

St. John the Merciful Outreach Ministry Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 2

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“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.’”
Mark 12:30-31

“Prayer, together with almsgiving, can furnish us with countless good things from above. They can quench the fire of sin in our souls and can give us great freedom.”

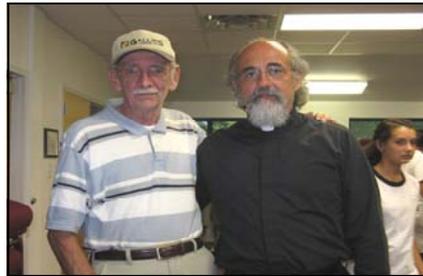
*-St. John Chrysostom
(Baptismal Instructions)*

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“...with God all things are possible.” (Matt. 19:26)

In keeping with our newsletter mission statement we are featuring two of our friends in the next two editions who have lived this Gospel verse. Tom was a guest speaker for our GOYAN’s and shared his struggles with alcohol addiction with them. Tom was a successful drummer for a beach music



band and DJ for a number of years. He was married and was traveling with the band and got caught up with the peer pressures of this lifestyle. Excessive drinking and partying eventually led to his divorce. On several occasions he was close to death and ended up serving 2 ½ years of a 5 year prison sentence. After prison Tom went thru three alcohol rehabilitation programs before finally getting clean. Tom relocated to the Raleigh area where he had a brief stay at the Healing Place before joining the program at the South Wilmington Street Men’s Shelter. At the age of 62, and being sober for 4 years he continued his battle to regain a normal life. Tom finished the program at the shelter and has been gainfully employed there for 4 years, and maintains his own apartment and has become self sufficient.

Tom reminded me that first of all he is still an alcoholic – he is just an alcoholic that no longer drinks. This is the choice he makes each day when he gets out of bed. He also reminds me that without the help of God he could have never accomplished any of this. He knew that as long as he kept God out of his life, he would never beat his addiction on his own. He had decided to

allow God to take over. He and I shared the analogy of how being a sinner is like being an alcoholic. It is all about the choices we make in our lives. No one forces us to drink; no one forces us to sin. We are all sinners and will remain as such – but it is our choice to keep committing the sins. If we are looking to beat these and other vices it will do us all well to remember: **“with God all things are possible.”**



Tom gave GOYA shag dance lessons.

Mission Statement

“...with God all things are possible.” (Matt. 19:26)

This newsletter is not to espouse all the things our ministry has done, only to show just how much more is possible with God! Networking: a technical term but we can use this to our advantage. Maybe you don’t have money, time, or the ability, but you can talk! Just talking to others about the Outreach Ministry makes others aware and we never know where the next help will come from. If someone you spoke to about this helps the Ministry then you too have done your part to help someone else! We will share a few examples inside!

The Men's Shelter Through A GOYAN'S Eyes

Over the weekend, my dad and I went with the Holy Trinity GOYA group to the men's shelter for some community service, and to show the Lord's love through our volunteer work. I have to say, I didn't expect my trip to the men's shelter to be as different as it was. When we first arrived, we immediately went to work. We scrubbed the walls with Clorox and helped clean the doors as well. I didn't think it was really necessary, since usually people don't tend to wipe off their walls so much, however it was probably a good idea, since there can be tons of bacteria that comes in and infect people with a sickness. As soon as we were done washing, I helped make a couple of sandwiches and folded napkins around forks. After all that work was done, it was just about time to help the Cafeteria crew serve the food.

My dad, Conner, and myself were serving at the drink station, and I must say it was really cool to have the Goyans and the other volunteers working together. In a way, I guess I assumed it was just every man for him self-doing his own work. I'm happy to say I was wrong, since it would have been harder if I did work by myself anyway.

The actual workers there were very clear with what jobs you were required to do. As the men walked by to get their meals, everyone had a different face, expression, color, size, etc. I was actually expecting to see something more along the lines of old men with tattered clothing, but that just shows how much knowledge I had of a men's shelter anyway. They all pretty much looked like the people you would pass by in a grocery store, they looked average, obviously showing me stereotypes can be deceiving. Some men were very sweet, many asked how the workers were doing, and most had very big smiles on their faces. One even complimented my eyes. This gave me a really pleasant feeling inside, even if I did little it obviously made the difference. But the one thing that stood out to me, the one thing almost every man had in common, was their gratefulness. Each one gave a smile, each one gave a kind "thank-you," and almost every man I met responded with "thank you so much for coming out here, we appreciate the time." I was surprised at how much I truly enjoyed myself that day. I was exhausted when I came home from a long day of multiple community services, however I'm happy I didn't pass this up.



Above: GOYAN Cleaning Crew (left to right) Connor Ingle, Elena Kyriakoulis, Gabriella Ragouzeos, Nada Milkovich, and Michael Bradley pose with shelter workers.

I can honestly say, if I had the opportunity to go again, I wouldn't hesitate. It really made me think. I loved seeing gracious faces, I loved feeling as if I made a big difference.

-Gabriella Ragouzeos

"And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone."

1 Thessalonians 5:14

Men's Shelter 2009 Schedule

AHEPA—2nd Wed of each month

OCM—3rd Sunday of each month

GOYA—last Saturday of each month

The Women's Center of Wake County

From its date of incorporation, 1978, as a refuge for former women prisoners, the Women's Center continues to change to accommodate the needs of its clients. Most of the clients are women in transition...whether through changing marital status, parenting, job status, age, income, or mental health. The Women's Center's mission is the empowerment of women to lead self-directed lives, realize economic viability, enjoy satisfying relationships, and strengthen their participation in the community. We focus on the multiple inter-related needs of the individual woman and offer information, health workshops, mentor advocacy (an augmented form of case management), basic needs services, referrals to community resources, legal information services, and opportunities to build a supportive network among the Center's volunteers, staff, and clients. In addition, we provide permanent affordable housing for home-

less single women, and a Housing Specialist to assist women and their children in finding and obtaining affordable, appropriate permanent housing. Transitional housing with supportive services are provided for single women at Epiphany House and affordable housing with supportive services are provided for single women at a duplex and for single mothers with children at two houses in the City of Raleigh. The Women's Center's hours of operation are Monday—Thursday 9:30 am—4:30 pm.

- *Ann Johnson, Women's Center*

Want for information on the
Women's Center ?
Check out their website at
www.wcwc.org

The Wehbie M. Wehbie Outreach Fund

The Wehbie M. Wehbie Outreach Fund began in 1993, when Fr. Michael Petrides, who was the executor of Mr. Wehbie's estate, turned over the funds our parish, Holy Trinity with the understanding that the funds would be used to assist the needy in Wake County and never be considered parish funds or an asset of our parish.

Along with the financial proceeds, which totaled approximately \$80,000, Mr. Wehbie's residence was sold to our local Ahepa Chapter for \$34,600. In the beginning years, a Committee was formed under the Parish Council to pursue disbursing funds to those in need. Substantial donations were offered to the Raleigh Rescue Mission, Shepherd's Table, The Salvation Army and F.I.G.S. (A prescription assistance program). In 1996, after the Hurricane Fran disaster, \$12,500 was given to the NC Food Bank. For many years, funds are offered under the discretion of the parish priest to parishioners and non-parishioners in Wake County who need temporary assistance for rental or mortgage payments and utilities. As a precaution, all payments are made directly to the particular companies. From January 2000 – May 2009, The Wehbie Outreach Fund offered assistance in the amount of, \$65,444.31.

In 2006, a Clergy Push-Up-A-Thon fundraiser was established in order to inject capital into the Outreach Fund so that it would continue to be in place answering our Lord's command to help those in need. The Push-Up-A-Thon usually takes place on Father's Day. Sponsors offer a donation, so much per push-up and the Clergy and recently Parish Council members have one opportunity to do as many push-ups as they can do and donors offers their sponsorship to the Wehbie Outreach Fund. The first three years have raised **\$17,037.65**. This year's event will take place on Father's Day, June 21.

-*Fr. Paul Kaplanis*



Philoptochos Lenten Food Drive



As part of our Local Outreach Ministries, Philoptochos voted to participate with the North Raleigh Ministries (NRM) Food Pantry during our Lenten period. Through the generosity of our Parish members each week, we were able to collect and deliver many food items to the Pantry which helped NRM give food to 464 families (1215 individuals) in the first quarter of 2009. We also received a call for Easter bunnies and candy to help fill 60 Easter baskets for the children. During our last meeting, members brought candy and gave money to purchase the Easter bunnies. The staff at NMR was very appreciative of our contribution towards this project.

NRM's commitment is "Helping Neighbors Now". The NRM Food Pantry provides grocery store items to people in crisis. Households may be eligible for food assistance once per month if they show proof of residence from zip codes 27609, 27612, 27613, 27614, 27615 and 27616. Philoptochos will continue to collect and deliver food items this summer and during the year as they accumulate.

The NRM also has a Thrift Shoppe and Crisis Center and are in need of volunteers. They are located at 2431-152 Spring Forest Road, Raleigh, NC 27615. If you are interested in volunteering, please call (919) 785-9911, ext. 158.

-Beba Zevgolis

Interact's New Family Safety & Empowerment Center

On April 24, 2009 Interact celebrated a new National Model Program and officially opened the doors to its New Family Safety and Empowerment Center during a Grand Opening Ceremony. This national collaborative model removes obstacles to obtaining access to programs and services to help victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and delivers the crucial help needed.



Interact's new center is located at 1012 Oberlin Road.

Quick Stats: As of April 21, Interact had already seen 200 people in the two week time period that they opened at their new location, a significant increase from the same time last year. Interact served 36,000 individuals in Wake County in 2008. Interact's Family Safety and Empowerment Center facilitates collaboration among 10 non-profits serving the needs of individuals and families facing domestic violence and sexual assault. Having raised \$4.3 million with its Capital Campaign, Interact urgently seeks raising the remaining \$700,000 to complete their goal of \$5 million.

"Already calls are on the rise! Our national model is unique by bringing together ten community agencies providing services for victims and survivors of violence and abuse to help remove the barriers many face while trying to receive help," said Adam Hartzell, Executive Director of Interact. "We are

thrilled to celebrate these collaborations and the public and private partnerships that helped us build the center to help meet a critical need in our community. We encourage the members of the community to come and take a center tour. Help is here! Please help us to let those in crisis know that there is hope and

Interact is where you can go for safety and support."

Interact's Family Safety and Empowerment Center brings together nine other community agencies:

Easter Seals UCP coordinates the provision of mental health services to women and children suffering from trauma exposure. **Inter-Faith Food Shuttle** operates Interact's commercial kitchen and provide culinary skills training. **KIRAN** promotes self-reliance and empowerment of South Asians in crisis through outreach, peer support, and referrals. **Legal Aid of NC** offers Interact's clients legal assistance and regular legal clinics. **Raleigh Police Department** houses its entire family violence intervention unit on-site. **South Light** offers family substance abuse counseling services on-site. **Wake Health Services** provides primary medical care using Interact's medical clinic. **YMCA of the Triangle** maintains the pool and operates after-school and summer youth programs. **YWCA of the Greater Triangle** offers its Women In Transition Program to Interact's clients.

Orthodox College Fellowship



UNC OCF welcomes Mother Magdalena on campus



Duke OCF hosts Orthodox nun, Mother Magdalena



NC State freshman, Patrick Pilos-Narron shares lunch with Mother Magdalena after she met with OCF Members in the Talley Center on NC State's campus.



NC State, Duke, & UNC Orthodox students meet in Raleigh's Moore Square on Saturday, March 21 for a Lenten almsgiving project called "Just Love".

How can you help?

OCF's campus chaplain position for the NC Triangle is funded solely through the generosity of individual donors. One such donor from Charlotte has pledged a \$100 donation for each presentation John Stonestreet conducts this summer in an Orthodox home in North Carolina. The purpose of the presentation is to raise awareness and support for this local Orthodox campus ministry, but the ministry receives a \$100 donation from the Charlotte sponsor just for conducting a one-on-one presentation for an Orthodox couple or individual. John can come by your home to conduct his 15 minute presentation anytime between 7:00 AM and 10:00 PM, Monday through Saturday during the month of May and evenings and weekends through the rest of the summer. Simply contact John at 919-624-9479 or john@ocf.net.



the Ubuntu way

Fundraiser

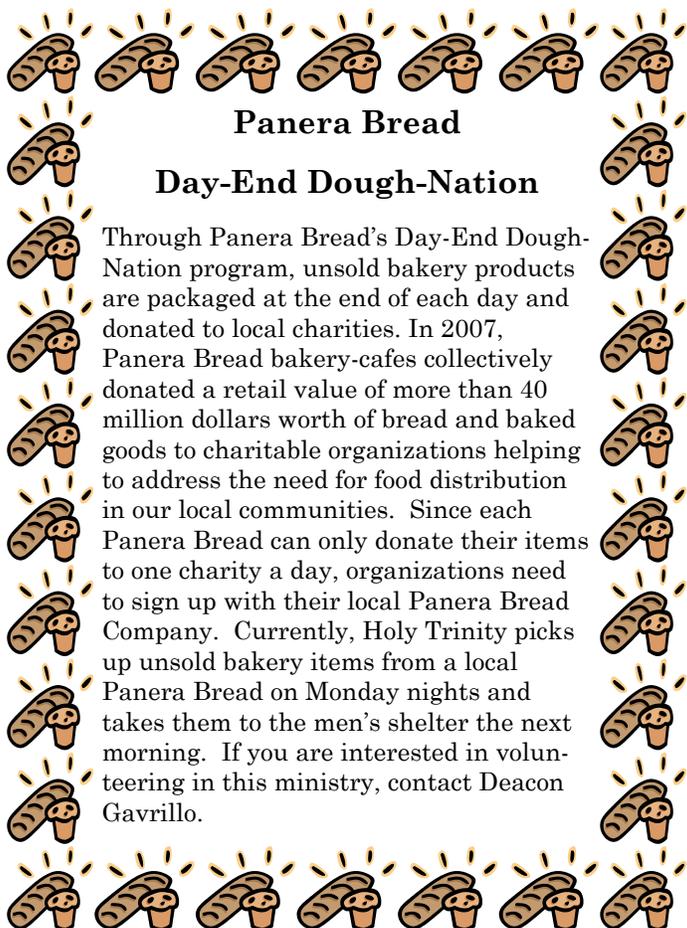
Join The Ubuntu Way at a
Carolina Mud Cats Game

Thursday, June 4, 2009

7:15 pm

Purchase your tickets through The Ubuntu Way and 1/2 of the proceeds will go directly to Project Gulu. Email russos.allie@gmail.com to buy your tickets!

What is Project Gulu? It is an effort to build a school in Gulu, an area in Northern Uganda which has been persecuted by the Lords Resistance Army for over 20 years.



Panera Bread

Day-End Dough-Nation

Through Panera Bread's Day-End Dough-Nation program, unsold bakery products are packaged at the end of each day and donated to local charities. In 2007, Panera Bread bakery-cafes collectively donated a retail value of more than 40 million dollars worth of bread and baked goods to charitable organizations helping to address the need for food distribution in our local communities. Since each Panera Bread can only donate their items to one charity a day, organizations need to sign up with their local Panera Bread Company. Currently, Holy Trinity picks up unsold bakery items from a local Panera Bread on Monday nights and takes them to the men's shelter the next morning. If you are interested in volunteering in this ministry, contact Deacon Gavrillo.

Upcoming Outreach Ministry Events

Summer 09—Ongoing Food Drive

June 4—The Ubuntu Way Carolina Mud Cats Game

June 21—Wehbie Wehbie Fund Push-Up-A-Thon

August 2009—Philoptochos Back To School Drive

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We wish to thank all those who have given of themselves unselfishly in His Name to all that is in this newsletter. Without your time, talents and stewardship, none of this would have been possible.

In Christ—Deacon Gavrilo