This time of year is all about transitions and promise. It’s not quite winter, not quite spring, but an “in-between” point of sorts. One day we are buffeted by snow and frigid winds that leave us searching for strength against the cold. The next, brings us sunny blue skies and muddy lawns that offer the promise of spring and its new beginnings. Our guests, in some ways, mirror the season- searching out strength to make it through the dark days and holding onto hope for a fresh start.

We recently completed an annual survey of our guests, so that we can better understand the wonderful folks we serve and how best to support them. One of the significant findings was that, while only 17% of our guests are currently homeless, 51% of those we serve have been homeless in the previous year. That’s 51% that are in the midst of transitioning from the chaos of homelessness- navigating the challenges of their lives’ gray days for the promise of a more hopeful season to come.

Paul is a charming man in his 40’s with a quiet manner and a disarming smile. He has struggled with depression so severe he was unable to work, lost his home and ended up at the shelter. For a time, he passed his days alone by the railroad tracks wondering if the “winter” of his life should end. He found the Samaritan Center in the depths of his pain and began eating with us daily, slowly connecting, opening up to others and finding a way to “spring.” Over time, he was linked with mental health care found a new job and a one room apartment- relying on his Samaritan family for support and strength on the journey. With the darkness slowly receding, Paul has reached a point of new beginnings. He stops in each morning before work to check in, share coffee with friends and pick up a bagged lunch for the day ahead. Each step he takes, each achievement, is like a daffodil peeking through the ground and preparing to bloom. While he is not yet where he wants to be, he is able to recognize the warmth of the spring returning.

Each guest’s journey is different, the transitions are not always smooth and are not always successful the first, second or even third time, but with your support and love, you help ensure Samaritan is there. There to help our guests find their way through the in-between. Not quite winter, not quite spring but always full of hope.

Wishing you blue skies and sunny days,
Greg’s prematurely lined face reveals the hardships he has endured. Only in his 40s, he could be glimpsed at breakfast, huddled in a corner curled over his cup of black coffee, looking pensive and serious. He was always quick to return a volunteer’s smile or kind word, but left to his own, he’d sink back into his defeated posture. Greg worked for most of his life in construction, until one day he had a seizure and fell off a third story roof and miraculously survived. Without the structure of work, Greg began to drink more. His instability left him isolated from his family. Greg slipped into a pattern of drinking, of attempting to quit by himself, of having seizures and ending up in the hospital.

One morning at breakfast, Greg revealed to us that he was living on the porch of an abandoned house. “I can’t do this anymore,” he confided. He had been the victim of a hit and run two nights before and coming into consciousness, seemed to find a new will to survive. He was sober and clear-eyed. With the help of some incredible community partners, we began the task of trying to help Greg get into a supportive apartment. He was patient through the mountain of paperwork, the tedious questions and intrusive intakes. “I need to do this – for my dad, for my kids,” he repeated, touching the tattoo of his daughter’s name and birthday on his hand.

As we waited for some final documentation to come through, Greg’s addiction ensnared him again. He had a few beers to make it through the cold night on that porch. He sat in the furthest corner of the dining room from his usual spot, attempting to hide his red eyes under his hood. We asked if we could sit with him. Greg simply nodded at his tray of half eaten breakfast. “We just want you to be safe,” we began. Greg stood abruptly. He began to walk, making a long circle around the dining room, flanked by the faces of the saints in stained glass, radiating in the early light of the morning, through the guests and volunteers beginning their days together. His circle complete, he stopped and gripped the back of his chair like a lifeline. He breathed deeply and said, “Okay.”

That Friday was move-in day. Greg’s face shone in excitement, in promise. We packed up a few essentials to get him started in his new place, but he only took a few things and proudly reported that after he arrived in his new apartment, his step-mother had said that she was going to come over and bring him a few things she had set aside for him, in the hopes that this day would come. Greg shyly shared that he was excited to get settled in the apartment, but was ready to learn more about how he could start seeking treatment and counseling.

Right before Greg departed, we gave him an envelope which contained his new benefit card. Greg gazed at his picture on the ID, taken a few weeks before. “Wow,” he said, almost to himself, “I look pretty rough, huh? Wow.” Greg stared silently for a few moments at the image, engrossed in the history it tells, and apprehensive about what the future will hold for this disheveled young man, who is both stranger and self.

Greg smiled and spoke earnest words of gratitude. We spoke our goodbyes and we reminded him to let us know if he needed anything. As he left, I remembered Greg’s meandering path around the dining room, in his pain and fear. We don’t know what’s next for Greg, but I am comforted that he is armed with the stability of a new home and the support of his family. And we will be here if he needs to come back.
2017 - 2018
Annual Appeal
Raises Over
$277,000

The Samaritan Center has existed for 36 years through the support and kindness of the community and in the belief that each individual should have access to healthy, nutritious food and be surrounded by support during difficult times. Over the previous year, with the help of over 1,500 monthly dedicated volunteers, more than 124,000 meals have been shared with individuals and families in need. In addition, through direct case management support and partnerships with community agencies, more than 2,500 Samaritan guests were assisted with housing, employment, health care, household goods, diapers, mental health care or legal assistance - fundamental supports that assist our guests to a brighter and kinder future. With all that, the human connection found here remains paramount.

With your generous support we raised over $277,000 for this year’s annual appeal. Because of YOU we will continue to be able to provide these services and create a family of support and brighter future for others in need in our community. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

ITEMS NEEDED

KITCHEN ITEMS
napkins, sandwich bags, plastic store bags, individual oatmeal and cereal, milk, sugar, creamer, large canned vegetables, large canned fruits, large canned soup, latex gloves (all sizes), hair nets, home baked desserts, sandwiches, volunteers to serve/prep, and volunteers to pick up donations

GUEST ITEMS
rain coats, socks, sweat shirts, sneakers, boots, umbrellas, water bottles, backpacks, and travel coffee mugs, My Place items, pots & pans

TOILETRIES
razors, body wash, deodorant, band aids, chap stick, toilet paper, shampoo, tissues, hair brushes, sunscreen, and soap

OFFICE SUPPLIES
stamps- Forever, new USB flash drives, 8 1/2 x 11” lamination sheets, white copy paper, white card stock, blue gel pens, office and packing tape, permanent markers, and dry erase markers

BUILDING SUPPLIES
floor blower, mops, mop heads, leaf blower, 55 gallon trash bags, bleach, laundry detergent, Home Depot gift cards, scrub sponges, copper pan scrubbies, volunteers to clean

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