



works OF mercy

All Saints Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry

VOLUNTEER FOCUS

Frank Cruz: "Everybody has something to give."

You are the Salt of the Earth, the Light of the World. (Matthew 5:13-14)



In this quote from Sacred Scripture, Jesus tells his followers who they are to be. As we enter one of the holiest seasons of the Catholic liturgical

year – Lent– let us examine the state of our souls, repent of our offenses to God, and amend our lives so that we may be more fully Salt and Light for the Lord. As the program manager for the All Saints Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry (ASSKFP) in Detroit, I can attest that one of the greatest ways to amend one's life is to serve the poor. Together in Christ, we make the Love and Mercy of the Father tangible at ASSKFP. The need is great, and your support is irreplaceable. You can learn more about us in this first issue of ASSKFP *Works of Mercy* newsletter and about how you can give of your time, talent, and treasure by serving the afflicted ones right here in southwest Detroit. Wishing you a blessed Lenten season, and a grace-filled Easter.

Yours in Christ,

David Allen

Program Manager

All Saints Soup Kitchen
and Food Pantry



Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me' (Matt. 25:34-36).

These verses from the Gospel of Matthew encapsulate life for Frank Cruz, a fixture among the regular volunteers at the All Saints Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry (ASSKFP) for the last three years. Originally from Texas, he came to

Michigan in 1986. In 2014, he moved into Detroit's Delray neighborhood near ASSKFP where he noticed a daily gathering of the hungry at All Saints church on Fort Street at Springwells, just off I-75 in southwest Detroit.

"I saw all these people coming and thought I would like to be a part of it," he said. "I wanted to do something for the community, helping the needy, the elderly, and the homeless."

He introduced himself to the woman who was then director of the soup kitchen who asked him to join the Monday volunteer team. "The team leader for Monday's soup kitchen asked if I would help open up in the morning so she wasn't doing it alone," he said.

Cruz proceeded to learn and take on responsibilities, from setting up and preparing the daily meal to serving and cleaning up. Since then he has volunteered at ASSKFP nearly every day the doors have opened. During his free time, Cruz, a retired musician skilled in guitar, drums, and keyboards, plays at a nearby Baptist church.

When asked why he gives so much of his time to service activities, Cruz said, "I think a lot of people today are more selfish. Instead of giving, they want to take. You hardly find people that want to help anymore. People don't always appreciate what is given to them when they have the chance to help someone else."

Inspired by his fellow volunteers, Cruz recalled a man in his 80s who serves at the soup kitchen. He said the man always brings donuts when he comes and even takes those donuts to the homeless living under the nearby freeway overpass.



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Cruz admires his respect for others.

"We're all the same," he said. "God made you just like he made me."

Cruz said the kind of patron at the soup kitchen who "grabs at his heart" is like the woman with one leg he remembers who came down the long stairway into the basement service area at ASSKFP with her daughter in tow. They are the ones "who can't do for themselves".

"I'm glad to do it for them," he said.

Cruz himself endured a period of homelessness for about six months. He said he survived doing odd jobs and getting by as best he could. "I never went hungry," he said. "God helps those who help themselves."

In 2016, Cruz was honored for his dedicated service at ASSKFP, receiving the first annual Mercy in Action Award from Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan.

Cruz said he tries to extend loving respect to everyone he meets. One day while working at ASSKFP, Cruz noticed a man sitting outside. The man was drinking a can of beer, and his hands were shaking. He looked depressed, so Cruz said, "Hey, how's it going?" The man did not respond, so Cruz sat down next to him and tried to engage him in conversation. The man shared some of his difficulties. "Well, at least you are alive and it's a beautiful day," Cruz told him, trying to be positive, and then went back inside. Later that same day after his shift was over, Cruz came outside to see the same man who gave him a wave and a smile. The man said, "You know, you made my day earlier. I was thinking about killing myself, but not anymore."

To learn more about volunteering at ASSKFP, call program manager Dave Allen at 855-882-2736, ext. 1 or email: allend@ccsem.org.

Catholic School in Canton sets its Charitable Mission to Assist Namesake Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry

Situated in the quiet, tree-lined streets of Canton, Michigan, just west of the intersection of Beck on Warren Road, there is a Catholic school, its hallways buzzing with students adorned in neat uniforms. Opened in 1997, All Saints Catholic School has about 580 students in preschool through eighth grade, the fruit of a joint effort between four neighborhood parishes - St. Thomas a'Becket, St. John Neumann, Resurrection, and St. Kenneth.



Teacher Jessica Geyer with some of her third grade students at All Saints School in Canton.

Just a half an hour away, in southeast Detroit's Delray neighborhood just off I-75 at the corner of Fort and Springwells, is a parish school that closed many years ago. Next to the empty school sits the parish church, quiet save for Saturday evenings and Sundays when Mass is celebrated. On weekdays in the basement below, volunteers ready to open the doors to a daily gathering of hungry local neighborhood residents, donned in not-so-neat but functional clothing to protect them from the weather. This is the All Saints Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry (ASSKFP) that, coincidentally, shares the same name as the suburban school to the northeast in Canton.

In March 2016, All Saints School raised \$7,580.78 for the soup kitchen and food pantry.

Since the teachers, students, and parents at All Saints School learned of the existence of ASSKFP about five years ago, they've made the most of their kinship. An All Saints teacher mentioned the soup kitchen and food pantry in southwest Detroit during a meeting of the School's Catholic Identity Committee, and ASSKFP was promptly adopted by the school as their special charity.

"We have the same name, and we were very interested in a positive relationship and in supporting them," said Jessica Geyer, a third grader teacher at the school for the past seven years.



Until recently, Geyer served as chair of the Identity Committee, overseeing most of the school's fundraisers and donation drives. The committee determines school service projects, organizing appropriate activities for seasons throughout the liturgical year. She said the committee has been organizing fundraising events for several years supervised by different teachers.

"We try to support the food pantry in any way we can," she said. "During Catholic Schools Week, we had a day where the kids brought in a can of soup for the pantry and we were able to gather about 400 cans."

The first time the school sponsored a food drive for ASSKFP, students brought in nonperishable food items to stuff into grocery carts. "The carts were all filled, lining the walls of the entire gym," said Geyer. "It was an amazing sight."

Since then, the school holds events for students at different times during the year to raise funds. "Our committee is really a group effort of teachers throughout the school," Geyer explained. "We work together to find a common goal reachable for all the students and something everybody can be involved in."

"We have done different activities to drum up excitement," she explained. "Penny Wars is always popular. We put big five gallon buckets for each grade in the main hallway and then every day, the students go down and put their change in the buckets."

The pennies collected add to a grade's total, while coins collected of other values are subtracted from the total. "The

kids will put their nickels and the dimes, for example, into the eighth graders bin so they lose points." The grade with the highest total gets some sort of prize in the end, like an ice cream social or a pizza party. In March 2016, All Saints School raised \$7,580.78 for the soup kitchen and food pantry.

"The students get really excited when there is some sort of a competition," said Geyer.

Another favorite was the staff versus student challenge in 2015. "We met our fundraising goal so the staff had to dress in a school uniform while the students enjoyed an out of uniform day," Geyer said. "It was a lot of fun."

A visual motivator for the students and their parents has been a thermometer sign posted outside the main school office which shows how close students are to reaching a particular fundraising goal.

"We always try to put what we have collected on display so they can see it," Geyer said. "The thermometer has been a good visual."

A 2015 fundraiser netted more than \$2,775. Geyer delivered the check to David Allen, program director of the ASSKFP. "He said something along the lines of, 'Now I can pay the utility bill,'" she remembers. "At the time, I thought the amount wasn't all that much, but it was touching to see Dave's reaction."

Besides fundraisers and food drives, the Canton All Saints students have collected school supplies to give to kids who visit ASSKFP. "We sent out a note at the beginning of the year



Geyer served as chair of the school Identity Committee which oversees most of the fundraisers and donation drives.

when parents were shopping for school supplies anyway," said Geyer. "Places like OfficeMax usually have notebooks on sale and we suggested to our parents to buy a couple extra. We then delivered them to the food pantry and they were able to distribute them. The parish told us they also used some of the glue sticks, crayons, and notebooks for their Religious Education program."

Annually, the school also sponsors a Christmas Giving Tree campaign during Advent to collect gifts for children from low income families at All Saints Parish.

"Our Advent Giving Tree is the service project we do every year," said Geyer. "This past year we had a group of eighth graders go down and help deliver the gifts. It was a very powerful experience for them. They were able to go in and meet the volunteers that work there, as well as visit with some of the people who get food from the soup kitchen. We are hoping to send more groups down in the future. It's good for the students to see this place only a half hour away where people are so in need."

The All Saints Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry is a ministry of Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan. To donate a monetary gift to the ASSKFP, visit ccsem.org and click on the donate link, making sure to designate your donation for All Saints. You can also mail your donation directly to ASSKFP at 7824 W Fort Street, Detroit, MI 48209-2702. To donate food to the soup kitchen or food pantry, contact program manager David Allen at 855-882-2736, ext. 1 or email: allend@ccsem.org.

Dearborn Magnet Students Learn Life Lessons Volunteering at ASSKFP



Dearborn Magnet teacher Clayton Campbell (left) works in the ASSKFP with his student volunteers.

A group of high school students from Dearborn Magnet High School are learning important life lessons while volunteering weekly at the All Saints Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry (ASSKFP).

“It feels good to help people in need,” said Jesse, a senior at the Dearborn Heights school. “It makes you thankful for what you have.”

Dearborn Magnet teacher Clayton Campbell said the school, with an enrollment of about 30, is an alternative program for students in the Dearborn Public Schools who want to complete high school. Dearborn Magnet has small class sizes and most courses can be completed online and offers a dual enrollment option at Henry Ford Community College.

One of the pillars at Dearborn Magnet is community service. Students attend a daily community service class and volunteer for a variety of worthwhile causes in the area. Every Friday, as

much as possible during the school year, Campbell brings his students to help at ASSKFP.

School staff learned about the ASSKFP from a former school counselor whose parents regularly volunteer at the soup kitchen.

“This is now one of the only service projects our students do,” said Campbell. “The experience shows them real people and real issues, and helps make our students more unselfish and caring.”

One student named Jacob is quick to point out his teacher does not make him volunteer. “I come because I want to,” he said. “It makes me feel great and brings me joy. I feel greatly blessed and inspired.”

Campbell is proud of his students. He said the demographic at Dearborn Magnet has changed over the past several years. The school system initially

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decided which students were sent into the program, but now there is an application and interview process. “Students need to demonstrate a desire to improve,” Campbell said. “We don’t want students who just want to get by. Our program tries to help students feel good about themselves.”

The ongoing service project at ASSKFP is helping to achieve that goal.

Work outside school at Dearborn Magnet counts toward high school graduation. Though most of Campbell’s students work the equivalent of full time jobs when not in school – about 25 hours a week – they enjoy giving some of their remaining time at ASSKFP.

“Not everything in life is about money,” said Jacob.

His classmate, Jackson, agrees. “You see these people who come in with nothing or very little. If you were in that situation, you would want someone to help you out.”

Paul, a Dearborn Magnet student who has been volunteering for almost two years at ASSKFP, said he can understand what the patrons at the soup kitchen are going through. “When my family – my mom, my brothers and me – moved back to this area from Tennessee, we didn’t have much. It’s great to know somebody is out there that cares about you.”



Livonia Parish Has Active Soup Kitchen Ministry

When asked what it's like to volunteer at the All Saints Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry (ASSKFP) in southwest Detroit, St. Colette parishioner Bob Mezzadri, said, "The soup kitchen is a great way to give back to the less fortunate. It's amazing how many people we know in the parish now through participation in this ministry. It's a way to keep our church community vibrant and doing God's work." Mezzadri has volunteered at ASSKFP since 2007.

Once a month for more than a decade, St. Colette Parish in Livonia has organized a group of parish volunteers stocked with food to serve guests at ASSKFP. They first began ministering through another soup kitchen at St. Leo Parish in Detroit.

"We sat down with our Christian Service director and asked if we could bring our own food to serve at St. Leo's," said Mezzadri. "Our pastor said the parish could contribute money towards its purchase and volunteers would supply the bread and rolls. We were able to get a local grocer to donate drinks and bought the rest of the supplies for a tasty meal. Our parish held donation drives a couple of times a year to cover additional expenses."

"At that time our cook, Jim, was also serving at the All Saints soup kitchen and asked us if we could go there once a month," Mezzadri explained. "We started with a new schedule, once a month at St. Leo and once a month All Saints."

He said St. Colette volunteers were "impressed by how well run the program was at All Saints. The cleanliness and organization was outstanding."

"We now have a budget that covers both soup kitchens," Mezzadri said. "Most of the money comes from

Nancy Ohman, who oversees the St. Colette Parish Christian Service ministry, said the parish faithful "really like to help others. I can't say enough good things about our parishioners."

"My husband Ken and I have been volunteering at the All Saints Soup Kitchen since we retired six years ago," said



Volunteers from St. Colette Parish in Livonia gather in prayer before serving begins.

Once a month for more than a decade, St. Colette Parish in Livonia has organized a group of parish volunteers stocked with food to serve guests at ASSKFP.

parishioner donations. Between the two soup kitchens, we probably have 25 regulars and 20 occasional volunteers. They've been recruited through parishioners and their friends by word of mouth, articles in the church bulletin, and once a year, through our "Time and Talent" weekend. We've had volunteers of all ages, up to their nineties. They enjoy the interaction with other volunteers and those we serve."

parishioner Michelle Nagy. "We wanted to do something for others. We began as subs and gradually became regulars."

"Ken usually helps with putting the food on the plates. I usually take the meals to the guests at their seats. And there are various other jobs that we do while we are there."

"We enjoy interacting with the guests," she said. "They are always very appreciative. The volunteers from St. Colette are the best, and All Saints is a rewarding place to spend our time."

Turning no one away, the volunteer and donation-based All Saints Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry (ASSKFP) is a source of corporal and spiritual works of mercy by fulfilling its mission to provide food security for the hungry in the Springwells and Delray neighborhoods of southwest Detroit as well as nearby communities. Collaborating with volunteers from Catholic parishes and other organizations, ASSKFP has continuously served the needy for more than 20 years. Operating year round, the soup kitchen offers patrons a well-balanced hot meal for lunch three days a week, and the food pantry serves the hungry two days a week. The soup kitchen and food pantry feed up to 200 of Christ's lambs each day of operation.



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All Saints Food Pantry in Need of Monthly Help

All Saints Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry (ASSKFP) is asking parishes, schools, businesses, service groups and other organizations to consider monthly service at its food pantry. While ASSKFP has already partnered with volunteers from several Catholic parishes and other groups to maintain its soup kitchen operations year round, similar support is needed for the food pantry.

"We are looking for volunteer teams to commit to working once a month on a regular basis," said ASSKFP program manager David Allen. "This would involve a team of five to seven volunteers coming to the food pantry on their selected day and assisting with food distribution to our clients from low income households. We need teams to adopt our Wednesday operations, beginning at 12:30 pm and ending at 3:30 pm."



A food pantry volunteer assists a client with food selection.

"It is not required, but having volunteers who speak Spanish would be a big plus," Allen added.

Volunteer duties include:

- Non Perishable Food selection - volunteers guide clients in selection of food items from each food group, based on household size.
- Fresh Item Tables - volunteers help distribute fresh produce and bread to clients, based on household size.
- Baggers - volunteers place selected food into bags or boxes for clients.

Teams also assist with set-up before the pantry opens and clean-up afterward.

Please prayerfully consider adding the All Saints Food Pantry to your monthly ministry activities. For more information, contact David Allen at 855-882-2736, extension 1 or allend@ccsem.org