

The Open Door

From the Director

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Fr. Bill Wack, C.S.C.

Dear Friends of André House,

We have begun another new year with a new Core Community. This fine group of people has brought with them a great deal of energy, talent and enthusiasm for the mission of helping God's people in need. They had all been involved with André House before joining the staff, either with their schools over spring break or through the Newman Center at Arizona State University. Every year we welcome a large number of volunteers from various colleges and universities across the country for an extended time in order to assist us and to learn through service. Schools such as St. Louis U, Emmanuel College, King's College, Bridgewater State U, Notre Dame, St. Edward's U, the U of Portland, and others spend part or all of their school breaks with our community.

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I am always amazed at the quality of the "young people" (I'm 39, so I can call them that!) who come to us year after year. Even as we wonder where we are going as a nation and as a world, I find that these people are very willing to learn and grow in this unique setting. André House is (for us all) a classroom of learning. Here we learn how to be patient, how to share our resources, how to forgive and how to ask forgiveness, how to challenge and how to encourage, how to pray and how to put the Gospel into practice. I can think of no better setting in which to grow as a Christian and as a human being.

When we think of André House we naturally think of our guests - the homeless, the poor, the abused and neglected. To be true, they are the reason we all do what we do. But this place is more than that. It includes our donors and benefactors who live out their faith through supporting our work. It encompasses our neighbors and friends in the Phoenix area, and it also includes the Core Community and volunteers who come to learn and to share their gifts.

Thank you for sharing your gifts with us, whether those be your prayers, your contributions, your donations or your encouragement. Together may we all keep learning in this school of the Gospel.

God bless you.

Fr. Bill

Peace



In Loving Memory of Mary Bennett



Since the publication of our last newsletter, the André House community has lost one of our most faithful and beloved members. Mary Bennett – and her husband, Oscar – had been a part of this place nearly since the foundation of this ministry. Parishioners at Holy Spirit Parish, they heard the call to assist with this fledgling effort more than 21 years ago, and they have been extremely active ever since. Mary had been struggling with cancer for the last several years and continued to give herself and her gifts to our guests and community at André House. She died on May 4, 2006, just 2 weeks after she and Oscar celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with a festive Mass and dinner in the backyard of our transitional houses. May God receive this beautiful soul into Heaven, and may Mary inspire us to help one another in love!



The “Real World” -by Mike Santoro

After my first ten weeks on Core at André House I am drawn to the similarity of my work here to the MTV show *The Real World*. For those of you not seventeen, *The Real World* is a television series in which MTV finds total strangers to live and work together. Sounds just like us, right? Other than the facts that we are not on camera, do not live in a luxurious beach house, and are not assembled to entertain the teenage masses, we are the Real World!

My glib comparisons of our lives to an MTV reality show is to point out how important community living is to our experience here at André House. We are five people who have little or no previous knowledge or experience with one another, thrown into one house to work and live together, and I must say, it is my favorite part of my year of service. Before this year I never thought very much about what it might be like to live with my coworkers, and what I had seen of such things were from reality TV shows, but we have about as much in common with reality TV as Brother André has with Howard Stern.

It is at home that we are learning so much about life, people, and each other. Most of us only see one side of the people with which we work. Here

we get to see the ugly truth, which the last time I checked, is where one's depth truly lies. In addition, we also get to have a whole lot of fun; our work is stimulating and encouraging and wonderful, but not always fun. Mom's House (our residence) is always fun. Whether it is the antics of Borat and Ali G, or the antics of Joe P, there is never a dull moment.

And sure there are arguments: who's turn is it to do the dishes? who used my toothpaste? (you know who you are); and who, for the love, keeps banging on the ceiling under my room? But isn't this what families do; see each other at his/her best and worst. For better or for worse, I have a new family, and that makes me happy.

Through the fun and the arguments, the relaxing and the exhaustion, we find love and companionship. Without the support we give each other on a day in day out basis, we could not do what we do. It is through the friendship and love created within our own community that we have the strength to give to others. I will say it once again, it: community is my favorite part!

Andre House: My Second Family

- by Hoa Nguyen

It was so hard saying good-bye to my parents and sister. I hugged them so tight, and I did not want to let them go. It felt like I would never see them again. One tear ran down my face, followed by many other tears. "I'm going to miss you," I said. They replied, "You will be fine. We are only a phone call away." It will not be the same when I am in Arizona. I cannot run to them and talk about my concerns, and feelings, or get a hug and have them tell me that everything will be okay. All my life, I have always counted on my family for guidance and moral support.

I knew it was time for me to start a new chapter in my life; the college and party life was over. It was time for me to grow up, take responsibility and do something good for others. I knew I wanted to do one year of service after college. Ever since I went on Emmanuel College's Alternative Spring Break my sophomore and senior years with my classmates to Phoenix, I knew I wanted to take one year out of my life and help God's people. Andre House definitively showed me the kind of work I wanted to do. I would be interacting with many people and performing many services including serving food, giving out clothes and doing laundry. I remember during my senior year trip, one man came up to me, shook my hand and said, "Thank you. God bless you." It was an amazing feeling to know I made a difference in one person's life.

I knew one year away from home would be very difficult for me since I am so close to my family. I thought I would be very homesick and would miss my family very much. I thought to myself, "Wow! One year away from home is a long time. I would not be home for the holidays." Holidays are very important in my family. We always do everything together. We would decorate the tree, make some holiday cookies and watch good holiday movies. This year will be a little different now since I am in Phoenix, and Andre House will need a lot of help during the holidays, especially Thanksgiving and Christmas. This means I will not be able to fly home and celebrate these holidays with my family. I knew when I came to Arizona that I would be dedicating one year out of my life to serving God's people, and if that meant missing my family and not seeing them as much, then I was willing to do that.

When I came to Phoenix at the end of July, I was very homesick. I felt like I did not have anyone out here to talk or listen to especially to release my stress or anxieties but that changed one week after I arrived at Andre House. It began during our Mexico Retreat when I started getting to know the other staff: Kristen, Conor, Mike, Joe, Duane, Richard and Bill while driving in the blue van. It was a great road trip. We all went swimming, watched the sun set together, had dinner together, shared some laughs, and hung out like a family. We were all very comfortable with each other quickly. I was very surprised because it usually takes me awhile to open up with people, but I was very open with everyone there right away. I might not be that homesick after all, and I was right about that. Ever since we all got back from the retreat, I've felt like I was home again. I am having a great time here in Phoenix, getting along with the Core Members and doing what I like most, helping the homeless. I feel I can talk to the staff and be very comfortable without fear that they will judge me. Friends and families do not judge each other, and I feel that Andre House gives me that kind of opportunity to be myself. No matter how far away my family and friends are, I know I will always have family and friends here in Phoenix; Andre House is my second family.

We Love Spadinner!

by Kristen Masloski

When I was younger, I was never allowed to use the stove, oven, or other cooking equipment. My family was always very worried that I would somehow burn myself, the food, or the entire house down. Once, against my family's better advice, I decided to make cookies and read while they baked. I ended up falling asleep and woke up to my grandmother yelling that whatever was in the oven was burning, badly. Another time, while I was mixing together the ingredients for zucchini bread, my aunt told me I didn't have to be perfectly precise with my measurements. I did not realize that this did not apply to baking soda, and I ended up having one large mess to clean out of the oven when the batter started bubbling out of the pan. Needless to say, I had my fears about coordinating a dinner for 500 to 600 people.

However, after my first few weeks learning the ropes of the Tuesday night spaghetti dinner from my phenomenal regular volunteers, my worry subsided; everyone worked together so well that Tuesday night "spadinner" could be nothing but a success. Even with such patient and hard working volunteers who tolerated my endless questions for weeks, preparing a meal for hundreds of people is not as easy as it may appear. Before coming to Andre House, I had watched several episodes of the Food Network's *Behind the Bash*, and secretly wondered if my Tuesday night soup line would be similar to a multi-million dollar fundraiser. I quickly found out the answer: not exactly.

A typical Tuesday begins bright and early at the St. Mary's Food Bank with Joe and the car-

go van. After the food bank doors open, Joe and I spend about half an hour or so gathering the various vegetables, bread, yogurt, etc. that we need to bring back in order to make spadinner happen. After "shopping" for our items, Joe and I load up the cargo van and drive back to Andre House where we unload the food and place it neatly in the walk-in cooler. Next, I add thirty pounds of spaghetti, broken in half, to each of the two extra large pots filled with boiling water and a little oil. Once the spaghetti is cooked, I strain the sixty cooked pounds of pasta and move it into metal serving containers to cool down. While the spaghetti is cooling, I prepare lunch for anyone who is around that afternoon. After lunch, I clean up the kitchen and lunch areas, bring up the supplies I need from the basement, and begin cutting fifty pounds of onions. Around this time, my volunteers start arriving, and together we cut vegetables, butter bread, organize desserts and yogurts, make salads, and prepare the famous Andre House secret spaghetti sauce in addition to setting up the main dining room, the family dining room, the water area, the serving area, the dishwashing station, and completing other tasks that need to

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Thanksgiving Eve Memorial Service

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On Thanksgiving Eve, Wednesday, November 22nd, the Andre House community of staff, volunteers, and benefactors gather at White Tanks Cemetery in Litchfield Park to remember all of the homeless men and women who have died. This powerful memorial service is a reminder to all of us of the brevity of our life on earth and prepares us to truly give thanks on Thanksgiving Day for the many blessings in our lives.

Every Thursday, deceased homeless and indigent persons for whom no relatives can be found to assume burial responsibilities are laid to rest in the bleak White Tanks Cemetery. Present to honor them are only the members of the chain gang, who provide the labor, and a rotating minister or priest to offer burial prayers. The Andre House staff presides over these services several times a year. More info: call Kristen at 602-255-0580

Thinking Good Thoughts

- by *Conor Kennedy*

During my first few weeks here, I had a hard time describing what role I served at Andre House. A typical phone conversation with my folks at home usually went as follows:

“So, what are you doing out there?”

“Well, today I cleaned bathrooms.”

“You cleaned bathrooms?”

“Yup. I *love* it here.”

I wasn't sure how to describe the Andre House, because, with every experience, I was slowly finding out what it meant to be part of this community. I was eventually awakened to the fact that the essence of our work is our philosophy: Andre House is *The Open Door*.

On paper, we offer time for showers; we open the doors to the clothing closet (a shopping bonanza of donated clothing); we'll take dirty laundry, wash it, and fold it; our phone is available in the office to make appointments or to simply call home and catch up; the soup line routinely serves over four hundred people, six nights a week, without missing a beat; our transitional house offers our guests the much needed time to save and prepare, so that they may restore their independence; we offer shade and ice in the summer and coffee and blankets in the winter. On paper we're scrubbing, mopping, washing and sweeping.

But what do we mean when we call Andre House *The Open Door*? The real commitment—the real *spirit*—of Andre House is being open and present to our guests. Let me offer an example: This past Sunday, Father Duane dropped off some donations from St. Gregory's Parish. As he put his first foot inside the car to go and grab the next wave of donations from St. Greg's, a man desperately approached him, feeling weak, frustrated and ineffectual. While the man shook his fist and professed his frustrations, Father Duane stood calmly and listened, focusing on the man and offering his full attention. Over an hour later, the two men parted ways, both in calmness.



We Love Spadinner!, cont'd from pg 4

- by *Kristen Masloski*

be finished before dinner can begin. There always seems to be so much to do that I do not know how everything gets completed before the doors open at 5:30. With a lot of good help though, everything always gets accomplished smoothly and efficiently, sometimes even a little early.

If someone asked me a year ago if I thought I'd be feeding 500 to 600 people spaghetti every Tuesday night 365 days later, I would probably tell them that I would highly doubt that ever happening, let alone in a year. Yet, here I am, one year later, feeding the hungry. It isn't always an easy job, and sometimes I feel overwhelmed and stressed, but in the end I love the work I am doing and the people I am working with, and I know, no matter how many times I worry about overcooking the spaghetti, that there is nowhere else I would rather be than at spadinner.

- KM

Daily occurrences like these reaffirm what Andre House means to me. The most difficult, essential task that we take on each day at the Hospitality house is to remain in a state of vulnerable openness to the guests without losing faith. We make our daily schedules flexible—to every approaching story, to every approaching need, to every tap on the shoulder—by remaining permanent in our resolve to serve the people genuinely, in pursuit of Jesus' message.

By being an Open Door we are approached by people who ask, ask, ask, ask, ask and most of the time they get. That's a great feeling: to be presented a problem and be able to offer a solution. In fact, it doesn't even feel like work. Of course we get cursed out sometimes when the answer is “No.” But there's no use focusing on that. The doors are going to stay open. And besides, as the people shuffle in and we greet, and greet, and greet them, most of the time we are met with smiles.

- CK



What do we teach and what do they learn, What do they teach us and what do we learn?

- by Joe Parreira

We have all had our own experiences throughout our lives where we have been taught to be both learners and teachers. In one way or another we do it each and every day, in our different ways. Some of those areas we have perhaps had the opportunity to learn and teach might fall under the categories of life, people, and all those other things that come up in the midst of it all that make us who we are and those around us who they are. How much of what we try to teach is really learned and understood and how much of a difference does it make? How much, in return, are we learning from others, and how much of a difference does it make to us and the ways we call "ours"?

In my time here at Andre House I have had many blessed opportunities to teach myself and what I know to others. On the other side of it all I have also had those many moments where I have been additionally blessed with the many opportunities to learn from others and grow stronger in who I am and wish to become. What is learned from Andre House and all its many day to day doings? What do we give out and what is taken forth to live upon for day to day usage? In the end, what can be made sense of and of course, what can we say to make sense and understanding of it all for others to understand who may not see our lives day to day, week to week, month to month, year to year? What examples can I use to perhaps make some sense of it all for me to understand as well as others who do not see or live the day that I may? Here is a start, and it is perhaps very wordy, but don't lose hope; it will have a point, purpose, and conclusion.

Once there came a time when I was assigned to do back gate on a weekly basis, involving just my presence there to de-greet our guests, to say goodbye, see you later, goodnight, and to have some infrequent conversations. To be a gate person you must be attentive to your surroundings and those in the area; I was not, nor was I taught that part of it. It would become something that I learned on my own through doing it. Normally when someone comes to the back "EXIT" door, he/she must present a locker key and be going to visit his/her locker; otherwise we ask that backdoor visitors go around the front "ENTRANCE" door. This is done mainly to avoid confusion or having to think of is this person going here or there, similarly, the middle gate person has to be attentive to his/her surroundings, remind guests coming back in line that they need to go around and get a new ticket, and assist volunteers with questions, concerns, as well as also reminding them of different rules and ways in which we do things every night at André House, especially first timers.

In my first year or first couple of months, I learned the how to's of giving out clothing through our Clothes Closet service. In doing this service which takes place four days a week, we collect our guests IDs, whatever they may be, at typically 10:00 am for 30 people. Of those people lined up that morning, we pass back 30 numbers. Those numbers/people are then called into our clothes room five to ten at a time, and they are then offered the opportunity to get a list of basic items such as: two long sleeves, two short sleeves and one of everything else including a pair of pants, shorts, (for women) a dress and a skirt, etc. Again this was a learning process that took me some time to do correctly and understand what I was doing and how it helped others.

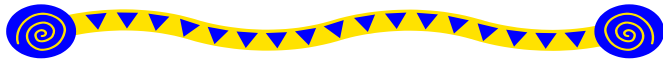
Amidst our many other services provided we also offer showers and the use of our telephones, each one pretty self explanatory. For telephone usage, we open up the front office (Pascente) and with someone sitting at the desk, we allow our guests to come in and make phone calls. Whether it be down the street to work or a friend, across the city to a sister or brother, or to the next state over or east bound, or even to friends or family outside this country, we welcome people in to help them get in touch with whom ever they wish to get in touch with. With this, though, we do keep an eye on the time of usage as to help everyone needing this service get an opportunity to do so. Local calls and long distance calls made with our phone cards to other area codes we allow ten minutes of usage time. As for outside of the country calls we keep it to five minutes, as those calls tend to take up more than the average domestic minute. In addition, showers are done similar to clothing as we ask that guests line up at a particular time of the day (7:00 am in the morning and 1:00 pm in the afternoon) and at that time his/her name is taken and again a number is given back to the guest and that number is then called one at a time for usage of our three individual showers. Similar to making telephone calls, we also ask that the time limit be kept to ten minutes. This also, is to allow time for all others waiting for a shower to be able to make it in and get a shower.

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What do we teach ...cont'd from pg 6
- by Joe Parreira

What are we teaching? We are, in our own little ways, teaching our guests and those who we welcome in each day, that we, too, have limits. To be within those limits, they too, must help us by arriving at the correct times of our services, going around for another meal ticket during dinner time, keeping their phone calls and showers to ten minutes, and understanding that we are trying to help everyone we can. In doing this we hope that our guests learn the importance of being on time, being respectful, this will help us to help them and others. What are we learning? We learn that although we have what looks to be a lot to work with: clothes, shampoo, laundry soap, dinner, and shower water; we, too, must have limits. We must learn to say the word "no." As mentioned earlier, in order to continue going on and be able to serve as many as we do, we must have some time to restock, refresh, and re-ready ourselves and our facility. In doing this we also learn the importance of patience, understanding, and how to be stronger believers in ourselves and in what we do each day. Thus learning about whom *we* are, what *we* are doing, *why we* are doing it, and how God is calling *us* to do it now and in our future as people and *our* worldly society.

- JP



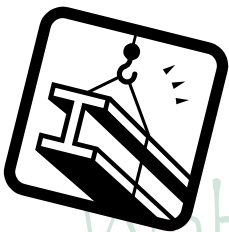
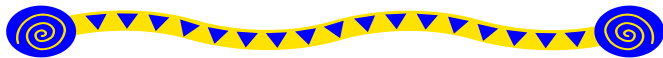
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Please call Ted Dunne at one of following numbers:

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THANKS!



Pardon our mess!



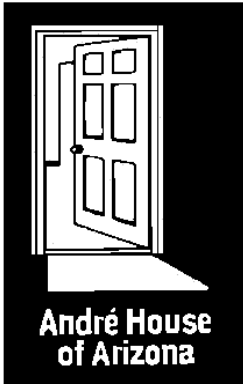
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The Open Door



**Join us every First
Friday for Mass and
a Potluck Supper at
Polk at 6:30 pm**



Andre House Needs List

Fall Focus Items....

- Coffee
- Frozen Whole Turkeys
- Washcloths
- Sleeping Bags
- Blankets
- Jackets
- Men's Jeans (sizes 28-38)
- Men's Tennis Shoes (sizes 8-11)



Thank you & God bless!