

MESH Tidings

NEWSLETTER of MONTCLAIR EMERGENCY SERVICES for HOPE

Donations Always Appreciated!

Please call 917-751-2176 if you'd like to help by sponsoring part of a meal.

To learn more about MESH or to make a monetary donation visit www.meshmontclair.org



MESH CAFÉ

Until further notice, due to the Coronavirus outbreak, the MESH Café will be serving only **GRAB 'N GO** meals from the Salvation Army building at 15 Trinity Place in downtown Montclair. 4:00 PM TO 5:30PM Nightly from Monday to Saturday.

Thanks To All!

*A reflection from our board president,
The Rev. Canon Wade Renn*



My dear friends of MESH,

I would like to thank our Executive Director, Dr. Gwen Parker-Ames, her committed and caring staff, our faith partners and supporters for providing essential services for those who look to MESH for help. Our kudos to them are especially deserved for their intrepid labors under the very daunting challenges of the pandemic and the adverse winter weather. Despite these difficult conditions they provided overnight respite, daily Grab 'n' Go meals and daytime drop-in warming centers. On behalf of the guests who were served and on behalf of the Board, a very heartfelt thank you to one and all for making all of these ministries possible.

The approaching summer presents its own challenges of dangerous heat and humidity. In the past, people without air conditioning have used the library and other public facilities as places to keep cool. It is uncertain if these cool locations will be available this summer. If not, I pose the question to all of the people in our caring community, "What can we do to help?"

With gratitude to all,

The Rev. Canon Wade Renn
President

Reflections of the Christ Church MESH Volunteers

Since December, 2020, Christ Church—across the street from the Grab-n-Go site at the Salvation Army—has welcomed MESH guests for a sit-down meal when they normally served—the second Saturday, serving with Grace Church, and the fourth Friday of each month and Thursdays in February and March. Sandra Bugg, Director of Church Life at Christ Church, says, "We feel blessed and honored to be among the Houses of Worship serving those in need of food support. Many of our Christ Church cooks are skilled in the culinary arts and MESH provides an outlet for them to serve. Here are some responses gathered from some of our long time volunteers":

"Serving as a volunteer for MESH at Christ Church, has been a privilege and a reward for me. It has given me the opportunity to fellowship with a diverse group of people that often go unnoticed in communities. These individuals have amazing backgrounds, interesting stories, and are loving and giving despite their circumstances. I am thankful for the opportunity to serve God's children, display God's unconditional love, and to be a part of the story being written."

"It is a privilege and an honor to be one of the volunteers to serve our MESH guests. I look forward to serving such amazing people. I feel Shirley Chisholm said it best, 'Service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living on this earth. It is the very purpose of life, and not something you do in your spare time.' To whom much is given, much is required."

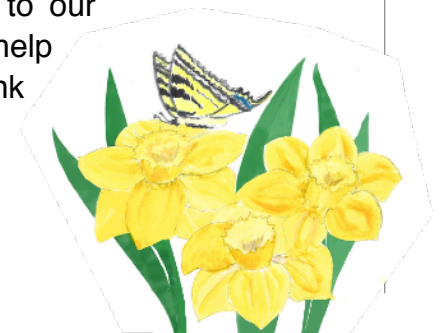
"Serving at MESH has been a very humbling yet rewarding experience. We get to not only meet heartfelt basic needs of people but also give words of encouragement and affirmation."

"I enjoy serving at MESH. It allows me to truly understand the human condition and it's a constant reminder that each of us has needs. But God allows us to care for each other and if I can help in anyway, I hope it encourages others to do the same."

Longtime resident of Montclair, and certified Integrative Nutrition Health Coach, MESH chef at Christ Church, whose goal is to always use healthy, fresh nutritious ingredients when cooking for our MESH guests, offered her heartfelt quote:

"It is a pleasure to be a part of the Christ Church team that cooks and serves our MESH guests. I love how the team greets these men and women with friendliness and warmth and a full hot meal. Seeing the smiles and a sense of relief on their faces, as they are able to just sit, relax and enjoy their meal in a warm, safe place brings joy to our hearts. We pray that serving in this way honors God's request to help those in need. More than anything else, it reminds us daily to thank Him for his many blessings in our lives."

Thanks to all our Volunteers!





What Does Hope Look Like?

Emergency is in our name. In 2005 our founder and current board president, the Reverend Canon Wade Renn, considered the plight of our homeless neighbors huddling in doorways as winter approached an emergency, and in response began the partnership that evolved into Montclair Emergency Services for the Homeless. Since then, our house of worship partners, the Township of Montclair and our generous donors have made it possible for us to provide meals for our food-insecure population and respite shelter on those freezing winter nights.

Shortly before the pandemic changed our lives, MESH Executive Director, Gwen Parker Ames, had spoken with many of our usual guests and learned that our organization brought them hope. So we rebranded ourselves as Montclair Emergency Services for **Hope** in the fall of 2020.

For over a year, we and especially our homeless neighbors, experienced a new emergency because of the COVID pandemic. With our house of worship partners and our public facilities closed, most homeless friends found themselves out in the elements 24/7. MESH adapted and found a way for our ever-faithful partners to continue to offer meals to hungry friends with our Grab-n-Go and to offer overnight respite on freezing nights.

And though it took a couple of very cold months longer, we are thankful that the Township of Montclair's COVID-19 Task Force was able to find a way to offer daytime warming centers staffed by MESH in the Salvation Army and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation's facilities.

Now we are all hopeful that the pandemic will be controlled, that businesses, houses of worship and public facilities will be reopened and that life will return to something like normal. But if we look at the new normal as still an emergency what new hope can MESH and Montclair society offer to our food-insecure and homeless neighbors?

A 2015 *Mother Jones* article by Scott Carrier described how Salt Lake City, UT is helping reduce their homeless population through *Housing First*. Carrier says that instead of looking at the main causes of homelessness—people haven't enough money to afford rent, "We stick our heads in the sand or try to find bandages for the symptoms." *Housing First* treats people who are chronically homeless as "members of our community with a basic right to housing and health care." The initiative has found and built apartments where the homeless can live permanently, with no strings attached. Carrier reported that, "After five years, 88 percent of the clients were still in their apartments, and the cost of caring for them in their own homes was a little less than what it would have cost to take care of them on the street."¹

Can our community of Montclair find a long-term solution to help our neighbors that is better than accepting each winter's cold as an emergency? I hope so.

Nancy Taiani

1. Scott Carrier, "The Shockingly Simple, Surprisingly Cost-Effective Way to End Homelessness," *Mother Jones*, 2/17/2015, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/02/housing-first-solution-to-homelessness-utah/>

Director's Corner: Serving Hope

MESH, Inc. takes great pride in having a community of friends and partners that surround us and help execute our mission to serve the homeless and food insecure. Our friends and partners extend to faith partners, restaurants, university partners public schools, police, health professionals, our kind donors and devoted staff who work hand in hand to maintain our circle of "HOPE." It is the circle of "HOPE" that has helped us to continuously remind the homeless and food insecure during COVID-19 that they matter. Despite the challenges we have faced, we know we are stronger together. This feeling of shared purpose energizes us as we continually work to devise even better ways to serve and offer Hope to our guests.



Dr. Gwen Parker Ames

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were convinced our robust numbers of middle and high school volunteers in our Café dinners would be another unprepared adjustment in MESH, Inc. operations. Unexpectedly MESH received an email seeking permission for Montclair middle school students to donate socks in medium sandwich bags with encouraging notes for our homeless guests. In October, we received baggies of Halloween candy treats, tooth brushes and toothpaste along with pieces of paper that illustrated proper brushing. December through February, hand-knitted scarves and hats were distributed by the Hillsong Knitting Ministry group with conversation. These messages of hope and encouragement can be a safe, fun and a creative way to make us all smile.

Gratitude for MESH, Inc.

Thank you for your amazing meaningful, beneficial work.

Edna Pearl

Thanks you for being so compassionate and caring so selflessly for all the Homeless in our Montclair community.

Harold Terman

I am happy to be able to make this special donation so that MESH, Inc. can continue to do the valuable work. I hope that all your staff know how much their hard work and compassion is appreciated.

Anonymous

Thank you MESH Staff for the hours you work for the homeless and food insecure, even when it's hard. Thank you for offering extra amounts of Hope.

Anonymous

Montclair Emergency Services for Hope, Inc.



Learn more about MESH www.meshmontclair.org
and how you can help this hopeful organization.