

THE OPEN DOOR

Spring brings new life and new opportunities. The flowers are blooming again, trees are coming out of dormancy, and most importantly, Christians celebrate that Jesus Christ rises from the dead.

Yes, Jesus Christ is truly alive and He still loves us. At Andre House, there are many reminders that God loves us. Recently, a guest needed help with her smartphone. I was able to witness another guest jump right in and help setup the smartphone, and get it operating properly. On another occasion, I witnessed a guest assist at dinner by cleaning up the trays of those who had left them behind. These are little actions of love that speak clearly of our care for one another. "As I have loved you, so you should love one another" (John 13:34).

These are not isolated examples. Everyday, the presence of God is experienced in different ways. This presence brings joy. At Andre House, our mission is to 'make God known, loved, and served'. The hope of new opportunities blooms in our hearts and in our actions. I look forward to ministering alongside of you at Andre House as we bring the joy of God's love to everyone who walks through our doors.

Please pray for Andre House, and most especially for our guests.

**John Delaney,
Executive Director**



**MAKING GOD
KNOWN, LOVED
AND SERVED**

Let each of us meet with a smile, for the smile is the beginning of love.
Mother Teresa

My Journey to Andre House

Michael P. Murphy , Volunteer Services Manager



I am Michael Murphy, and I now have the blessing of serving a great organization, with a great mission and purpose, André House, as its new Volunteer Services Manager. I am a graduate of Thomas Aquinas College in Southern California, and I earned my MBA through the University of Phoenix. With work experience in all three sectors, most of my career has been in the non-profit sector in media and public relations, but with an emphasis on grant management and non-profit development.

As a husband and father of four children – and as a family, we arrived in May of last year, professionally, socially, and spiritually at a limit. In my work, I had felt the restraints of a bureaucratic system that prevented me from carrying out true public service. Socially, our family struggled to achieve a sense of belonging where we were, regularly contending against a feeling of isolation. Spiritually, we had wondered if our current circumstances were as good as life would get, and despite the energy, talents and potential God had given to us all, we must content ourselves with what was.

We turned for support and help from Our Lord through the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary, particularly under the title, Our Lady of Sorrows. This title of Our Lady had a special connection to us, as our prayers would be an appeal to an authority on *sorrows*, to help us through our own. The title also spoke of the promise of membership in a new church and school, both placed under her patronage and located in Phoenix; a place where we had family and perhaps a chance to start again.

I would apply to and interview for several Phoenix-based job opportunities in the ensuing months, and with God's help and Our Lady's intercession, was invited to serve the mission of André House in December. *The world has changed for us now.* We are reunited with family; I am participating in a work that directly serves those most in need, with no barriers to that work; our family has arrived to both a church and a school for our children dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows. Only after I began my employment did I learn an important and relevant fact: the Congregation of Holy Cross, the order under which André House itself was established, has Our Lady of Sorrows as its foundress. *Of all possible opportunities that could have come to us, this one came through the hands of her to whom we entrusted our care.*

Together with the miracle of The Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which we celebrate in this season, my family is enjoying that miracle of God's mercy related above. There is another miracle at work in us here. Now. The miracle is that fountain of mercy that awaits every one of us in showing mercy to others. I am looking forward to getting to know you all; to assisting in this most important work of mercy you engage in for our guests, and witnessing the miracles He brings into your life. May God bless you and Mary keep you.



ANDRE HOUSE



COMMUNITY OF THE COMING KINGDOM FATHER BRIAN KENNEDY



Just over a decade ago, when I was still a seminarian in the Congregation of Holy Cross, I was sent at Andre House for a two-month summer assignment. The experience was an important one in my formation for the religious life and the priesthood. My time here helped to realize in me what Vatican II proclaims of us all, that “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ” (*Gaudium et spes*). I saw this solidarity expressed in the shared laughter and conversation shared between our guests and volunteers. I also experienced at Andre House an important “disorientation,” as sisters and brothers in my peripheral vision suddenly became the center of my attention.

Now as I return to Andre House as a priest and chaplain, I am encouraged by this line from the Constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross: “wherever through its superiors the congregation sends us we go as educators in the faith to those whose lot we share, supporting men and women of grace and goodwill everywhere in their efforts to form communities of the coming kingdom.” God’s grace and our goodwill, these are the pillars on which Andre House stands. I look forward to meeting and working with many of you. And on behalf of the entire Congregation of Holy Cross I would like to thank you for all that you do to make Andre House a loving and hopeful community of the coming kingdom of God.

Thoughts from the core

There is so much to learn each day here at Andre House. Our Core team is a wealth of knowledge. Drawing from that fount of wisdom, I reached out to the core team to ask them about their experience here over the year(s). This is what I've discovered.

John Delaney (JD): How long have you been at Andre House?

Karlee Bradley (KB): I've been at Andre House since July of 2020. So, this coming July will be 3 years that I've been on the core staff.

Andrew Cece (AC): I've been volunteering since summer of 2019 and joined the Core Staff in January of 2020

Ruby Briones (RB): 1 1/2 years

Grant Gaylord (GG): I joined the core staff in January of this year, and before that I was a regular volunteer during 2022. I started volunteering at Andre House back in 2016 as a student at Brophy College Preparatory.



JD: What do you wish you had known before coming to Andre House?

KB: I don't think there's anything that I wish I knew before coming to Andre House. Part of the beauty of Andre House is that every day is different and unexpected things happen all of the time. Some of those things are hilarious, and some of those things are emotionally taxing. But experiencing all of it and learning so many lessons and stories along the way is part of the Andre House experience.

AC: Honestly, there isn't anything I wish I would have known. To be clear, I am not suggesting that I knew it all before coming here...far from it. In fact, it feels like I could spend a lifetime here, and still have lots to learn. When I came to Andre House, I held many misconceptions I needed to "unlearn" and many valuable lessons ahead of me, but I honestly don't believe I could've grasped or appreciated those lessons the way that I do without having learned them through my own first-person experience at Andre House.

GG: I wish I would've known that the Andre House would play just as big of a part in helping my life as it helps the guests. We often view service as a bunch of people doing 'okay' helping out those doing 'not okay', but I don't think that's true anymore. We are called to give selflessly, yet for some reason it's precisely through living for the sake of others that we learn the most about ourselves. I also would've liked to know that to some guests you will become a walking vending machine. Nutter Butters weren't what I envisioned when I heard 'feed the hungry', but you gotta give something!

RB: I don't think I would want to know anymore than I knew at the time. This created room for growth in many areas of my life. I would only tell my past self to not be too worried about knowing stuff and tell her to be gentle with herself in the ways she'll change and grow.



Thoughts from the core continued



JD: What is the biggest/greatest lesson or experience you have had so far here at Andre House?

Veronica Ramirez: It is a simple one: my presence makes a bigger impact on the world than I can ever know. I don't mean this in a selfish way. It's just that, at Andre House, we enter into the lives of so many people who could easily have passed through the world as complete strangers to us. Instead, we are given the privilege to be part of people's lives at some of their most critical and vulnerable moments. It is a gift to be treasured for sure, and it is one that constantly reminds me why God created me and you - to share the truth of God's love with others.

Our showing up each day to Andre House communicates to our guests unspoken words of love and care. I've had many guests come up and thank me for just being at Andre House and it is always such an overwhelming experience. "But I didn't really do anything" I think to myself. But that's not the point. The fact is that my presence was somehow able to lift someone's heart in gratitude, not just to me, but ultimately to God. I believe that in these moments God somehow uses me to make Christ present in the world. It remains a mystery to me, but it is one I have participated in this past year on Core and it has filled me with gratitude for the power my life holds when given to God.

KB: I think the biggest thing I've learned is that it's so easy to become homeless, and it can be so extremely hard to escape it. There are so many stories of people becoming homeless because they got a divorce or broke up with their ex or had an important family member die. Do you have a support system who will let you stay with them if your house burns down or you're evicted? Would you even want to stay with them if you're lucky enough to have someone? So many people are falling victim to the rising cost of living, that even I wonder if I can afford a place to live once I leave Andre House. If you were sleeping on the street on the coldest night of the year or the hottest night of the year or the wettest night or snowiest, how would you sleep at night, or would you even be able to? Sometimes it can feel like drugs are the only thing that can help numb the noise or the thoughts in your head. And then you can get stuck. You develop an addiction, if you didn't already have one. Your mental health starts to decline, and your physical health. You start to lose hope, especially when you don't qualify for a housing voucher or there's no room in the shelter that you've heard is so dangerous or you're too scared to ask for help or don't even know where to go or who to ask. So how do you get out? Outsiders can assume that people choose to stay on the streets, but what they don't realize is that people really just want a safe place to sleep and affordable housing and to escape it.

AC: Like many people who join the core staff, I come from a results-oriented background. In my life as an executive, I believed in the process of setting specific goals and working my tail off to achieve those goals. I measured myself almost entirely on whether I achieved the results that I had set my sights on. I believe this to be a very typical model for gauging performance in our society and it is one that I have completely thrown out the window while on Core Staff at Andre House. The truth is that our guests face some incredible challenges, and though I will always try to help them to the best of my abilities, I have come to recognize and accept my limited ability to predict or guarantee outcomes in their lives. As bleak as that may sound, this reality has given way to a new model that governs my behavior which I hope to carry with me forever. The new model is to do the right thing removed from what the result will be. I have learned to let go of any transactional expectations for what "return on investment" my actions would yield. Instead, I just try to focus on doing what feels right and loving because that is the type of energy I believe in putting into this world.

RB: So many lessons. But the first one that stands out is to love now! I've learned I shouldn't wait to express and show love. Our lives are so uncertain, so we have to love one another with urgency. Our friends on the street need someone to love them and it's been a gift to be in a place where we get to love people many will never get the chance to meet. We were created to love and be loved so no need to wait! The irony is, I've discovered, that loving with urgency lies in slowing down and being as present as we can to those around us. It lies in doing little things with great love and stopping to be intentional with our time.

GG: The greatest lesson I've learned is that life is so much better when it isn't about 'you'. I always try to make things about me, from trying to grab the attention of a room to grasping at material comforts. However, life seems to work in a way where true satisfaction comes only from willing the good of others, for others. There's no better place to learn that lesson than at the Andre House, where the purpose of being here is never just for yourself.

JD: Do you have any advice for future core?

KB: Don't lose hope. Sometimes it can feel like you're not doing enough or like things will never get better for people after trying so many times, but you can't lose hope. Our guests need us to stay positive for them and to keep fighting for them always. We can never lose hope.

RB: I would offer to treasure the times you clean bathrooms. This is a truly a special space where you get to spend time with your fellow core members, listen to bangers while doing something for our guests that goes unseen by them. Post-dinner bathroom clean up is one of the things I will miss the most! So, I would offer incoming core to be treasure the gift of cleaning bathrooms with your community members.

AC: One word: GRACE.

Give grace to our guests. In my experience this is something you will likely come here prepared to do on day one and that is truly wonderful. God knows our guests deserve it. Thanks in advance for all the grace you will show our guests this year!

Give grace to your coworkers and roommates. Living & working with people is not easy and the challenges can be amplified by the stressful nature of the work we do here at Andre' House. Try to remember that we all come at it from different angles and with different life experiences and we're all doing our best. I promise you will never regret the moments that you choose to respond gracefully to those in your community.

Most importantly, show yourself more grace than you ever have before. You would not be here if you weren't truly amazing! Having said that, you are about to embark on a year that will present some sizable challenges that can be physically, emotionally, and mentally taxing for even the most amazing humans. The great news is that these challenges will offer you nearly unparalleled opportunities for growth...but sometimes that growth is hard to recognize in the moment. Trust the process and be gentle with yourself. You are worthy of unlimited grace! In my opinion, the grace you show yourself and the grace you accept from others will be the greatest weapons you will have for combating the challenges presented by a year of service at Andre House!

P.S. Remember to laugh a lot!!!

GG: To my fellow core staff, take this precious opportunity as a chance to tune out the noise of the outside world and focus exclusively on making God known loved and served. Words can't describe how liberating it feels to put away your phone and live in the moment with your guests and fellow staff members. Make Andre House the center of your world, because when your problems and worries are what's in front of you instead of what's online, you gain a sense of mental clarity and stability that makes your time here all the more enriching.

Core Continued...

JD: Has your relationship with God changed as a result of your time at Andre House?

GG: It's clear to me that God used the Andre House to bring me back to him. In the summer of 2022, I had graduated from a college in Singapore and expected to begin a corporate life overseas for years to come. I had no faith then and was only focused on myself. As my work visa applications were being dragged out and denied by the Singaporean government, I was waiting around in Arizona with no direction or meaning in my life. I had a thought pop up in my head saying 'Maybe I should go to the Andre House, that place I helped out in high school' and signed up for a meal service slot since I had nothing better to do. One meal service turned into two, then once a week, then multiple times a week. There would be moments where it felt like time stopped and I'd feel this outpouring of love to the people around me. Eventually, another thought popped into my head saying 'Maybe I should go to Mass'.

I was confirmed to the Catholic Church this Easter, and now my faith is the primary focus of my life. So much has changed in the course of a year. Ask Saint Andre to pray for you or someone you love, because he must've done something to turn my life in such a wonderful direction.

KB: I've been questioning my faith a lot, especially since the wrongdoings of the priest who was our previous executive director. It's harder for me to attend mass or participate in intentional prayer. How does God allow there to be so many people who walk past the person struggling on the sidewalk and judge them? How does the Zone keep growing and growing and the number of people experiencing homelessness keep growing and growing, yet the people who are the richest in the world and choose to quote Bible passages only become richer and richer? How can this "one nation under God" have such a high rate of homelessness with not enough people working together in an effort to eliminate it? It just makes no sense to me. To me it seems like people are so quick to cast the first stone at people who come out as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, or people who explain their reasonings for physically needing an abortion, or people who get a divorce to end their abusive relationship, but they fail to do anything to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to give shelter to the homeless, to visit the sick, to visit the imprisoned, or to bury the dead. Instead, people in those categories and who are judged are being punished, imprisoned, killed. It just makes no sense to me.

RB: My relationship with God has been challenged on a very deep level. To call my time here spiritual desert would be an understatement. Yet in the midst of this season of desolation, there is no denying the presence of God and his love in this place. I've witnessed extraordinary things during my time here where I see, feel and experience someone greater than myself. These moments are gifts I hold in a special place in my heart.



Core continued

JD: What advice do you have for volunteers?

GG: To our beloved volunteers, I'd encourage you to always go one step past your comfort zone each time you are here with us. Maybe that means sparking up a conversation with a guest, or trying a slightly more difficult task for the evening service. When we put aside the mental barriers we create for ourselves, we give God room to transform us in new ways. And when we aren't stuck trying to feel 'comfortable', we are gifted a chance to share in the discomfort of those we serve.

Also, don't give out an entire butterball turkey just because someone asks!!

KB: Don't just hide behind the comfort of our kitchen. Our guests have names—ask for them. Our guests have stories—hear them. Our guests have personalities—get to know them. You don't know about the problem of homelessness without knowing people who are experiencing it. And keep spreading the word about Andre House. We are always searching for more volunteers to be present to our guests, and we rely on y'all to help us out and help our guests out.

RB: Homelessness is a very complicated issue that doesn't have a single solution. A lot of volunteers often ask what they can do outside of Andre House to help our friends living on the street. I would offer our volunteers to allow their lives to be interrupted. I would offer to not be afraid to pull over or stop and spend some time with someone they see on the street. Simply asking their name and making a human connection is a perfect starting place.



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