What do family and home mean to you? Are they defined by blood, proximity or affiliation? Are they about a place of comfort, love or support during the hard times? … Now imagine for a moment you didn't have either.... That feeling of isolation, that brief moment without grounding, is something those we serve struggle with daily. At the Samaritan Center, we believe everyone should have a place to feel connected and comforted. A place to get the support needed to thrive. For so many, Samaritan provides a community kitchen table, a home, where meals are shared, relationships are built, burdens are lightened and direction is found.

Over the previous year, we have been able to share more than 119,000 meals for a community family in need, including a 51% increase in meals for children under 10 and a 20% increase for those over 65. In addition to meals, support has come in the form of resources never before available at Samaritan. We launched a new employment lab, helping guests build resumes, apply for jobs and prepare for interviews. Through direct case management and partnerships with community agencies, more than 2000 referrals were made to assist our guests to a brighter future. YOU, our guests, our volunteers - together we create a true family of support.

One of our guests named Charlie has struggled to get his chaotic life on an even keel. He's had ups and downs, struggles with addictions, with the law, with memories of childhood abuse. He has shared his journey with his family from the street and Samaritan and all shared in his joy as he obtained an apartment, got into counseling, found his way. Until one morning when he spoke of a decision he was trying to make. He had found one of his friends, Bill, vulnerable and cold on the street and had let him stay at his new apartment. Charlie described how he washed Bill’s blistering and bleeding feet, laundered his tattered clothes and made sure he got a good meal. Charlie struggled with their friendship, whether what he had done was wise and how he could best help Bill. We discussed options, risks and consequences, how Charlie could best protect himself and ultimately came to the “You need to make the decision that is right for you” point in the conversation. After much thought, Charlie wisely identified his limits and boundaries then tenderly said, “I love Bill, I’m going to do what I can.” Family, in so many forms, simply being there for each other.

Each year we reach out to you to help make this amazing community home possible. This year we need to raise $274,000 through the Annual Appeal, the largest goal ever, because the need has never been greater. Please join us with your generous gift and help continue to make family and home possible for so many in need.

Warmest regards,

Mary Beth
It’s all good

Rita Kimak is one of our valued and cherished volunteers who was chosen as one of the five winners of the Community Foundation of CNY “What Matters to You?” Contest. Here is her winning entry to benefit The Samaritan Center.

“Until he extends his circle of compassion to include all living things, man will not himself find peace.” Albert Schweitzer

Each of us has moments in our lives that stay with us forever and change us….and thankfully not just one but hopefully several. One of mine happened back at the end of 2011 and into 2012. I had the privilege of experiencing the death of a great man, which then inspired me to volunteer at the Samaritan Center. Now, you’re probably thinking to yourself that this will just be another story about the hope found in the death of a loved one, or how seeing the homeless in CNY touched me and made me thankful for what I have. Hopefully, it will indeed convey those feelings, but the story behind how I came to volunteer at the Samaritan Center is where I hope to touch you and move you to action on its behalf.

In 2011, I was a member of St. Joseph’s church in Camillus, N.Y. In the fall of that year, our congregation and entire community found out that our beloved pastor, Fr. Gregg LeStrange was dying from cancer. He was 55 years of age, full of life and energy, and an example to all he met. Ok, ok you’ve heard hundreds of stories like this, so what makes mine so special? Let me tell you.

Fr. Gregg volunteered a lot of his time and energy at the Samaritan Center. Now he didn’t just ask for donations during his weekly homily, or stop by once in a while to visit the homeless. He SERVED at this remarkable shelter. The Samaritan Center’s mission is “to fight hunger by providing nutritious hot meals to anyone in need 7 days a week – no questions asked.” Its mission is “rooted in the belief that sound nutrition is the first step in enabling people to cope and become productive, self-sufficient members of society.” Their mission doesn’t stop there. The Samaritan Center has case management advisors who work with their guests to help find the ways and means to a more positive future. What is most special is that ALL people are treated with dignity and respect. I’ve never met a more hands-on staff who aren’t afraid to pick up a mop, wash a table, or comfort a distraught guest. But I digress…. 

Back to our beloved Fr. Gregg. I can remember him serving behind the line at the Samaritan Center. While wearing his priestly garb, he sported a wildly colorful apron and a baseball cap. Yet, it’s not only what he was wearing, but also how he was serving the homeless. He was always ready to give out a plate, but the would stop to LISTEN to a guest. He would look him or her in the eye, show a sincere interest in what was being said, and smile as if no one else existed at that moment but that fellow human being who was in need of a meal.

I could not quote statistics on how many in our community are homeless and hungry, but I think each of us need only look around to see this heart-wrenching picture. Every day when I stop at a traffic light, I am approached by someone looking for anything that I may have to give them; to help them survive another day. I’m sure if you sign on to http://www.samcenter.org you can read these devastating statistics. But back to my story….

In 2012, I started volunteering with our religious education director at the time, Kristen O’Hara. I remember we helped serve dinners on Thursdays. I can still see all of the people who crowded into the then small space on Montgomery Street. They were looking for a meal, but also looking for human interaction. It was hot, and it was hard, but it was so rewarding. To hear a “thank you” or a “God bless you” from one of the guests; those words were forever engraved on my heart. I saw in person what Fr. Gregg had seen – the importance of sharing a meal and of spreading hope.

When I saw the information on “What Matters to you” contest and I just had to tell my story – Fr. Gregg’s story, because what is more deserving of such a prize than the nutritional and personal enrichment of our fellow human beings? Nothing. I have never felt so alive as when I was volunteering at the Samaritan Center. I will forever cherish those moments with Kristen O’Hara. We left sweaty and exhausted but feeling full of love and also feeling Fr. Gregg standing right there beside us.

I also felt like I had a sign from God, or more than likely from Fr. Gregg, to write this. You see the contest is called 5forCNY, and five entries will be selected, and $500 will go to the charity of choice. This coming December 13, 2016 will be the FIFTH anniversary of Fr. Gregg’s death; a death that took place at the age of FIFTY-FIVE. The five just struck me. We each have five fingers that form one hand, and that one hand can be used for good or evil. The Samaritan Center allows you to use it for good.

I’d like to end with a message from Fr. Gregg. You see, when he was near death, he could not communicate verbally anymore. His dear friends went to see him one last time, and in his hand was a note. On that note there were FIVE simple words: “No regrets whatsoever. Tremendous gratitude.” Thank you for listening to my story, and I hope that you will find it in your hearts to give that $500 to the Samaritan Center. God Bless, and as Fr. Gregg always said “It’s all good.” Sincerely yours,

Rita Kimak
Soup to Nuts.....News, Notes & Happenings

Sold Out Pour Raises $42,000

On November 5th, close to 200 attendees joined us at our fun fall Pour Tasting Event sponsored by Key Bank, Welch Allyn, Alan Byer, Carrier Corp, Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield, Time Warner Cable, Central New York Services Inc. and SYSCO. The tasting extravaganza featured wine, food, and live entertainment from Prime Time and Michael Crissan. The food featured tastes from Dinosaur Barbeque - Vince's Gourmet - Liehs and Steigerwalds - Mesa Grande - Renzi Food, Empire Brew, Beak & Skiff and Cheeky Monkey. This event was hosted by Honorary Chair Ed Riley and his wife Janet, owner of the Marriott Downtown Syracuse. Cheers to all who attended and helped with this fun event while supporting an important cause.

AT&T Pioneers Group Raises $5,000 for Center

On Wednesday, Nov. 9, the AT&T Pioneers in Syracuse, a volunteer and donation-driven organization, prepared its 10,000th peanut butter and jelly sandwich for the needy as part of the volunteer group’s Sammie Time, a program started four years ago at the AT&T call center on South Clinton Street in downtown Syracuse, where employees meet during their break and lunch times on the second Wednesday of each month to make 200 sandwiches that are donated to the Samaritan Center. In recognition of this milestone by the Pioneers of Syracuse, they are contributing $5,000 to the organization as part of the AT&T CARES Special Contribution Program, an initiative that awards local funding based on the nominations of AT&T employee groups.

Save the Date
Carrie Newcomber Concert to benefit Samaritan

Coming to Park Central Presbyterian Church on April 29, 2017.
Tickets $25 - Tickets go on sale in January 2017. For more information http://www.parkcentralchurch.org/

Winter Items Needed

FOOD AND PAPER PRODUCTS
- fresh and canned fruit & vegetables
- napkins, paper towels
- sugar & creamer packets
- cereal, breakfast bars, jelly
- butter, fruit juice, drink mix
- milk, sandwiches, baked goods, yogurt

GUEST ITEMS
- deodorant, razors, travel sized wipes, hand sanitizer, shampoo, shaving cream, blankets, belts, socks, toiletries, pots & pans
- toilet paper, lip balm, gloves, hats, boots, coats

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS
- latex gloves, sandwich & trash bags
- bleach & laundry detergent, Mr. Clean Sponges
- silverware, spray cleaner, clorox wipes, hand soap, hand sanitizer
- Dawn liquid dish soap

OFFICE SUPPLIES
- blue gel pens, stamps (Forever), packing tape, laminating paper, ipad, file folders, copy paper

DINING & BUILDING SUPPLIES
- paint brushes- all sizes, ladders
- all sizes, paint rollers, mops, Lowes and Home Depot Gift Cards & sidewalk salt

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Thank you so much for your kindness. Visit our web www.samcenter.org for ways you can help and more thank you acknowledgements.

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