

# THE OPEN DOOR

*from the Core Community of André House*

*Fall 2022*

*"... a place where the Kingdom is so close,  
but also not yet ..."*

 **ANDRE HOUSE**



**MAKING GOD KNOWN, LOVED and SERVED**

# André House of Arizona Announces New Executive Director

André House of Arizona ( André House) is pleased to announce that John C. Delaney, II will be joining André House on September 1, 2022 as its next Executive Director and will be the first lay person to serve in this role.

“John is deeply rooted in faith and has a passion for serving people experiencing poverty and homelessness,” said Greg Herrle, André House Board Chair. “He has strong leadership and operational skills with a focus on organizational structure and programming. John shares our mission to make God known, loved and served and strongly believes in the dignity of all who pass through our door.”

Over John’s diverse 20-year career, he has worked for non-profit organizations like the Missionaries of Charity (Mother Theresa’s nuns), for-profit law firms and most recently for the non-profit civil liberties law firm Alliance Defending Freedom. His philosophy has been to identify best business practices from the for-profit sector and adapt them to the needs of non-profit organizations. Pope Francis and the Vatican invited John to participate in several business conferences and events, including being the liaison for Vatican events.

“I am very excited to join the André House team,” said John. “André House has a great mission and a wonderful history of service to the community. It is an honor to serve as the Executive Director. I look forward to collaborating with the staff and volunteers in this great work.”

John & his wife Nicole, a Canon lawyer, have two children and reside in Phoenix where they lived since 2010. John has volunteered with local organizations, including Friends of the Cathedral, and is a Founding Board Member of the Phoenix Chapter of Young Catholic Professionals.

John received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Pennsylvania and a Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome. He attained a Masters of Business Administration degree from Benedictine University at Mesa.

John, welcome to Andre House!



# The Light of Hope

*Jay Minich Interim Director/ Director of Finances and Administration*

“Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies.” (Andy Dufrense in *The Shawshank Redemption*). As I reflect on my past 9 years with André House, and particularly the last 2 years in the aftermath of COVID-19, I realize now more than ever that finding hope, and believing in hope, and channeling hope to our guests and to our larger Andre House community is truly the essence of our mission, and truly what God is calling us to do each and every day.

Walking along the path of homelessness with our guests can be overwhelming, and saddening, and at times frustrating. When I see our Staff, our Core, our Volunteers, and our Donors giving so much of themselves selflessly at each and every dinner, clothing, shower and laundry service, and then we see the number of tents outside our building going up and not down, it’s easy to lose heart, and to start down the road of desolation. I sometimes find myself reflecting on the letters found after Mother Theresa’s passing where she expressed her doubts, and fears and frustrations, and I feel like I understand just a small fraction of what she and her sisters must have felt in their walk with the poorest around her. It is in these moments of doubt and feelings of darkness, that the light of hope, which I know to be the Holy Spirit, begins to shine brightest. It’s a bright smile from our guest Felicia asking me how my little dog Samson is doing after a particularly long day. It’s an offer from our guest Bubba to help carry a donation inside and a heartfelt thank you for helping him get an apartment after so many years outside on the street. It’s a call from a case manager across the street thanking us for the hotel and rent assistance that allowed a mother and 6 children to avoid eviction and homelessness. It’s a new and generous volunteer offering to help cover some of our busiest shifts at just the right time. It’s a new medical partner offering lifesaving testing and treatment to our guests outside. And it’s our Core and our Staff sitting together in prayer and reflecting on Jesus’ words, and then being grateful for one another knowing that we are on this walk together, come what may. And in just an instant, the light of hope restores our energy, our minds, our hearts and our faith in God’s love for us.



As I look inward and reflect on what I am feeling most hopeful about today, it is beginning the next chapter in Andre House’s 38 year history and continuing to offer dignity, compassion, hospitality and hope to all who pass through our door. In this spirit of hopefulness, I am delighted to welcome John Delaney into our André House community as André House’s new Executive Director. John will be the first lay person to serve in this role, and John comes to us with a great set of career and life experiences over the past 20 years which I feel make him especially ready to serve in this role. I ask you to join me in welcoming John to André House, and in sharing with John the hope that each of you bring to our guests and to all of us through your commitment of André House. May God bless you all.

**The most difficult question** I am asked at André House every day is “Why?” Folks ask this countless times, and it can be dangerously easy to brush past the question, giving easy answers.

“Why can’t I have a shower?”

“I’m so sorry, but the list is full.”

“Why can’t I have a shirt?”

“I’m so sorry, but we ran out of your size.”

Other times, the question stops me dead in my tracks.

“My partner stole all my things and now I have nothing. Why is this happening to me?”

**Throughout my time at André House**, I have received countless stories of unimaginable suffering. Often, guests are simply looking for someone to listen to their pain. Other times, they are struggling spiritually or existentially, and they want to figure out why this is happening to them.

It is in these moments where hope feels nonexistent. It can feel disrespectful to even suggest hope because oftentimes, we confuse hope with blind optimism. It can be tempting to use false hope to push away the suffering of others. It can be tempting to simply tell a guest that everything will be okay or to promise them that tomorrow will be better. These cliches might make me feel better, but in reality, I cannot make promises that I cannot keep. Because tomorrow might not be okay.

**True hope is not blind optimism.** True hope sees reality with eyes wide open, ready to receive the fullness of each person who walks through our door. True hope does not push away suffering. When a guest shares their suffering with me and questions, “why?” I try not to jump into question answering mode. Instead of pushing them away with my empty answers, I can join them in their pain and question God alongside them. True hope reminds me that even Christ himself questioned God in the midst of his suffering: “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” True hope is a reminder that when we angrily cry out “why?” God is right there alongside us, crying out with us. True hope is never alone.

**True hope reminds me** that while this suffering is real and true, it does not and it should not have the final say. There are moments at André House when it feels like the darkness has overcome the light. There are moments when it can be tempting to choose this darkness. But, whether I like it or not, glints of light always make it into the day: Felicia will walk into Pascente and give me a hug. My community members will make me laugh at dinner. Jayquan will come in and offer to help with showers. One guest will donate their backpack to someone else who needs it more. The sun comes up the next day, and the rhythm of our life continues. The suffering is never erased, but it does not get the final say.

**Finally, true hope hungers for justice.** True hope continues to ask those with power “why?” Why have our societal safety nets failed so many? Why are there so many folks who have been stripped of the dignity of permanent housing? Why are there so many people who have no option but the streets? True hope is stubborn enough to push for change until a world marked by love, not suffering, is finally born.



“This place is a school of trust and hope.” Midway through my summer at André House, I found myself writing this in my journal. In a place where people’s hopes—for shelter for the night, for stable housing, for restored relationships—are constantly frustrated and sometimes crushed, finding hope, let alone being a person with hope to bring to others, can seem impossible. But, as the guests of André House showed me time and time again, hope is not positive thinking or blind optimism. Instead, hope has a lot to do with the trust that one is loved.

**I learned about hope** above all through André House’s summer faith-sharing group. Each week, gathered around a Psalm, coffee, and donuts, guests shared openly and freely about the suffering and injustice they faced, but they also shared their hopes for their lives. Each guest’s hopes were intensely unique, but often what lay at the core of each guest’s hopes was the same.

**Danny, a guest new to André House this summer**, in particular comes to mind. Danny showed up to faith sharing on a whim. He was new to the Zone, and within just a few months, had lost his mother and brother, suffered a foot condition that made him unable to walk, and found himself needing to stay in overflow shelter. As Danny shared his story, he told it honestly, not glossing over any hard detail, but telling of his loss and affliction openly. However, he also shared that he felt God strangely close precisely in the midst of his suffering, like the Psalmist who says, “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted.” Danny also shared his very concrete hope to be walking again soon, and to slowly begin using a walker. After the meeting, he asked if André House could store his wheelchair while he used his walker throughout the day, and vice versa, and this was arranged.

**Weeks later, I saw Danny again.** He shared that the doctor said he could have done damage to his foot by walking on it prematurely, and that it would now be upwards of six months or a year, instead of six weeks like he had hoped, before he could begin to walk again. While I expected Danny to be discouraged, he was at peace and almost joyful. Danny told me that he was just taking it “one day at a time,” hoping that, in God’s good time, he would walk again, and trusting that he was loved and care for in the present moment. I was

floored by Danny’s hope, which was not optimism, the belief that his circumstances would magically get better because he wished they would. Rather, Danny had the great hope that, as Pope Benedict put it, “I am definitively loved and whatever happens to me—I am awaited by this Love. And so my life is good.” On my very last night, Danny brought this hope to me when, after I shared with him that I was sad to be leaving, he saw to my heart and said, “Yeah, for everything in life there is a season, but sometimes we get too attached and then the Lord has to lead us away. But trust that the Lord is guiding the seasons.”

**The hope that Danny and so many guests** brought with them surprised me, but their lives and actions also opened me up to the same hope—that I am definitively loved as I am, and that amid the suffering and injustice that oppress so many of our guests, each guest is loved beyond all telling as well. By the end of the summer, my one hope was that each guest who walked through our doors would find that great hope that they are loved, in each other and in me.



## Hope rises from every human encounter at André House like yeast rises in a batch of dough.

As I was reflecting on how I've experienced hope at André House, the following verse from the Gospel of Matthew came to mind: *The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and hid in three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened. Mt 13:33*

André House is like the three measures of wheat flour, hope is like the yeast, and the love of every person at André House (guest, volunteer, staff) are the hands and feet that knead the dough until the whole batch is leavened.

Upon learning that I was a new core staff member, a guest gave me some words of advice saying, *be sure you work just as hard with your heart as you do with your hands*. Anyone who knows André House knows our services can entail a lot of physical work (standing on your feet all day, going up and down the stairs multiple times, or lifting dozens of heavy water bottles for instance) but the work we do at André House cannot be boiled down to our physical acts of service alone. André House also entails interior/spiritual work as well, and this is the labor of love that gives rise to hope, leavening the kingdom of heaven into the world.

However, just as the yeast is hid in the three measures of wheat flour, so too can hope feel hidden at a place like André House. This is especially so when the number of those experiencing homelessness increases or when you see the same people struggling with the same things day after day. We may not be able to measure the impact of our work by seeing a decrease in number of those experiencing homelessness, but we can measure the impact of our work by the number of guests who express their love for André House and treat André House like their own home. We can measure the impact of our work by the way volunteers and staff dedicate themselves to a life of service for our guests. We can measure the impact of our work when a guest thanks us for being at André House and doing what we do. We can measure the impact of our work when people feel inspired to donate because they believe in the mission of André House. Finally, we can truly measure the impact of our work when we have learned to love total strangers and have felt them love us back in a way that makes us contemplate if we have ever felt a love like that before.

It is not always easy for me to see something to be hopeful for. Yet, just like I know the yeast is slowly giving rise to the batch of dough, I know that the kingdom of heaven is being leavened every day through what we do at André House. I may not see it rising every day, but when I reflect back on the history of André House, I see just how much it has risen to reflect God's kingdom by the many hands and hearts that have labored for love here.

André House is full of people working hard with their hearts and this gives reason for hope.





## Sunsets - Beauty in the Midst of Darkness

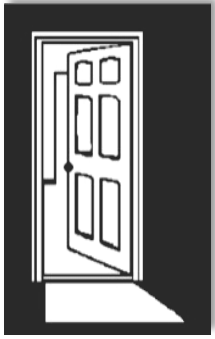
*Leah Moody 2022 Summer Intern*

Throughout my summer at André House, each day was different. Sometimes, they were incredibly joyful. I'd match hats with one of our guests. I'd jam to loud music while cleaning the bathrooms. Some days were full of hugs, laughter, and love, and it would almost feel like heaven. Yet, there were other days that were just so hard, days I would want more than anything to help a guest but knew there was nothing I could do.

Sometimes, I felt utterly unprepared for the work in front of me, and often, I would question how God could allow our friends to suffer so much. It was on both the beautiful days and the hard days, however, that I walked out into the parking lot at the end of the workday to be greeted by a beautiful sunset.

André House caused me to struggle in my faith more than I would like to admit. I thought I would sail through the summer as a shining example of God's love to all I encountered, relying on unshakeable faith to get me through the difficult moments. However, the difficult moments were not few and far between, and I was overtaken by an ever-present, heartbreaking recognition of the poverty and despair that I encountered. Even the good moments were difficult in a sense, for they made me realize that the people we were serving, the people going through astonishingly challenging things, were not just people, but my friends. I looked out at The Zone every night, framed by a magnificent, colorful sky, and I struggled to understand how so much beauty and suffering could coexist.

It was in the beautiful, heartbreaking moments that I was most stretched this summer. Upon reflection, I have begun to realize how, through it all, God was present. I have heard it said that André House is a place where **"the Kingdom is so close, but also not yet"**, which, in my opinion, is a perfect description. So often at André House, I was reminded of the immense brokenness present in this world. Still, it was in all the beauty I encountered - in the hugs, in the laughs, in the celebration of new jobs, in the met needs, and even in the sunsets - that I was overwhelmed by just how close the Kingdom was. In this, I believe, lies our hope. We pray and work that we might see justice today, here as it is in Heaven. Yet, in the beautiful moments - in the sunsets - we are reminded of our confident hope in the eternal Kingdom in which all will be made right.



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