here in Minnesota as they are in Chicago or New York. The majority of us don’t want to acknowledge how close we are to needing assistance. It’s hard for me to ignore reality when someone explains that they have only $80 for the month to buy food and personal items. It’s even harder for me to ignore reports that the need continues to grow, and we can make a huge difference.”

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Reflecting on the Past 60 Years

A House of Charity Timeline of Milestones & Milestones

As our 60th anniversary comes to an end, we want to take a moment and look back on where we started as an organization. Since our humble beginnings serving people at a five-seat dining table and accommodating overnight guests on our floor, we have grown from simply meeting basic needs to addressing the root causes of an individual's long-term instability, such as chemical dependency, mental illness, and lack of opportunity to gain life skills, attain quality education and secure employment. We are grateful for the many supporters who have allowed us to serve those in need throughout the years and who continue to do so today; we hope you enjoy this brief 'lesson in House of Charity history:

- July 1952- Tom Kondrak, aka Brother de Paul, founded HOC at 1306 2nd St. N.E.
- Oct. 1952- Brother de Paul purchased a building on Nicollet Island (26 East Hennepin Ave.); 17 men slept on the floor with blankets and coats.
- 1953- 3,000 plus homeless people lived on skid row; the first board of directors was formed; there were 9 members.
- Dec. 1953- HOC served meals to 120 men on Christmas.
- By spring 1954, HOC had served over 50,000 meals.
- Summer 1954- HOC acquired the building next door at 24 East Hennepin Ave. to be the new dining room.
- Sept. 1955- HOC's AA group held an anniversary banquet and bestowed pins upon those who had been sober for one year.
- Feb. 14, 1956- HOC hosted a Valentine's Day Charity Dinner; 200 men and women paid $50 each to attend.
- Thanksgiving Eve 1962- Brother de Paul announced that HOC would start a halfway house for parolees. When it opened, the Roncalli House had 25 residents at a time and was the 7th such house in the world.
- 1966- Brother de Paul developed a system where men could live at HOC for between 6 months and five years; they were given room & board, a small amount of money, and a special area of responsibility in the operation of HOC.
- June 1969- HOC moved from Nicollet Island to the north side of Minneapolis at 250 17th Ave North.
- Nov. 20, 1972- Thanksgiving Day. The first meal at the new Food Centre was served.
- May 14, 1976- HOC moved to its fourth residential location, the old Field Hotel at 510 South 8th Street.
- July 1, 1981- The MN Legislature cut about 1,900 people in Hennepin County from General Assistance Benefits; numbers at the Food Centre increased by 1,000 per month.
- Oct. 1980- HOC officially began its chemical dependency treatment program.
- 1981- HOC's 20th anniversary was celebrated. Brother de Paul found an old warehouse at 7th Street and Park Avenue to be the new dining room. From then on it was called the House of Charity Food Centre.
- Nov. 27, 1972- Thanksgiving Day. The first meal at the new Food Centre was served.
- Dec. 1993- HOC served meals to 120 men on Christmas.
- Aug. 1972- HOC became part of Hennepin County's Housing First partnership with 36 clients enrolled by the end of the year.
- June 1, 1970- HOC founder, Brother de Paul passed away at the age of 81.
- 2011- HOC was contracted by the Veteran's Administration to set aside beds specifically for homeless veterans.
- 2011- HOC’s Day program became licensed to provide co-curricular mental illness & chemical dependency treatment.
- January 2012- The Women's Day by Day treatment program officially began.
- Spring 2012 through Fall 2013- HOC celebrates 60 years of transforming lives...one person at a time.

As in our lives, we forget the positive interactions that we can positively impact people with our actions. It is pretty rewarding just to simply say hello, you may time stamp their week. For many of the people we serve, today feels like a last Tuesday. It may not seem like much, but the fact that a person didn’t walk past them as if they were a parking meter or a trash can might make their day, week or even longer. It’s really quite simple to do.”

Mike finishes by mentioning a meeting he was at a few months back. “We were asked what our legacy would be. As in, if we never came back to our position, what would we be remembered for? I hope mine would be that I make a difference. I give as much effort in getting to know someone in the meal line as I would to a CEO of a major corporation. I encourage everyone I meet to do the same. When a long-time volunteer asks ‘what happened to Bill, Eric, or Jane’ I know we are doing something right at HOC. One of our guests or our clients mattered enough for that volunteer to remember them, and ask about them. A connection was made. Often in our lives, we forget that we can positively impact people with our actions. It is pretty rewarding to see those positive interactions take place here every day.”

Chef’s Corner

Rotollos

You will need:

- 8- 10” flour tortillas
- Boursin or cream cheese
- Steamed fresh spinach
- Matchstick carrots
- Salsa

Fresh salsa
Spread cheese on bottom 1/4 of tortilla, then place another tortilla overlapping the cheese area.
Cover entire combo with cheese using a spatula; spread evenly.
Place spinach across at the base of tortillas combo then place multiple carrot sticks on top of spinach, crossing end to end.
Drizzle salsa along the same line from end to end.
Roll tightly from center outward.
Cover and chill.
Slice creating pin wheels.
Arrange and serve.
Fantastic hors d’oeuvres!

Make a Difference

Your gift has a profound and immediate impact.

$20 provides an hour of case management and just 50 cents provides a meal.

Enclosed is my gift of:

$__________________________

Please make checks payable to House of Charity. Feel free to use the envelope provided. To make a credit card donation, please visit: www.houseofcharity.org

I am interested in leaving a gift to House of Charity in my will. Please contact me. Phone: ___________________

Send us your feedback on the newsletter!

NAME:

EMAIL:

COMMENTS:

I check here if you would like to join our email list!

Did you know?

2013 marked the addition of a new staff position at House of Charity- the Resource Navigator connects public meal guests at the Food Centre to additional community supports and makes professional referrals as needed.

Upcoming Events

Heart of the City Open House

Hear from our Executive Director to find out more in-depth information on the programs and services that we offer at House of Charity and why we do what we do relative to the larger community.

In addition, you are welcome to join us for lunch at the Food Centre to allow more time for conversation.

Friday, November 8th

11am - 12 Noon

RSVP to Liz at 612-594-2066 or ljones@houseofcharity.org

House of Charity

the heart of the city

Beats from the heart of the city

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