



Summer/Fall 2017

*Working to end homelessness, one life at a time.* **THE CATHEDRAL CENTER**

## “Life is really good for me now. It really is.”

**THE LIFE STORY OF A WOMAN WHOSE ROAD TO TRANSFORMATION BEGAN WITH FEAR, BUT WHOSE PATH LED TO A SECURE, INDEPENDENT LIFE.**



*Helen with LaDeidra Johnson, Women's Independence Program director at the Cathedral Center.*

The road to transformation began with fear. That's how Helen Barnett came to the Cathedral Center - a frightened woman. "I can remember walking and walking and trying to find this place. And I finally found it. I was a very down person," she recalls. "I was an emotional wreck. Very low self-esteem."

Spending her first night in the shelter, with all its challenges of living with others, led her to a conclusion: "I was just like, 'Helen, you're here for a reason. Just be Helen.'"

Helping her find that person was LaDeidra Johnson, director of CCI's Women's Independence Program. Together, they got to work.

Helen had no computer skills. She needed to learn the basics, but the first day in the computer lab, she experienced a panic attack. "I said, 'Give me a paper and pencil - that's what I know!' But LaDeidra said 'No, you've got to learn how to do this.'"

Helen struggled with anxiety. She also battled addiction, and grew up the child of an alcoholic who frequently found herself in the role of parent.

"All my life I've overloaded," says Helen, a mother of seven who moved to Milwaukee from Rockford, Illinois, in an unsuccessful

attempt to reconcile with her former husband. "I don't remember being a kid."

She got past all that, made friends with computers, got her own email address, and was on her way to landing a job. A few prospects didn't pan out, but finally she was hired. At the end of November, she became a laundry attendant at the nearby Plaza Hotel. "That job is just like family to me," she says. "We all get along. We all look out for each other."

Just how true that was became apparent when Helen found an apartment. She was happy about that, but she couldn't move in for a few weeks. She didn't know what to do. The owner of the hotel heard about her problem. He let her stay at the hotel. "He said, 'Here's the key. You don't owe us anything,'" she recalls.

Through it all, faith kept her on the path to a secure, independent life. She recalls telling herself, "God is still with you. You got to start looking ahead."

Today, she marks one-year on the job. She's eligible for a 401k. "Life is really good for me now. It really is. Who wouldn't want to make more money? But we make enough to get what we need," she says. "People say, 'God bless you.' I say, 'May God keep blessing me.' He blesses you every time you wake up."

**We are pleased to honor Helen Barnett with our 2017 Client Transformation Award. Helen will be recognized at the Pathway Home, a Fall Celebration of Ending Homelessness event on Thursday, November 9th.**





### Our 15th Anniversary Celebration Continues!

Thank you to our Board of Directors for hosting a wonderful Jazz in the Park picnic in appreciation of our staff and in celebration of our 15th Anniversary!

## Bonnie Patton, a Woman on a Mission

**2017 WOMAN OF THE WORD AWARD WINNER**

We are pleased to honor Bonnie Patton with our 2017 Woman of the Word Award. Bonnie will be recognized at the Pathway Home, a Fall Celebration of Ending Homelessness event on Thursday, November 9th. Visit [CathedralCenter.org](http://CathedralCenter.org) for information or purchase tickets.

Who can say for sure how many meals Bonnie Patton has served up in the past 12 years at the Cathedral Center and other shelters? It's easily over 1,500. Patton, the **2017 Woman of the Word**, is too busy making the meals, and crafting quilts (easily in the hundreds), to consider the numbers.

In retirement, Patton and her husband Bob have made a sweet life out of volunteer work that sweeps across generations. It's built of meals and quilts and more.

Bonnie and her team of quilters at Crossroads Presbyterian Church create beautiful, vibrant quilts for CCI's guests to call their own. Her needlework skills led her to the Smocking Arts Guild of America on both the national and local level. She's made tote bags for residents, too, and bakes decadent desserts each year for the Pathway Home fall fundraiser. She served on the board of the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups, and worked with the Agape after-school program. And she feeds the homeless through Family Promise as well.

Clearly, Bonnie is a woman on a mission. She was chair of the Presbytery Mission Partnership for at least one of the three years she was a member. She served as chair for several of the many years she was on the Crossroads Mission Committee. Bonnie accompanied mission groups to an area of New Orleans that was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. She did most of the meal preparation for the groups while they helped to rebuild lost homes. Here in Milwaukee, Bonnie prepares meals for builders during Habitat for Humanity Build Week for three weeks of each year.

So why does she do all this?  
"I guess I do it because we can," Patton says. When she retired in 1995 from her bookkeeping job at Cedarburg Lumber, she and her husband made a pact: "We decided we would not sit on the couch and wait for 'the big one.' We would do things. There are things that need to be done."



Their work is a matter of faith, too. "It's what we're called to do. And we get a lot out of it. We get a lot of joy," says Patton, who notes that she grew up in West Allis in a family that set a fine example. "My dad didn't have a heck of a lot, but he shared what he had."

She's been fortunate in life, she says, and appreciates that when she encounters women and families at

the Cathedral Center.

"One of the things that strikes me often is the stereotypical view of what homelessness is about... people think that homelessness is kind of a choice, or that people don't make the right decisions. It's that man in a baggy coat with a brown paper bag, begging for something. They don't see the women and children, and they don't see that life gets in the way. It's not always a choice, and even if it is, we all make mistakes sometimes. And maybe it could be any one of us if the right circumstances occurred.

"These are lovely ladies and lovely families struggling with whatever befell them. And if I can help in any way ...," she says. "Plus I love to cook."

One fellow volunteer called Bonnie "a beautiful example of selflessness...giving her heart and soul to those less fortunate." Another said she was just plain "awesome." For her part, Patton says simply this: "It's a great joy. There are so many blessings in it."

### CATHEDRAL CENTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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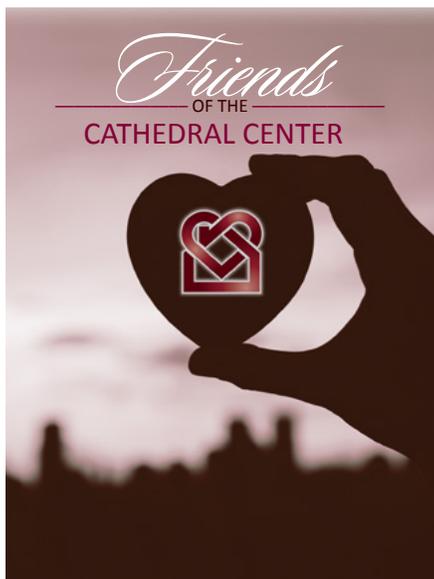
**DOUBLE THE IMPACT OF YOUR DONATION**

Did you know that your gift can be doubled (and sometimes tripled)?! Check to see if your employer offers a Matching Gift program! And if you volunteer with us, your company may also offer a volunteer grant program.





Working to end homelessness, one life at a time. **THE CATHEDRAL CENTER**



## A Little Help from Friends

### FRIENDS GROUP LAUNCHED

The Cathedral Center has many friends – volunteers, board members, staff. Now these dedicated folks have a new way to gather and help the mission to end homelessness.

The new Friends of the Cathedral Center is focused on education, service and resource development. It launched at a kickoff event on August 23rd. There is no fee to join the group.

Dan McCarthy, former president of the CCI board, came up with the idea for the group and headed the committee that formed it. “We expect the Friends of the Cathedral Center to deepen the sense of community between all those working to fulfill CCI’s mission,” he said. “This should spread the story of homelessness in Milwaukee, and the ways that the Cathedral Center are bringing change.”

The Friends of the Cathedral Center will hold its first event on November 29. The topic, time and place are yet to be determined.

Interested in learning more? Watch the Cathedral Center web site for updates – [www.cathedral-center.org](http://www.cathedral-center.org), email Dan McCarthy at [dan.mccarthy@zilber.com](mailto:dan.mccarthy@zilber.com), or call him (414) 274-2546.

## Partnerships Build Strength

FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - DONNA RONGHOLT-MIGAN



We have family and friends...And we have partners and collaborators... This is how we make things happen! 15 years ago, folks from 6 organizations,

private and public, faith based and non-sectarian, saw their hard work pay off when Cathedral Center was incorporated as a private not for profit organization. Cathedral Center believes firmly in our tag line – **partnerships build strength.**

Over the past year we have been able to broaden and strengthen our support of women and families faced with homelessness and housing crises – we watched homelessness end for 225 women and 41 families and celebrated the 16 families and 19 women who were able to avoid the need for a shelter stay altogether! Staff, volunteers, partners and collaborators helped 127 households in shelter and in community increase their income and have access to support from case managers and resources in the community.

Throughout all of our published material, take note of the many people and organizations that have and continue to come together to help us achieve our mission...of providing a safe environment for women and families...while working to end homelessness one life at a time.

As the vision of our founding partners grew and services developed, CCI became interwoven in Milwaukee’s basic needs service delivery system. Throughout this process, we have been helped by numerous partners and collaborators.

From short term counseling support, to staff training, meals, gifts for our guests and even to help write a grant or navigate a housing application, CCI staff do not work alone. Our group of employer partners has grown from 3 to 15, over 1,400 individuals volunteer with CCI annually, 4+ universities place students here for internships and field experiences, individuals and groups respond regularly to needs big and small that we can’t always anticipate. And – we have a new partner in **Friendship House** – enabling us to provide emergency and transitional housing for an additional 4 women and 8 families!

This is community – we help each other and work together with the understanding that the weapon against hate is love and kindness.

**A heartfelt thank you goes out to all of our partners and collaborators who understand the importance of systems thinking, who step outside of the box every day and open their arms to a mutual vision that includes a safe home and food to eat for every single human being. We are no more deserving of a safe place to call home than anyone else.**

**Please join me in thanking our founding partners – who are directly responsible for having the vision that has no doubt saved lives in the provision of critical basic needs services and support:**

- Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist Parish
- The American Red Cross – Milwaukee Chapter
- Columbia St. Mary’s – St. Ben’s Clinic
- Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee
- Catholic Charities
- Milwaukee County – Department of Health & Human Services





The Cathedral Center  
845 North Van Buren Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202  
Cathedral-Center.org

**The Pathway Home –  
A Fall Celebration of Ending Homelessness  
Thursday, November 9, 2017**

Save the date – and plan to join us as we celebrate 15 years of ending homelessness!!

For sponsorship opportunities, tickets or more information, please visit our website at [www.cathedral-center.org/celebration](http://www.cathedral-center.org/celebration) or contact Carol McLain at (414) 831-0394 ext. 2127 or [cmclain@cathedral-center.org](mailto:cmclain@cathedral-center.org).



**HEART** MATTERS



*Working to end homelessness, one life at a time.* **THE CATHEDRAL CENTER**

## Changing Lives – One Spoonful at a Time

**BECOME A CATHEDRAL CENTER VOLUNTEER – FOR INFO CALL ANA TREPTOW AT 414.831.0396 OR VISIT CATHEDRAL-CENTER.ORG.**

Virtually every night of the year, a small army of volunteers mobilizes to feed the guests at the Cathedral Center. The usual head count for the meal: 60. Among them, many small children.

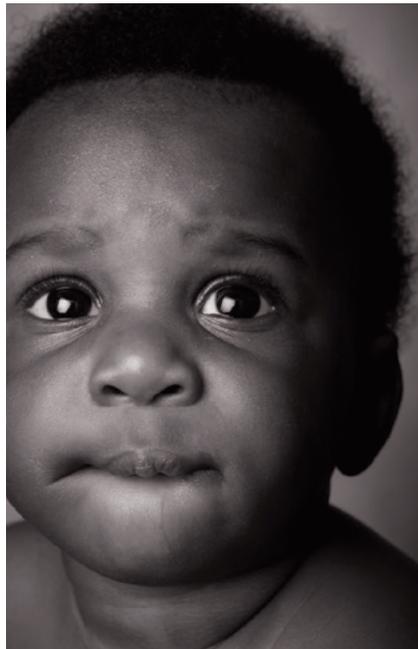
On a warm evening in August, a man who is a new volunteer witnessed one of the kids being fed by his mother.

“It was a woman with the baby, and at least one and maybe two other older children at a table,” he says. “She was giving him spoons of the potato salad...a little bit at a time.”

What the volunteer was struck by was the child’s expression.

“His face reminded me of babies getting their first taste of ice cream -- big eyes, anxious to wrap his mouth around the next bite,” the volunteer said.

“As I was leaving, I told the woman that her baby sure seemed to enjoy the potato salad. She smiled and said she could tell. She seemed delighted to find out he enjoyed it so much.”



### OUR WISH LIST:

#### SHELTER

- Bath Towels
- Face Towels
- Twin Sheets
- Pillows

#### TOILETRIES

- Deodorant
- Toothbrushes
- Soap
- Shampoo
- Conditioner

#### CLOTHING:

- New Socks, Underwear, Pajamas
- New or Gently Used T-shirts, Sweatpants
- Flip Flops
- Work Attire

#### FOOD ITEMS:

- Boxed Cereal
- Sliced Sandwich Bread, Sliced Cheese, Sliced Lunch Meats
- Individual Packets of Cheese & Crackers, Granola Bars
- Juice boxes
- Bottled water – (8 or 16oz)
- Hot Cocoa Packets, Tea Bags, Ground Coffee
- Paper Plates, Plastic Cutlery, Napkins, Paper Lunch Bags, Baggies, Hot/Cold Drinking Cups

**Donations can be dropped off at The Cathedral Center at 845 N. Van Buren Street, Milwaukee, WI 53202 between 9am and 4pm.**