

# The Ascension Weekly

January 28, 2018

## Warm Nights at Ascension

*“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ...” (Mt 25:46)*

The Warm Nights program is a rotating emergency shelter sponsored by Community Crisis Services, Inc., in which participating area churches provide overnight shelter during the winter months to individuals in need of a safe, warm place to sleep. For several years now, Ascension has participated in this program, hosting Warm Nights for one week each winter and giving those in need a warm place to sleep in our Bates Hall, as well as providing them with dinner each evening, a bagged lunch to take with them during the day, and breakfast in the morning before departing for the day. This winter, our parish participated during the week of January 21-28. Anne Powell and Jeana Barber, both parishioners of Ascension, were the two main co-coordinators who worked tirelessly to ensure the week went off without a hitch. In the following interview, we spoke to Jeana Barber to learn more about how the week went.

### **Q. How many homeless people have been served by Ascension during this past week?**

**A.** This year we are serving 17 people in total, seven men and ten women (one pregnant and due on February 5<sup>th</sup>). About half of them have jobs and cars to get to those jobs. It's just too expensive in this area for them to live without assistance. Five or six are on disability, generally for mental deficiencies. One woman actually teaches at a Christian school.

### **Q. Can you tell me about the many volunteers who offered their assistance?**

**A.** Many groups and individuals collaborated to make sure we were covered throughout the entire week. The American Legion, Disney Bell, and our parish chapter of the Knights of St. John with their Ladies Auxiliary each took a night to cook dinners as well as breakfasts for the following morning. Share & Care, the Bowie Lions, our Religious Education teachers, the Knights of Columbus and individual parishioners also made dinners. Dinners included: 1) turkey, mac & cheese, green beans; 2) sloppy

joes, corn, cole slaw; 3) pork roast, sauerkraut, kale; 4) beef soup, and chicken & rice soup, salad; 5) hamburgers, corn, salad; 6) ham, mac & cheese, green beans; and 7) chicken cacciatore, rice, broccoli. Of course, dinner was always served with drinks, rolls, and plenty of dessert!

Additionally, many individuals provided 10-15 lunches each day. These included the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Religious Education class and a girl scout troop. Several of our volunteers who made lunches have been doing so since we first began participating in Warm Nights many years ago. Lunches are packed in a plastic grocery bag for easy carrying and include a meat sandwich, snack, fruit, dessert, drink, napkin, and utensils if needed.

Twelve volunteers stayed overnight with our guests – one or two per night. Just as with our lunchmakers, many of these folks have stayed overnight since we began Warm Nights. The overnight folks ensure that doors are locked and lights are out by 10:00 pm. In the morning, they are responsible for making coffee & setting out other drinks. They also set out breakfast items such as cereal, oatmeal, danishes, muffins and such.

There were about twenty high school teens, about half of whom have volunteered consistently for the last 3-4 years, who helped during the week to set up cots, set up for dinner, help serve dinner, and clean up after dinner. Four 8<sup>th</sup> grade Religious Education students also volunteered to help.

### **Q. What is something memorable that you come away with after having served during Warm Nights this year?**

**A.** I am always touched by the gratitude displayed by many of our guests. They help clear up the dining room in Bates Hall and even clean the bathrooms. Two years ago during the big blizzard when we were snowed in, some of the men even helped shovel snow, and the guests all signed a thank you card for the parish.

*Thank you to all the many parishioners and other individuals who gave of their time and talents to serve those in need in our community during our parish's week of participation in Warm Nights!*