And the Feast is all the Fuller

“For the folks who eat with us, we are often that family-offering connection, hope, hugs and kindness. At the core, Samaritan Center, and you, offer a meal shared among folks...each finding a place to belong”

Like many people, the holidays hold a special spot in my heart. With yummy food at the center, holidays are filled with family, laughter and memory making. It’s rising early and making stuffing and playing in the yard while the turkey roasts. It’s laughing and remembering Grandma’s weird lumpy green jello and the cranberries out of the can- complete with can lines. It’s family, connection, a time to catch up from being too far apart and a time for long hugs and conversations. Shared holiday meals gather people close and create a space for relationships to strengthen and hearts to be shared.

And that may be what so many of us love about the Samaritan Center. Every day is an opportunity to share a meal and share of ourselves in the process. So many of those we serve find themselves alone, not just on holidays but every day- without sisters or grandmas, without family or the support so easily taken for granted. For the folks who eat with us, we are often that family-offering connection, hope, hugs and kindness. At the core, Samaritan Center, and you, offer a meal shared among folks both different and alike, each adding what they can to the moment and each finding a place to belong.

Over recent weeks NPR Radio has been interviewing people on their perspectives of heaven. The comments of Sister Catherine Hilkert hit a special cord. When asked about the imagery she associates with the afterlife she spoke of food, of feasts, of a shared banquet table. In explaining, she spoke of those images as, “moments of greatest human intimacy and communion and inclusion-surprising events where the outsider or the outcast is somehow welcomed- and the feast is made all the fuller because of that.”

I want to thank you for helping create a space where ALL are welcome at the table. Where the uniqueness of each is recognized but what binds us together in our humanity is kindness and love. Thank you for being a part of the feast and this little piece of heaven for so many.

Mary Beth

Photo credit Mike Greenlar/The Post-Standard
Soup du jour

Indeed there are Good Samaritans amongst us each day. One of these Samaritans is Brittany Lynch, 17, of Fayetteville-Manlius High School. She along with her friend Dylan Barrera, raised over $500 for The Samaritan Center this past summer. Brittany had volunteered her time at The Samaritan Center through her church and was inspired to give back even more. So Brittany and Dylan spent the summer babysitting, washing cars, and other odd jobs to raise money for the center. Thank you both for your generous support to help others in need.

A Shared Cup of Coffee

By Julie Gilbert

I’ve had occasion lately to wonder about kitchen tables. My grandfather’s kitchen table recently travelled from Philadelphia to live in my kitchen here in Syracuse. There are ghosts that linger around the laminate wood piece: of meals and of memories and of people, greatly loved, that are long gone. They dine with me, even as I sit alone.

At the Samaritan Center tables, the shadow of even more men and women remain. There’s Stephan, who followed a job down south. There’s Angie, who needed us after her husband suddenly left her and her four children, until she got on her feet again. There’s Terry, who ate with us for years while she was homeless on the streets of Syracuse, but now fills her days with volunteering for a local food pantry. There’s Dominic, who after years of struggling with mental illness, was finally receiving the treatment he needed, when he suddenly had a heart attack and died.

Perhaps the spot at the table that feels most empty in my heart is Jack’s. His Native American face was heavily lined and asymmetrical with stroke, but his grin was always wide. His gaunt arms were always gesturing wildly, as he enveloped his friends around the breakfast table in another story. The small group met most every morning, to sip their coffee and catch up. Jack was kind and welcoming to a fault, often taking homeless folks in to stay in his small efficiency apartment. He confided in me that he hated the night and being alone. Alone, he was haunted by the memory of his wife, comforted only by a bottle.

During our long conversations, I would often try to wind our conversations back to getting treatment for his alcoholism. For about a decade before we met, Jack was sober and even served as a peer counselor, before falling off the wagon. I offered resources to my friend, tried to inspire him again for a journey towards recovery but he would just smile sadly at me. You’re young, he said, and don’t understand. I miss my wife. I’m so tired of being sad. My life is behind me - I drink because I want to die.

And when he looked at my stricken face, he’d pat my hand in comfort and tell me how much he loved me. He’d tell me that throughout the long night, what he most looked forward to was dawn and a hot breakfast at the Samaritan Center - where he felt like he belonged.

Whispers came to me through his friends and fellow guests. Jack was found in an alleyway, alone and dead. My heart ached at the thought of him turning cold with the night air. I still grieve for my friend, for his stories, for his companionship, and for the others that loved him as I did. I grieve for the story that could have been for Jack.

That long last night in an alley is not Jack’s story. The real story is in the table, with his friends that loved him and shared a cup of coffee. The real story is that he was accepted, with all of his demons and all of his grace. There was once a table where he lived and laughed, where he was welcomed, where he was well fed and well loved.

Thank you

King & King

Samaritan Center staff and Board members were all smiles playing in the 11th annual King & King Golf Classic at Beaver Meadows Golf Club in September. Over the past decade King & King has raised more than $51,000 to support CNY non-profits through this event. This year, Samaritan Center was honored to be named the beneficiary of the generous and kind hearts of all those who participated...and it was a beautiful day on the course to boot!
Jeff Taft is a regional sales manager at CXtec. Jeff has worked at CXtec for nearly 15 years in various roles, including Strategic Partnership Manager and Senior Account Executive. He also worked at TERACAI for two years, where he served in sales and business development roles. Jeff has been volunteering at Samaritan Center for five years, preparing and serving meals, and arranging for the delivery of sandwiches. He is an active member of the Central New York Sales and Marketing Executives (CNYSME). Taft attended the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he completed coursework in business communications.

Victor Ianno Jr. is a Senior Marketing Manager at Welch Allyn. Victor’s previous employers include Pyramid Management Company, Mark Russell & Associates, and Lakeside Printing, a family Pennysaver & Printing Company. Victor is a graduate of the Boston College School of Management and received his MBA from the University of Rochester, Simon School of Business. He also is a graduate of the Leadership Greater Syracuse program. Victor lives in Baldwinsville, NY with his wife, Wendy, and their three children. He serves the community by working on various Radisson Committees as well as coaching youth lacrosse teams.

Nichola (Nicki) Arnett-Burke was employed by the CN Tower in Toronto, Ontario where she managed human resources and labor relations for 700 unionized and non-unionized staff. Nicki then went on to direct the Human Resources portfolio at Bond, Schoeneck & King. She attended the Masters of Industrial and Labor Relations graduate program at Michigan State University and received her Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Relations from LeMoyne College in 1989.

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New Board Members atSAMARITAN CENTER

Fall & Winter Items Needed

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

GUEST ITEMS
bars of soap, shampoo, conditioner, hand lotion, tissues, deodorant, chapstick, toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, razors, shaving cream, antibacterial wipes, gloves, socks, hats, scarves

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS
latex gloves, sandwich & trash bags, large bottles of hand sanitizer, bleach & laundry detergent

OFFICE SUPPLIES
blue gel pens, stamps (Forever), office and packing tape, white copier paper, flash drives

DINING ROOM
baker’s Rack - Heavy Duty, Large Commerical Fan, New Toiletry Cart

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It’s Time for

2013-2014 Samaritan Center Annual Appeal

Please make a generous gift today
to provide the warmth of family, one bowl at a time.

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to provide the warmth of family, one bowl at a time.
Thank you So Much
please visit our volunteer web. page for additional thank yous

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SYSCO Food Service
The Silverhammers
Wal-Mart Cicero
Welch Allyn
Michael, & Vanessa Yates
& all of our sweet bakers

Save the Dates -

Good Samaritan Award Dinner
May 2, 2014 - 5:30pm - Holiday Inn, Liverpool, NY

Soup Bowl Golf Open
August 11, 2014 - 1pm - Lakeshore Country Club, Cicero, NY

United Way of Central New York
located at St. Paul's Cathedral

Director: 315-472-8156
Office: 315-472-6505
Syracuse NY 13202

SHARING GIFTS
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March 2014