
Good News from the Gutter

1 message

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Harry Tompson Center Fall 2015 News

Staff from the Harry Tompson Center and Depaul USA recently enjoyed a day of reflection together at Fountainbleau State Park.

A Message from our Director

I have heard the “Good News” from the most likely and unlikely of places. When I started working here 2 ½ years ago, I knew that I would be inspired by the dedicated people who have made the Harry Tompson Center the special place it is today. What shocked and surprised me was hearing the good news from the “gutter.”

I have heard it from those who call the sidewalk their home, who are living in

the filth and stink of the street, often with the unbearable noise of an expressway all around them, afraid that someone might take their belongings while they sleep, and afraid of the very real dangers of cold weather, disease, violence and overall chaos. It is individuals living in these deplorable conditions who have provided the most profound witness to me, who have helped me to believe, to really believe, that there is always hope, even in our darkest days, and even when living in dangerous, dirty places.

Here's what several of our guests shared with me recently when reflecting about their time living on the street. After months of sleeping outside, Robert recently found a job and moved into an apartment with assistance from the HTC. What did Robert say about his ordeal? *"As Frederick Douglas once said, 'without struggle there is no progress.' I use that as my motivation."*

Linda never doubted that she would be okay or that she would finally be housed, even after living in a street camp for 8 months. When asked to reflect on her situation, she said, *"God keeps sending me angels to help me through my ordeal. There's the trucker who stops by the camp each morning to give me a breakfast sandwich. There's another woman who brings me plate lunches from time to time. The Lord is with us. Don't ever forget that."*

I started asking Larry for the good news for the day after noticing he was always reading the bible. After being homeless for 2 years, Larry has just been placed in our new Coming Home program and is about to move into a home of his own. Today, when I asked, for today's good word, he said, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself."*

They have such hope, even after enduring such oppressive conditions! As St. Vincent de Paul has said, *"The poor have much to teach you. You have much to learn from them."* I am thankful for all of you this Thanksgiving season. May these and other lessons from the poor enter our hearts, transform us and encourage us.

In thanksgiving for all of you!
Vicki Judice

UPCOMING EVENTS

Interfaith Prayer Service for

New Orleans Homeless

Fellowship & simple reception to follow

December 2, 2015

5:30-6:30 p.m.

St. Joseph Church

1802 Tulane Avenue

New Orleans, LA 70112

Harry at the Hop

Spring Gala benefiting the HTC

March 12, 2016

6:30 p.m.

Jesuit High School



Volunteer Spotlight: Dr. Mark Thomas

After Practicing medicine and surgery for nearly 50 years, Dr. Mack Thomas decided to slow down and began donating his time on Tuesdays to the guests who visit the Harry Tompson Center. Dr. Thomas has been volunteering his time in our medical clinic since shortly after the Rebuild Center was opened in 2007. As a highly accomplished and respected doctor in New Orleans, Dr. Thomas started Intensive Care Units and Multi-Specialty Groups in Houma, headed the Anesthesia Aepartment at the VA Center in New Orleans, started three other practices in various locations in Louisiana, and still currently teaches residents at Oschner Hopsital.

A native to Louisiana, Dr. Thomas grew up in Tallulah and came to New Orleans in 1958 to earn his doctorate at LSU Medical. Besides the great work that he does at the Rebuild Center, he also enjoys his retirement by traveling with his wife and occasionally



Guest Spotlight: Mary Barrett

Mary Barrett is a singer, an artist, and pianist. She has been a guest at the Center for two years, but is in the process of moving into an apartment sponsored by UNITY of Greater New Orleans. She cannot express how blessed she feels, especially knowing that she will not be spending Thanksgiving in the cold. Mary moved to New Orleans from Mississippi three weeks before Hurricane Katrina, and lost everything in the aftermath. She evacuated with family to Mobile, Alabama, but came back as soon as possible because of her love for the food, music, and people of the Crescent City.

She is thankful that the staff at the Harry Tompson Center understand that there are many factors that can cause a person to be homeless, and admires them for all that they do. She appreciates that the staff do not look down on the guests in any way, instead offering help and understanding.

"They are like a family, You... get to know them, and they offer support. That is what homeless people need more than anything."

Known in the Center as being a source of humor and encouragement, Mary is often telling other people about God. She wants to be encouraging to everyone,

entertaining his fourteen grandchildren.

Having known Father Harry Tompson personally through his children and the Good Sheperd School, Dr. Thomas attempts to honor the memory of our founder through his work at the Center. He admired Father Tompson for seeing that something needed to be done, and getting it done. He loves that the Center gives him the opportunity to help those who need medical attention as well as allowing him to meet many new and interesting people. He feels that everyone wants to give something back, and his method, by his work at the Center, is especially rewarding.

Wish List

- Winter coats, gloves, and hats
- Blankets and sleeping bags
- Men's Socks
- Small toiletries and hygiene supplies
- Men's belts
- Backpacks
- Men's reading glasses
- Books for our reading cart
- Small snacks such as granola bars
- Walking Canes
- Ponchos
- Men's shoes, size 10 and higher
- Copy paper, small notebooks, pens, and other office supplies

whether they are a guest at the Center, a staff member, or someone she doesn't know. She wants the world to know that if nothing else, she is on their side.



Staff Spotlight: Melvin Simmons

Originally from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Melvin is a respected member of the HTC staff. He is the Assistant Site Coordinator for our satellite services at the VA Community Resource and Referral Center, and has been working with the Harry Tompson Center for two and a half years.

Coming to New Orleans after his father's passing to reconnect with family, he went through his savings and became temporarily homeless. His worst experience was sleeping under a bridge, but thankfully he has been housed at his current place for over a year. In addition to the great work he performs for the guests at the Center, he is also attending nursing school at Delgado and works nights at Touro Hospital. He tries to talk about and use his experiences to set an example for the guests, encouraging the young men at the center not to lose hope. The guests know that he's been where they are, and they respect him for it.

He loves working with the guests and staff



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and particularly looks up to Vicki, who he sees as a mentor. She is the one who inspired and motivated him to go back to school and gave him the courage to get back on his feet. As the current Assistant Site Coordinator, going to school, and working at a hospital at night, Melvin has not only gotten on his feet, he has started running.



Happy Thanksgiving
Everyone!

HTC Staff:

Executive Director: Vicki Judice
Assistant Director: Emily Bussen
Case Manager: Kip Barard
Case Manager Intern: Jessica Lovell
Case Manager Intern: Roxanna Martin
Center Assistant: Brian Midkiff, Jesuit Volunteer
Site Coordinator: Michael Lank, Jesuit Volunteer
Assistant Site Coordinator: Melvin Simmons
Center Assistant: Oscar Medema
Center Assistant: Dyana Estrada
Assistant Public Relations Coordinator: Regi Reyes



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