Our work
Joe Piskulic is a case worker. But he calls himself a workout buddy, personal trainer and dietary specialist. And that’s not all. “I’m the cheerleader,” he says. Page 2.

Our purpose
For a year and a half, Frank Harper had been hospitalized with chest pains nearly every weekend. Since arriving recently at Depaul USA’s pilot medical respite program, he has not returned to the hospital. “Thank God for places like this,” he says. Page 3.

Our spirit
St. Louis program director Gretchen Shipp wrote a memo to staff, volunteers and supporters in April, six months after the St. Louis MORE and PLUS programs became part of Depaul USA, and she could hardly contain her exuberance. “Please take this six-month anniversary to breathe and be amazed!” she wrote. Page 4.

Our team
Meet Bennie Bonner and some of the other staff and volunteers of Depaul USA’s Daybreak in Macon, Ga. Page 5.

How our New Orleans van makes a difference
Depaul USA’s Movin’ On program in New Orleans keeps driving home impressive results.
In 2013, the program—which transports clients from the city’s Rebuild Center to local agencies—transported 430 individuals, including 168 for various services; 235 for medications; 56 for eye exams or glasses; and 42 for housing appointments.
The Movin’ On van provides access to the St. Vincent de Paul Free Pharmacy and the Vision Center, among other places and services. Our New Orleans operation housed its first client in May.

‘An example of what can be’

Matthew Gilmer quoted St. Vincent de Paul as saying: “One must be firm and unchanging with regard to the end but gentle and humble as to the means.”

Depaul House resident pays tribute to residents, volunteers, staffers
Matthew Gilmer is a resident of the Depaul House transitional housing program in Philadelphia. Here is the text of a speech he gave at the April 15 graduation ceremony:

I’m Matthew Gilmer, and I’d like to welcome you to Depaul House’s fifth graduation. When I was coming up with what exactly I was going to say tonight, and trying not to be scared out of my mind at the prospect, I was thinking of quotes or important words to open with. I found that perhaps there were no more apropos words than those from the man this organization and this house owe their name to. St. Vincent de Paul is most primarily the patron saint of charities of all kinds. He was a man that during his life faced many hardships including poverty and eventually being sold into slavery. Throughout his life his prime focus was charity, mercy, and kindness to the downtrodden of all variety. He always tempered his works and believed above all in a balance between harshness and mercy. A quote in particular that struck me as highly relevant on the subject of charity was, “We must be full reservoirs and we must possess the spirit with which we want them to be...

Continues on page 3

How our New Orleans van makes a difference

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Good news from the Atlantic to the Mississippi

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am delighted to share the new version of Depaul USA’s newsletter with you! In an age when media communications are ever shorter (and dare I say, dumbed down?); we are taking another approach. The redesigned newsletter features: articles from those we serve, perspectives from employees and information about Depaul USA in general — all of which are designed to inform you about and invest you more deeply in the work of Depaul USA. Changes are afoot in other areas of Depaul USA as well. You have noticed our redesigned website with updated information about our programs. In addition, in Philadelphia, we have opened that city’s first homeless respite for men who have been discharged from area hospitals. In Chicago, we are working with the local Vincentian community to fashion a response to that city’s homelessness program. I write this from Little Rock, Ar., where city officials asked us to submit a proposal to partner with and manage their day/resource center for individuals facing homelessness. I hope you enjoy the newsletter. Please send any comments my way (email: info@depaulusa.org), and thank you for supporting our work.

— CWL

CASEWORKER JOE PISKULIC

‘I’m the cheerleader’

Caseworker stays motivated to help clients live better

Joe Piskulic is a caseworker. But he calls himself a workout buddy, personal trainer and dietary specialist.

“And that’s not all. ’I’m the cheerleader,’ he says.

Piskulic joined Depaul USA last year when the organization merged with the St. Louis-based scattered-site housing program, where he had worked for about six years. The supportive housing program takes chronically homeless individuals off the streets, puts them into housing and supports them long-term.

At age 46, Piskulic is talkative and full of energy, especially when it comes to his role of helping clients develop good dietary and exercise habits.

“’I’m like their sponsor, their workout buddy,” he says. “These guys never dreamed of going to the gym. It gives them a sense of accomplishment. They’ve lost weight, and they tell me how they’ve done. It’s a confidence booster.”

He says he takes pride in his clients’ accomplishments and shares their enthusiasm.

“When they see me once or twice a week, they say, ‘Hey, I lost two pounds,’” he says. “One man lost 126 points. He had a cane, had to get monthly shots in his knee.”

He says the man also was diabetic and took four medications, including for high blood pressure.

“It’s pretty neat when you think about it,” Piskulic says. “It’s just the consistency. Now, that guy is off all four meds. No knee brace, no cane.”

He adds: “Sticking with them, and walking them through it, they see a difference. They’ve never done it before. No one took the time to show them how to lose weight. They say, ‘Oh, my gosh. I feel better, and I’m sleeping at night.’ It improves their mental and physical health. It is a pivotal part of what I do.”

Piskulic gives an example of a client who is HIV positive. The client started walking to improve his health. He also stated going to church, and then he met somebody with whom to talk about walking.

“Different activities and hobbies attract different company,” Piskulic says. “Before, they were hanging around with other guys who weren’t a good influence on them.

“This walker now volunteers at two of the places where he used to get handouts. That’s pretty cool: Now he gives back.”

As for words of wisdom, Piskulic says: “Three words I say to the guys: dedication, motivation and focus. Be dedicated to the task, motivated to do it, and focused while you’re doing it.”

He adds with a laugh: “I write it down for them.”

— Kelli McGee, Director of Operations

We have been awarded a three-year grant from the Pew Foundation for our programs in Philly. This is a remarkable achievement on the part of director of fundraising Peggy Robertson and program director Sandra Guillory, as a grant from Pew is considered the gold standard in the social service sector.

DePaul House’s second walkabout was a resounding success. It drew twice as many participants as last year, please visit our website (www.depaulusa.org) and Facebook page (Depaul USA) for pictures. Depaul USA was also the beneficiary of a St. Joseph’s table collection in New Orleans for our programming.

Read on, and we’ll be back in the summer with another edition of the newsletter for you. Thank you for supporting Depaul USA and allowing us to continue this good work!

Charles W. Levesque
Executive Director, Depaul USA

Offering homeless and disadvantaged people the opportunity to fulfill their potential
A program’s success and a patient’s love

Since arriving three weeks ago, Frank Harper begins each day by telling staff at the Philadelphia medical respite that he appreciates them:

“Good morning, Linda. I love you!”

“Good morning, Cheryl. I love you!”

Frank’s optimism is remarkable considering the challenges he has faced in his life. He fled the wars in Lebanon during the 1980s and believes that everyone in his family has passed away.

He spent a lifetime working in restaurants before his health started to decline three years ago. Ever since a heart attack and open heart surgery in 2011, Frank has been unable to work, and he’s ineligible for benefits. Now, at age 66, he has spent the last three years bouncing among shelters and hospitals while his health has progressively declined.

Many homeless patience mirror Frank’s experience. They receive world-class care in hospitals and emergency rooms. But once they are discharged to the streets, homeless patients face many challenges to their recovery. Lack of a stable home environment diminishes the long-term effectiveness of hospital care.

Additionally, homeless patients often have complex and multiple conditions that need to be addressed. A 2010 study revealed that homeless patients are hospitalized at rates higher than the general population (23 hospitalizations per 100 people versus 5 for the general population). The cost per hospitalization is also higher for homeless patients, who average $2,559 more than non-homeless patients. Local stakeholders and social service agencies have recognized that this system is failing the most vulnerable while also burdening hospitals.

The Depaul USA medical respite program is one solution. Medical respite is a national best practice to address the transition of homeless individuals from hospital to the community. The collaborative project by Philadelphia’s Public Health Management Corporation and Depaul USA, an eight-bed pilot, seeks to demonstrate that case management and nursing services can successfully move patients to better housing and health outcomes, simultaneously saving money.

Funded through grants and per diem rates from four local hospitals, the respite opened its doors in March. Frank was the second patient to walk in.

For a year and a half, Frank had been hospitalized with chest pains nearly every weekend. Since arriving recently at the medical respite program, Frank has not returned to the hospital.

With support from nurses Linda and Lisa and respite residential staff Cheryl and James, Frank takes all of his prescribed medications, eats healthy meals and attends all appointments. Staff has given him information so that he can better manage his diabetes as well. The respite, located in what was formerly the chapel of the Depaul House building, has been a restful and recuperative place where Frank doesn’t have to worry about meeting basic needs.

Every afternoon, Frank reads his bible in the respite. He says the Bible is his source of strength and serenity. Although he is homeless, he says, “I’m not hopeless. I have so much to look forward to!”

Frank’s optimism has set a positive tone for the other respite residents, and he’s now responsible for helping them settle into the program.

“Thank God for places like this,” he says. “I have been treated well, and everyone here is nice. My heart feels stronger because of this place.”

— Sandra Guillory, Philadelphia Progam Director

FROM PAGE ONE

Matthew Gilmer shares ‘an example of what can be’

animated, for no one can give what he does not have." He is speaking, specifically, about one’s service and volunteerism toward the unfortunate. He is speaking of leading by positive example. He is speaking of engendering a positive, motivational spirit in one’s charges.

In my short time in this house I have seen this philosophy bear out time and again at every level from the employees who work here each and every day to the volunteers who come here with little thought for personal gain providing services, kindness and wisdom that we otherwise would not have access to.

The level of devotion and esteem showed to us, the homeless, is such that I initially found it unbelievable in the most literal sense.

I was so jaded in my experiences that I doubted the genuineness of the organization and tried to find cause to prove its assertions false. My doubt proved infinitely misplaced, my proof nonexistent. It’s been a long time since I was so glad to be so wrong.

The kindness, the mercy I have been shown here has been unmatched by any other group of people I have contacted in life. Not coworkers, not associates, not family. Of purpose Vincent says, “One must be firm and unchanging with regard to the end but gentle and humble as to the means.”

The end, in the context of this organizations mission, is defeating homelessness. It is successful in that end. More so than any other entity in this city and that is due in total to the efforts put in by its employees, volunteers and residents. We are here tonight to honor these people for those efforts and to appreciate the achievements that have been accomplished.

I do not want to get too heavy or too political, but to my eyes and I believe to some of yours as well, we live in a time in which our divisions have never been greater, where the gap between those who have the most and those who have the least is astronomical, where even the most menial of employment is considered a privilege to those that have it.

I say to everyone assembled here that THINGS WILL GET BETTER. What we are and what we have are not nearly as important or as meaningful as WHO WE ARE and WHAT WE DO. Our differences should be celebrated and our similarities should be cherished. History has proven since time immemorial that equity and mercy will always outlast division and cruelty.

This wonderful organization stands as an example of what can be. What will be, if we have the courage and the wisdom to work together for each other and ourselves. To difficulty, Vincent said it better and shorter than I could, “Fear not; calm will follow the storm, and perhaps soon.”

Offering homeless and disadvantaged people the opportunity to fulfill their potential
Well, I got to go on a wonderful hike this weekend and my mind always wanders on hikes — no pun intended — and it dawned on me as fleeting thoughts of work would enter in and out of my brain, that this month is our six-month anniversary! And while it might seem like A LOT longer on some days … it has only been six months — and it made me think “WOW! We are really good!”

(St. Louis staff) has been given the enormous task, with the awesome support of Depaul USA, of basically creating an agency to support our clients in an effort to not only keep them housed, but to be able to support them with a dignity that all human beings should enjoy (but as we know so many do not). We have been given 70 of our most vulnerable neighbors to take care of — as they are not in a position to take care of themselves — so off we went.

Starting with Depaul USA giving us the chance to continue our programs, we went to town:

1. We continued to provide housing to 70 clients without any real interruption in care;
2. We survived the enormous challenge of getting these grants transitioned and eventually some payments started;
3. We created and had our first Local Advisory Council (LAC) meeting … and are starting to set goals with the LAC;
4. We sent out our first mailing — and are started to reap those benefits;
5. We have a Friends of Depaul USA Club, which ran a March Madness pool and donated $500 to our programs;
6. We have a date and park set for our fun run in October — and planning meetings to make it wonderful are underway;
7. We started meeting with another PSH–Shalom (permanent supportive housing) to share ideas and brainstorm on how to serve clients better and share resources;
8. We developed and now have our very own program brochure — that is beautiful;
9. We have a fundraiser/learning opportunity for the kids set at St. Mary Magdalen before the school year ends; and
10. We have started our Project ONE meetings to see how we can support and work together better to support each other and our clients.

And this is just what I could think of — I am sure there is more. Additionally, this list does not reflect all the extra commitment, time and energy that each one of these tasks has involved to make them happen. Nor does it reflect all the extra commitment, time and energy that will continue to be put into these and more as we continue to develop and grow under the direction and support of Depaul USA. You all are truly AMAZING! So if you are feeling tired and amazed — it is because you should be! :) I tend to look at the end picture and wonder how are we going to do all this — and then I get overwhelmed and nervous … I often forget to be in the process because as each stitch happens a beautiful quilt is being made. So, please take this six-month anniversary to breathe and be amazed! Because we are a good team, and slowly but surely we are creating our own, unique quilt — I for one am truly glad to work with such a fine group of people and look forward to growing with you …We will figure this out together — Thanks for everything :) — Gretchen Shipp, St. Louis Program Director

Offering homeless and disadvantaged people the opportunity to fulfill their potential
Reflections on trust, patience, appreciation

Oliver Miller, Development Associate and manager of DePaul USA’s Immaculate Cleaning Services, is moving on, having accepted a position with Teach for America. Carrying with him the values of St. Vincent de Paul, Oliver is fulfilling a dream of shaping young minds. ICS is a for-profit company designed to generate unrestricted income for DePaul USA programs, supported in part by a program-related investment from The Patricia Kind Foundation.

As my time with DePaul USA comes to a close, I want to reflect on my experience here. The most important lessons I have learned are also fundamental characteristics of the organization: DePaul USA’s balance of patience and urgency and its desire to innovate and take risks.

Zoom in to any one of DePaul USA’s programs, and you see people building relationships. Patience is pretty far down my list of skills, but I have seen how important it is in building trusting relationships that ultimately provide the foundation for moving our residents/guests/friends/clients toward self-sufficiency. Employing our residents through Immaculate Cleaning Services gave me additional insight into how challenging it can be to persuade another person to change what I know to be self-destructive behaviors.

Staff across DePaul USA engage in this struggle every day and have shown me that a step backward, no matter how small, can set an individual back months. I have seen how important it is in building relationships. Patience is pretty far down my list of skills, but I have seen how important it is in building trusting relationships that ultimately provide the foundation for moving our residents/guests/friends/clients toward self-sufficiency. Employing our residents through Immaculate Cleaning Services gave me additional insight into how challenging it can be to persuade another person to change what I know to be self-destructive behaviors.

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Two key staffing changes

Lynn Giordano, our part-time Employment Specialist, has agreed to take on additional hours and manage Immaculate Cleaning Services when Oliver Miller departs in June. Giordano has been a strong ICS supporter, and she received praise in the Depaul House evaluation for her commitment to Depaul House residents. This handover is a testament to the sustainable nature of this young enterprise — the well-oiled machine that Oliver worked so hard to build now requires a light touch to maintain. Meanwhile, after a diligent search, we welcome Kathy Gorla as assistant director of Daybreak in Macon. Gorla, who started work in late April, brings strong operational experience and a proactive approach to the position.

With our staff’s patience comes a clear sense of urgency for every one of DePaul USA’s projects, programs and goals. When I joined Depaul USA in 2011, the organization operated only Depaul House in Philadelphia. As I write, Depaul USA operates programming in four cities with (spoiler alert) more on the way. We launched a social enterprise, a medical respite, a health clinic, scattered site housing and more. While the work requires compassion and a patient heart, Depaul USA operates as though the clock is working against us (which it is), and as if every passing minute represents another missed opportunity to move those less fortunate towards stability and independence.

Though Depaul USA’s drive toward innovation flows through our programming on many levels, I experienced it most intimately through the creation of Immaculate Cleaning Services. On my first day, launching a social enterprise was still a dream. A working group had carefully evaluated different business options and determined a commercial cleaning business was feasible. Six months later, Immaculate Cleaning Services was celebrating its inauguration.

Though a success in its own right, both profitable and employing Depaul House residents, ICS serves a larger goal. It affirms Depaul USA’s risk strategy. Despite the risk-aversion endemic within the nonprofit sector, Depaul USA has repeatedly harnessed its small size and growth-oriented attitude to take carefully calculated leaps into unknown territory, very much in the spirit of St. Vincent.

As DePaul USA continues to grow and change, it will face new challenges such as how to define its organizational context. Our family has grown tremendously and will continue to do so. We’ll shape our organization based on how we as supporters of our respective programs — and I now include myself in this group — embrace and back Depaul USA nationally as it finds new places where people and communities need our unique brand of services.

I am forever thankful to my colleagues, the board, our clients and the ICS crew for the privilege of working with and learning from all of you.

A visit to Macon

A look inside Depaul USA’s Daybreak in Macon, Ga., finds volunteer Barbara Toomer (above) at her station, Bennie Bonner (middle right) at her desk and volunteers in the laundry room and at the piano. Daybreak this year won the Historic Macon Preservation Award for revitalization. This 1940 building was an abandoned warehouse of the Macon Iron and Paper Company. When you see Daybreak today, you see a project preserving the qualities of its first occupant: It’s as strong as iron. Sister Elizabeth Greim (top right) is Macon’s program director.

Offering homeless and disadvantaged people the opportunity to fulfill their potential
Replicating the Macon Model

Depaul USA has been at work to implement its Macon Model — low-threshold access for clients, comprehensive services in one place and interfaith community support — in Little Rock, Ark. Over the past few months, we’ve maintained close talks with Little Rock city officials and organizations serving individuals facing homelessness. Sister Elizabeth Greim, Macon’s program director, and Charles W. Levesque, Depaul USA’s executive director, have met with Little Rock’s mayor and with officials of surrounding communities, plus foundations, service providers, representatives of faith communities, business leaders and university personnel. Little Rock officials invited Depaul USA to bid on a project that would improve and expand services and reduce the city’s contribution to the work.

Give us an ‘A’ for B Corp status

Immaculate Cleaning Services (ICS), Depaul USA’s social entrepreneurship, officially belongs to the Community of B Corporations. B Corporations are a new kind of company, which use the power of business to solve social and environmental problems. ICS joins about 900 other certified B Corporations from more than 60 industries in 32 countries. They share one goal — to redefine success in business. B Corporations inspire businesses to compete, not only to be the best in the world but to be the best for the world. Certified B Corporations meet higher standards of social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability.

The school spirit of St. Louis

Depaul USA in St. Louis is going back to school. Education breaks the cycle of poverty, and we are working all the angles. Staff has developed a “win-win” donation and education program to bring to St. Louis-area schools. The learning session teaches students about homelessness and solutions for helping our homeless neighbors. Through a PowerPoint presentation and by introducing students to formerly homeless people, students will be able to see that people who are homeless are similar to them and people they know. Additionally, we hope to teach students that as a caring community, we can do better for our most vulnerable neighbors. Following the lessons, students will collect funds through “penny wars” and Depaul USA activities.

Pencil us in

Sept. 27 is the 25th anniversary celebration for Depaul in London. Oct. 11 (World Homeless Day) features a 5K run/walk in St. Louis.

Activities in Ukraine, U.K. and France

Depaul Ukraine continues to provide meals, medical care, day-center services and shelter to individuals in Kharkiv, an Eastern Ukrainian city under constant stress of political unrest. Depaul is in its 25th year in London, a definite cause for celebration. Depaul UK will celebrate this milestone with DePaul International, which celebrates its 10th birthday. The key date for your diaries is Saturday, Sept. 27, the Feast Day of St. Vincent de Paul. We welcome you to a special Mass at Westminster Cathedral in London. Details to follow. Depaul France, a new subsidiary, is getting started by meeting individuals facing homelessness in Paris. While the main day-center building is under construction, a mobile outreach is providing food and medical aid in the 6th and 7th arrondissements. In April, Depaul France began circulating a mobile shower service called in French, “Mobil’douche.”

Philly.com: “Philly’s much-needed homeless recovery center is open.”


St. Louis Business Journal: “Here are the nonprofits participating in Give STL Day.”


Vincentian Family News: “Where do homeless go after surgery?”

http://famvin.org/en/2014/03/22/homeless-go-surgery/

The Tablet: “Nets and Ladders.”

http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/article/21st-decem-ber-2013/22/mark-mcgreevy

Click here to make a donation!