

The Open Door

from the Core Community of André House

Winter 2022



*“Oh Come
Let Us
Adore
Him...”*

*Wishing you a
Bright Christmas
and a
Blessed Holiday
Season*

*your
André House Family*

There is an old saying: “Trust the past to the mercy of God, the present to His love, and the future to His providence.”

The Spring/Summer 2022 edition of The Open Door began with a statement from the Board of Directors for André House describing the removal of our previous Executive Director and Priest for engaging in sexual misconduct with an adult member of the André House community. First and foremost, our heartfelt thoughts and prayers continue to go out to the victim. In this article, I would like to touch on how André House has further responded to this situation, and what André House will do to prevent such further actions from occurring in the future.

André House’s Response. When the allegation of misconduct was brought forth, our former Executive Director and Priest was immediately removed from his position at André House. After an internal investigation conducted by an outside counsel appointed by the Congregation of Holy Cross substantiated the claim, he was also removed from his priestly ministry. As noted in our summer newsletter, our Board amended the by-laws to separate the Executive Director and Board Chair roles, elected Greg Herrle as our first lay Board Chair, began a search for the lay Executive Director role which I now serve in, began to review our internal policies and procedures around employee standards of conduct, and provided opportunities for our staff to access outside counseling for emotional and spiritual support.

Over the past 4 months, we have also taken the following actions to prevent this type of misconduct from occurring again:

In July, a full Employee Handbook with a detailed Sexual Harassment and Reporting procedure, a Whistleblower procedure, a Complaint reporting procedure, and a Discipline and Standards of Conduct section was issued to all employees and put into effect after review and approval by our Board.

In August, André House began a six part series of trainings mandatory for all staff, beginning with sexual harassment and misconduct training and including modules on respectful workplace conduct, trauma informed care, diversity, equity and inclusion, among others. This training was augmented in October, with a special training for all in a supervisory capacity. We will continue to hold these training sessions on a regular basis for future Core Staff and employees, and ensure this becomes an essential part of our culture and mission.

In September, I began holding individual meetings with all André House staff members to hear their ideas, concerns and recommendations for the future of André House.

André House’s Future. The opportunity for improvement is always welcome. In fact, our response is not static. We will continue to review, recommend, and incorporate the latest best practices into our employment policies and procedures. There are also additional areas we have identified for potential growth in this area, such as improving our onboarding processes, and recommitting ourselves to our mission and core values in how we serve our guests and interact with one another. Lastly, we can reinforce the checks and balances we have put in place to hold us accountable in carrying out our mission.

As we engage the present situation, we strive to do so as children of a loving God. We ask forgiveness for our shortcomings, and we hope for a brighter future so that, at André House, we may make God known, loved, and served by feeding, clothing, and comforting the most vulnerable among us, offering dignity and hospitality to ALL who pass through our door.

“We must not repeat the sins and the errors of the past. We must resolve now to live as nobly and as justly as possible.” – [Pope Francis](#).

John C. Delaney Executive Director, André House

Welcome Home

John C. Delaney

André House Executive Director

"Welcome to André House." During my first few months here, I have heard this phrase regularly from guests, volunteers, and team members. In fact, I still feel very welcome every day, and I try to extend that same sense of welcome to all who come through our doors.

Our guests are the first people to welcome me daily, and the last people I see at the end of the day. It is a great reminder of the reason we are here. They keep the mission front and center for me.

The volunteers made me feel at home immediately and began showing me the right way to prepare the evening meal. I am still struggling to remember names, since there are many volunteers, but I appreciate everyone's patience.

It is a privilege to serve alongside our staff, who welcomed me right away. Change is not always easy. As a team, we are working together to best serve our guests, and implement the best practices that will help keep André House a special place of welcome.

As a community, we strive to keep André House as a home. A home to those who are unsheltered. A home to those who are in need. As I look upon my life, home has always been the place that I went to when I was hungry. And I was fed. Home was the place that I found myself being clothed. Home was the place that I found love and warmth. Here at André House, our guests are fed, clothed, and surrounded with the warmth of love and protection. To them, André House is home.

We thank you for your continued support. Your support has kept our guests, fed, loved, clothed. As we look forward to a year of inflation increased expenses and greater numbers of individuals who will come through our doors for sustenance, we ask you, our André House community, to consider a year end contribution. A contribution that will help us continue to provide a place called home. And most important of all, we ask you for your prayers. Prayers for all who come through our doors.

Allow me to welcome you (again) to André House. This truly is a House of Hospitality. Good things are happening here.

Sincerely,
John



ANDRE HOUSE - PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Forgiveness: A Little Glimpse of Heaven

Jay Minich

André House Director of Finance and Administration

With Christmas upon us, our traditional Catholic imagery is around new life, rebirth, and a sense of excitement and joy as we celebrate Jesus' entry into our world, with all of the hope and fulfillment that brings to all of us. As I reflect on my past 9 years with André House, serving alongside our brothers and sisters living on the streets of Phoenix, I find myself more aware than ever before that in order for us to fully enter into the new life that Christmas promises, we first must both give, and receive forgiveness. And I now can see that the good Lord's forgiveness is really the cornerstone of our André House mission.

One of the trends I have been saddened by over these past 9 years is how many of our dear guests express a sense of guilt, and even shame, that they have fallen into homelessness when they tell me their stories. It is hard enough for any of us to endure the conditions of the streets and shelters. To then add the weight of guilt, and a sense of failure to these survival conditions creates an unbearably heavy cross to carry. When I first came to André House in 2013, I had many pre-conceived notions of why men and women become homeless. I believed that most individuals experiencing homelessness suffer from serious mental illness and perpetual addictions to drugs and alcohol, as are the most common beliefs and assumptions. However, over the years as I looked at the data, and simply observed the faces of our friends at dinner each night while passing out and taking tickets, it became clear to me that only about 20 - 25% of our homeless guests actually struggle with severe mental illness and addiction. And while these dear friends deserve a special kind of loving support and compassion, I realized that most of our guests become homeless due to economic/financial reasons, because their closest relationships have been damaged, or some combination of both of these.

As I began to realize that these two simple and related reasons are causing so many of God's children to become homeless, my heart sank further when I would hear our guests blame themselves for their predicament. I've heard countless "if only I had.....", and "maybe I should have", and "what did I do wrong". To me, this is the heaviest and hardest cry of the poor.

While the social, economic and political solutions to ending homelessness in our world may be complex, at the personal level, I believe the answer is simple. We need to offer forgiveness freely and fully, without reservation, just as Jesus showed us how to do so many times in the Gospels. We need to forgive our homeless friends for some of the actions they take, or are forced to take, to survive on the streets. We need to forgive the minority of our guests who fall into the trials of addiction and help them find their path to recovery. We need to forgive our leaders, for perhaps overlooking so many of the poorest among us living in the shadows. And we need to help our friends on the streets to forgive themselves, and to hand their blames, burdens and heavy crosses over to Jesus, who is there with open arms offering them healing, peace and love.

As I begin my 10th year at André House, when I look at that at our image of the Open Door, I now recognize the light of the good Lord's forgiveness shining through, inviting ALL of us in, and giving us all a little glimpse of heaven.

Merry Christmas everyone. May God bless you all,
Jay



And There Is Something Greater Here

Debbie Shane

André House Director of Services and Facilities



Recently we read in the Gospel about the Pharisees and the scribes wanting a sign from Jesus (Matthew 12:38-42). As Jesus is in their midst, He reminds them of Jonah and Solomon – “there is something greater than Jonah here”, “there is something greater than Solomon here.”

As I heard this Gospel, I thought about how many of our community often say there is something special here at André House. Yes, of course, I told myself a bit matter of factly. Any one of us who is a part of this ministry believe we are the hands and feet of Christ. We are Christ to each other. It seems almost easy to say this.

I do not need a sign; I believe Christ is standing in front of me, sitting next to me, holding my hand, yelling at me from the street. I believe ... God with us. God with us! I can say it but how do I explain what it means to me. How do I explain what it means to me to **live** God with us,

to begin to **live** in the fullness of the Kingdom of God?

I sit on the sidewalk in front of our parking lot. I pray. I am present to all the sorrows and joys around me and within me. I am vulnerable. I cry, silently. I feel the fullness of the Kingdom touching my soul.

My journey is a continual conversion. I have moved my definition of community beyond the confines of our gate. I have gone beyond not averting my eyes to seeking out others' eyes. With the grace of God, I have glimpsed and felt a very infinitesimal part of God's love as I stand in our parking lot. I am uncomfortably awestruck and overwhelmed with a feeling of belonging here, a place where there is something greater, a place of God with us.

I pray that I continue to empty myself and yearn for the unsettledness to live fully God with us – Emmanuel!

I pray the same for you.



The New Innkeepers

Megan McCormick former André House Core Staff 2015-17

"I'm sorry, there's no room for you here," says the innkeeper to Mary and Joseph as they enter into Bethlehem. "No, we cannot take you," says another. Dejected, fatigued, and surely quite dirty, the two do not know what to do. They are at the end of their rope. Ultimately, Mary and Joseph decide to take refuge in an empty, abandoned manger, and Jesus, King of Heaven and Earth, enters the world in abject poverty.

Jesus is homeless. Jesus is a transient, a refugee. He is without a house, in a land that is foreign to Mary and Joseph's own homeland. Would you blame Mary and Joseph for not having had a bed for Jesus to sleep in at night? Would you blame Mary and Joseph for their filth and grime? Would you blame Mary and Joseph for their physical and psychological exhaustion upon just having completed a very long journey? Surely, Mary and Joseph could have planned in advance for their trip to Bethlehem. Surely, they could have left earlier, could they not? It's not Jesus's fault He had to be born in a manger. And it's not the innkeepers' fault they have no more room. So Mary and Joseph must be to blame for the Son of God's entering the world as a sign and victim of poverty, right?

Unless, of course, homelessness is not something for which an individual is responsible. Unless homelessness is not deserving of blame, at all. If only we all actually had that mindset in reality, and each believed that a person experiencing chronic homelessness is not to blame for their present condition. Surely, we are all sorry that poverty exists in this world. We are all in some way sorry for the homeless. But there is a difference between saying we're sorry and acting with remorse. The innkeepers said they were sorry that Mary and Joseph couldn't stay the night, but they did not act with remorse over the fact that Mary and Joseph did not have a place to sleep, and that they would suffer. It is when we are truly sorry for the homeless, that we stop saying we're sorry for their sufferings, we stop blaming them for their homelessness, and the act of remorse has begun.

André House is a hospitality center for the homeless and transient populations of Phoenix. We are the new innkeepers who don't say we're "sorry," but instead, attempt to act with remorse for the conditions of poverty our guests must face on a daily basis. By providing dinners for our guests Saturday through Thursday; by offering services such as showers, laundry, and a clothing closet; and by being present for our guests as we sit as porters and act as gatekeepers in the André House parking lot, we intentionally put ourselves in the position of being and interacting with those whose lives most genuinely reflect the trials and tribulations of the Holy Family on that most blessed night that Jesus Christ was born.

(This reflection is a reprint from our 2015 Winter Open Door)



FRITZ EICHENBERG © 1952

Seeds of Hope

Elizabeth Wunsch André House Director of Volunteer Engagement and Communications

One month after the start of Covid shutdowns.

The parking lot at André House is bare bones. Concrete, concrete, concrete with metal beams supporting solar structures and heavy block walls encasing it. Metal benches, railings, stainless sinks and fountains all allowing sustainability.

And then there was the tomato plant. It was discovered when someone was able to pause for a second and see.

How did it get there? Whose sandwich contained a thick tomato that spit out seed filled juice when chomped down upon? Were there tomatoes growing across the street in the St. Vincent de Paul Garden? Did the wind inadvertently whip up and blow a seed that had been given off by a tomato that had dropped to the ground and slowly gave up its essence? Or did Tuesday Spaghetti night Core staff leader, Grace, plant it lovingly as to assure we had tomatoes to make sauce with?

A seed is planted. And like the tomato plant in our parking lot, that grew from a seed against all odds, hope grows. Signs of renewal emerge. Signs of a life to come that may look different. Something that defies all the odds as it still grows. And soon again it will thrive.

I see our guests this way. Somehow, they landed here. I watch as they defy all odds and with a little love and hope they grow in strength and move into a new and better future. They have been doing this for a long time. The circumstances that surrounded all of us during covid and now, may not seem quite as daunting to them. They live in "survive."

This is my sixth and final year at André House. I will be retiring at the end of December. Throughout these years there has always been one constant. Everyone finds themselves at André House for a reason, many times unknown. Guests, volunteers, staff, visitors. There is something at André House that awakens, shines a light upon or plants a seed within the being of all who walk through our open door. Something that stirs the soul. Exposes. Heals.

I have watched as friendships were formed, bonds were created between communities and compassion flowed freely. I have witnessed incredible healings within individuals who had no idea they were broken. I witnessed the Holy Spirit as it flowed through volunteer to guest, guest to volunteer, creating a beautiful community. A community that flows in love and the present. A community that embraces each individual where they are in each present moment.

It has been my honor to bear witness to the miracles of André House. It has been my honor to share these stories as the unconventional Editor of The Open Door. And most of all, it has been a privilege to greet and engage with all our wonderful volunteers and our guests who continually grace André House with their hearts.

The holidays are a season of sharing. A time of sustenance. A time to continue to plant seeds of hope. Currently there are approximately 1000 individuals who are living in tents surrounding André House. And the number keeps growing. We ask for your help. Help us as we continue to provide meals and services to so many who are in need. Help plant seeds of light and hope. Consider a holiday gift to André House. Help us continue making God Know, Loved and Served.

A tomato grows.

Elizabeth Wunsch

Director of Volunteer Engagement and Communications





André House
PO Box 2014
Phoenix, AZ 85001
Phone: 602-255-0580
www.andrehouse.org
www.andrehouse.volunteerhub.com

Non-Profit Org
US Postage
Paid
Phoenix, AZ
Permit No. 2751

CORE COMMUNITY 2022

Karlee Bradley
Ruby Briones
Andrew Cece
Veronica Ramirez

BOARD of DIRECTORS

Megan Agliano
Br. Richard Armstrong, C.S.C.
Tom Crotty
Kathleen Downey
Mike Hanosh
Greg Herrle
Todd Kallmyer
Liz Odhner
Rev. William M. Lies, C.S.C.
Rev. Brendon McAleer, C.S.C.
Mike Smith

STAFF

Mary Allen
Mark Cordova
Derek Dare
Austin Davis
Sue Edmonds
Theresa Falzone
Taylor Hoffer
David Iloh
Matias Miramontes
Darrell Nails
Jay Minich
Wilfredo Morales
Debbie Shane
Chris Smith
Leah Terry
Elizabeth Wunsch

**DONATE NOW AND APPLY TO YOUR
2022 STATE TAX REFUND!**



If you file taxes in the state of Arizona, your donations to André House may qualify for a tax credit under the **AZ Charitable Tax Credit**. This dollar for dollar credit allows single filers to get up to **\$400** and joint/married filers up to **\$800** in credit on Arizona state taxes. Consult your tax advisor for advice specific to your tax situation. When claiming the credit, make sure you fill out form 321 and reference André House QCO number **20467**.

**To make a donation to André House visit www.andrehouse.org/donate
André House PO Box 2014 Phoenix, AZ 85001**