



Parish Heartbeats: Stories of Faith In Action

Helping families attain self-sufficiency

When Pat McAuliffe was looking for more ways to volunteer at St. Margaret Mary she was drawn to our Daybreak Transitional Housing Ministry. As Pat recalled, "It appealed to me because I grew up in an urban environment (New York City) and lived in apartments for 32 years. I knew people from mixed backgrounds and enjoyed working with them."

Daybreak Transitional Housing Ministry is a program of Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Joliet. Working with volunteer parishes Daybreak provides transitional housing and supportive services to homeless families so that they can work toward recovering economic and family stability. Families are screened by Catholic Charities and interviewed by our Daybreak Ministry to determine whether the family is a good fit with our parish. Once a parish accepts a family the parish agrees to provide the family with housing and mentoring.

Daybreak is a goal-oriented structured program that helps families work on issues such as employment, education, budgeting and parenting skills. Parish volunteer mentors meet with the families weekly, sharing their wisdom, experience and support. Currently our parish funds one apartment for a Daybreak family.

As the chairperson of our parish Daybreak Ministry Pat works with her team to recruit mentors and keep an eye out for apartments in good locations (near shopping and job opportunities). Pat is also involved with interviewing prospective families to determine their suitability for our program, and she deals with the landlords and helps prepare apartments for new guests by doing furniture drives, cleaning and painting the apartment.

It is the mentoring and support that Daybreak volunteers give to families that most appeals to Pat, "I was fortunate I had a family that supported higher education and respected all people, and I felt I needed to help those who did not learn all the skills I had acquired growing up."

Once a family is accepted into our parish Daybreak program, we make a commitment of up to two years to help them achieve economic self-sufficiency. For their part, families must follow certain regulations determined by Catholic Charities

and commit themselves to the goals they set with their Daybreak mentoring team.

The work is not always easy and Pat recognizes how important it is to have strong faith and a generous heart: "I depend on God to give me patience and insight into our guests. Often they don't trust us, and they withhold vital information which hinders their advancement. While this can be frustrating for our Daybreak team, we must realize that this is how they have learned to survive. My faith helps me stay committed to the families even during the troubling times."



Our Daybreak ministry is always open to new volunteers. As Pat points out, "Our volunteers work so hard, with no agenda except to help our guests learn as much as possible to better manage their lives and that of their family in their two years in this program."

If you are interested in learning more, contact Pat McAuliffe at 630-420-8835.

Parish Heartbeats is an occasional bulletin column that celebrates the ways St. Margaret Mary parishioners make a difference in the lives of others.