

more than a SOUP KITCHEN

a St. Patrick Center Publication

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ISSUE 001





A Note from the CEO

Welcome to the first issue of St. Patrick Center's *More than a Soup Kitchen* publication. For nearly 40 years, St. Patrick Center has been transforming the lives of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This includes serving a warm meal every day through our Casserole Program. This year, St. Patrick Center has served nearly 42,500 meals to people in need. These meals serve as an important part of connecting our clients and community members to our services and building a path to permanent, safe housing. With your support, 2,824 clients have been served this year. Thank you for your continued support and we hope you enjoy reading more about St. Patrick Center.

– Anthony D'Agostino, CEO

Veterans Day 5K November 5, 2022

This Veterans Day, race to end veteran homelessness. While less than 6% of this country's population are veterans, they represent over 25% of the clients St. Patrick Center serves. St. Patrick Center has several programs dedicated to helping veterans and their families get back on their feet.

Your participation in this event shows the compassion you have for the mission of St. Patrick Center and helps make the St. Louis community a better place to live and work for everyone. Registration is now open at www.stpatrickcenter.org/vet5k.



Give Thanks Thanksgiving Program November 21, 2022

The Give Thanks Thanksgiving Program assists St. Patrick Center clients and their families at Thanksgiving time. Clients receive grocery items such as potatoes and cranberries and a frozen turkey. You can help a St. Patrick Center family celebrate Thanksgiving by making a gift of \$25 to help a family's holiday dreams come true. We are also in need of frozen turkeys, turkey pans, and gently used winter coats.

Christmas Wishes Family Sponsorship Program December 14-15, 2022

Christmas Wishes assists more than 450 St. Patrick Center clients and their families each year by providing Christmas gifts. Sponsors will receive the wish list of the individual/family. The wish list will list all members of the household, clothing sizes, and special gift wishes. We ask that you purchase a minimum of two gifts per person in their families with suggested spending of \$40 – \$50 per person.

LEARN MORE & REGISTER:



BY THE NUMBERS: TRANSFORMING LIVES

JANUARY 1 - MAY 31, 2022:



2,824

Individuals Served



539

Veterans Served



42,492

Hot Meals Provided



71

Distinct Clients Employed

SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE

St. Patrick Center has been named Top Work Places 2022 and recognized as a What's Right with the Region award winner for our Hospital to Healthy Housing program.





FROM CLIENT TO COWORKER

When you've held the distinction and honor of serving your country

in the armed forces, experiencing homelessness can blunt that point of pride.

"A lot of veterans have pride," says St. Patrick Center Case Manager Rico Dotson, "and a lot of times they don't want to ask for help, or they don't want to accept help."

Dotson, who served in the Air Force for 11 years including duty in the Gulf War, knows this firsthand. Before he began working with veterans experiencing homelessness at St. Patrick Center, the St. Louis native once faced homelessness himself.

Dotson, who graduated from Roosevelt High School and holds two master's degrees, admits that he too had a hard time asking for and accepting help. After being laid off from his job in the financial sector, Dotson, found that he could no longer afford the house he owned.

"I had other opportunities to stay someplace but I was so independent, I said I can do this on my own," Dotson said. "Sometimes we get in that frame of mind where we don't need help. So, you know, I ended up staying at a shelter for a little while."

It was during that time that Dotson discovered St. Patrick Center.

"Someone mentioned to me about St. Patrick Center, and I said, 'what is St. Patrick Center, I've never heard of it,'" he said. "So they took me down there and got me into the HVRP program."

Established in 1988, the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program provides job readiness training and life skills support to veterans who meet the federal definition of homelessness.

While he attended the HVRP program, Dotson worked as a part-time accountant for a home health care company. But the program's employment counselors saw a better fit for Dotson – a job working in the HVRP program itself.

Dotson saw the new position as a way to get away from the stresses of corporate finance while giving back to a program that had helped him.

"I said, 'this is something I could do, this is something I could give back, and not be stressed about it,'" Dotson said "So I applied for the job, and lo and behold, I got the job doing employment for HVRP. That opened a lot of doors for me to meet different veterans and things like that."

Dotson said being unhoused and then working with those who don't have housing helped him understand the bigger picture of homelessness.

"I've learned a lot since working at St. Patrick Center," Dotson said. "Homelessness has no face, it has no type of clothes you wear because anyone can become homeless at any time, no matter how much money you have. Your house could burn down and you're homeless."

Dotson soon found himself transitioning into supportive services for veterans. In addition to connecting veterans to housing, Dotson helps his clients work toward independence through financial education, mental health and substance use disorder

“NOT EVERYBODY’S ADAPTED TO TAKING CARE OF THEMSELVES OR BEING HOUSED”

treatment and resources such as food pantries and furniture referrals.

“I found that more fascinating because you deal with so much more than housing, just much more than just putting the person in a shelter or a roof over their head,” Dotson said. “You know, there’s a mindset to it because not everybody’s adapted to taking care of themselves or being housed. The key is to sit down with that client and find out what their needs are.”

In addition to finding his work with clients rewarding, Dotson is also happy to be part of the St. Patrick Center family, citing less stress, more room for self-care and better opportunities at the nonprofit. He especially enjoys his role on St. Patrick Center’s Equity Committee.

“The biggest thing with the Equity Committee is information [and education],” Dotson said. “St. Patrick Center is open to everyone who walks through the door and wants to make them feel comfortable.”

It’s a comfort level Dotson has experienced since he came to St. Patrick Center seeking services. And a satisfaction level he now feels as an employee.

“The best thing about this job is I can see my work every day when I help someone,” he said. “With St. Patrick Center, everyday has been a good day.”

A MINUTE WITH THE STAFF... KENI, STREET OUTREACH

What fun team building activity do you wish we did more often?

Volunteering as St. Patrick Center. Getting out in the community.

What are two things that you love about working at this company?

I love the recognition and appreciation shown for the employees who work at SPC. I feel seen and I’m sure others can say the same; in some way. Also, I love the sole intent of SPC. It’s refreshing to work at a place that’s for good and not greed.

What’s your favorite quality about yourself?

I’m an optimist, I believe in creative and positive solutions.

If you could add one element to our workspace, what would it be?

Give me a massage chair!

What is your last played song on Spotify (no cheating!)

Algorhythm by Childish Gambino

Who was your celebrity crush in high school?

Diggy Simmons

If you were stuck on a deserted island with two books, what would they be?

A fill-in book and a how to survive on a deserted island guide.

What’s your hidden talent?


I can talk with my mouth closed.

If you could hop on a plane right this second, where would you go?

I’d immediately fly to Zimbabwe!



SPC Street Outreach staff, Keni, at the SPC staff retreat day at the ballpark.



Photos taken by Humans
of St. Louis at the Cathedral
Basilica of St. Louis

HUMANS OF ST. LOUIS: **THE OLWIG LEGACY**

“Twenty years ago, I could have gotten involved in a dozen other things

, but I got connected with St. Patrick Center because of my work. World Wide Technology was invited to be a corporate sponsor and the CEO, Jim Kavanaugh, said yes. He was eventually invited to served on the board and then as Board President. Before that, I had been involved a little, like with the Casserole Program through my local parish. At that time, my kids were five and three, so I had my hands full. I probably just bought raffle tickets for fundraisers. But in the last 10 years, I stepped up my volunteering. When Jim’s term [as Board President] expired, he asked me if I would want to join the board. I told him, ‘Absolutely.’ It was because of him that I started going to events and participating, volunteering, and donating.

What has kept me volunteering is the impact St. Patrick Center makes in the community. They are serving individuals who are not often thought about. Many clients suffer from substance use disorders or mental illness. People don’t choose to be homeless. It’s a condition that befalls them. So our role is to help them avoid homelessness and provide wrap-around services. Last year alone, we served over 2,200 people with mental health services. We helped about 800 people stay in their homes. And we found jobs for about 170 people.”

– Bob Olwig



"In the winter of 2021, it was bitterly cold for a good 10 to 15 days. We had way too many people on the street that couldn't find shelter. Some clients had even been kicked out of shelters and weren't allowed back in. There are spaces that make it more challenging for people to receive services because of barriers like on-site breathalyzers and drug screens, strict curfews, rigid rules, forced labor participation, or admission-dependent class attendance. So St. Patrick Center decided to open its doors during that cold spell. We worked with other agencies to provide a winter haven, which is basically a low-barrier space for clients to come into and get a hot cup of coffee. If they wanted to spend the night, we had 30 cots set up, too. I volunteered seven of those evenings, and over the course of that time, I saw some of the most awesome compassion watching the way the social workers and people from other agencies talked to our clients. Many people didn't have coats, and there were hundreds that had been donated along with sweatshirts and socks. There were so many clothes piled up that when clients came in, I was able to go to the stash, pick two jackets, and ask the person, 'Which one do you want?' It was then that I really saw how people wanted to have dignity and their own agency to pick and choose what they want, not necessarily just what could be given to them."

- Bob Olwig



"FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES IN MY AGE GROUP AREN'T ALWAYS FAMILIAR WITH ST. PATRICK CENTER. SO A LOT OF WHAT I DO IS ADVOCATE AND EDUCATE PEOPLE ON WHAT IT IS. I DO SO MUCH POSTING ON SOCIAL MEDIA JUST TO SPREAD THE WORD."

-ANNA OLWIG

"One of the first things we did [for St. Patrick Center] together as a family was serve lunch on Christmas Day. It was my dad's idea, of course. We even took my grandmother with us. Now it's a tradition. We've been doing it for seven years. My parents also participate in the annual gala and golf tournament and help with fundraising. When I was coming up on graduating college, I made a comment about wanting to get involved with a charitable organization. My dad mentioned the St. Patrick Center Young Professionals Board. I had no idea it existed. At the time, I met with the then-president and he was so cool. I realized it would also be a good opportunity to meet people my age and connect with people I wouldn't have crossed paths with otherwise. The Young Professionals Board focuses a lot on fundraising activities. My full-time job is in marketing and communications, which is a lot of activity planning. So I felt like I could use my skills to meet the organization's needs."

- Anna Olwig





"Nobody wants to be homeless. Some of the negative dialogue I'll hear people say around the unhoused community is, 'Just go get a job,' or, 'What did they do wrong?' But that's not always the case. Mental health is a huge aspect and sometimes not being dealt a good hand of cards in life. I've learned to be more compassionate and adjust my own way of thinking around how someone might end up in the circumstances they are in. Since joining the St. Patrick Center Young Professionals Board and becoming more educated on the terminology, I definitely correct people a whole lot more. I don't think they have bad intentions in how they phrase things, but they might need to be educated and a bit more compassionate."

- Anna Olwig

"You realize when you talk to some clients that they are just like you. They have a family. They want to take care of themselves. They want dignity. I don't think a lot of people want handouts. It's kind of corny, but St. Patrick Center provides hand-ups. It's about getting workforce development and training to get a better job. It's about offering wraparound services for mental health and substance use disorders. And, ultimately, it's finding someone a home they can live in. These are basic human needs. I love Anna's word 'compassion' because I think we need to have more of that for others."

- Bob Olwig

"My mom and dad were always very generous with their time, talent, and treasure. That rubbed off on me. I'm glad to see it rub off on Anna, too. When my dad retired, he joined St. Vincent de Paul as part of the parish. He volunteered to take phone calls for people who needed help. They recorded the calls in a volunteer book, so he would try to figure out who the people were, what they needed, and what they received in the past. I talked to him nearly every day, and you could tell when it was his week or weekend with the book. He was like me and got emotional listening to the stories of all of the people who needed help. And this was out in St. Charles County, so it's not even in the City."

My parents died of COVID. Their funeral celebrations were filled with so many people they had touched in their lives. You'd think I would get better talking about this, but it's hard to say it without choking up. It's been two years now. They both died on May 1st, 2020, within an hour of each other. It made headlines in St. Louis. Well, a local reporter got a call from a man who told him, 'I'm not going to give my name, but I knew Bill Olwig. We went to grade school together. I remember we were getting ready to load the bus to go on a field trip one day. I didn't have enough money and wasn't going to be able to go. But Bill gave me 50 cents so I could participate. I will always remember that.' It's not a huge deal, but it's who my dad was."

- Bob Olwig

"Recently, we both moved into the City — Mom and Dad in the Central West End, and me in the Grove area. Obviously, we were involved in St. Patrick Center before that, but when we moved, I noticed a lot more exposure to the community we are trying to support. In Creve Coeur and Chesterfield, you don't see the unhoused community as often. It feels a lot more prevalent here and we see just how many people need help."

- Anna Olwig

"The analogy someone told me once is that St. Patrick Center is pulling people out of the river. But we need to figure out how people are ending up in the river upstream and address those problems — mental illness, substance use, and other crises — and then have good training and jobs for people. It seems overwhelming because, at the end of the day, you can't solve every person's problem. Still, we're solving hundreds if not thousands every year."

I'm convinced some of these challenges are never going to go away. We are always going to have people who are marginalized. Drugs will still be around in 25 years, people will still have mental illnesses, and I'm sure people will fall on hard luck. So St. Patrick Center's services will always be needed. But we can solve chronic homelessness in St. Louis. Maybe not in 25 years, but we could solve it in 10 or five if the community would come together."

- Bob Olwig

ST. PATRICK CENTER IRISH OPEN




\$760,000 Raised!

Thank you to everyone who sponsored, donated, attended, and volunteered at the 38th annual St. Patrick Center Irish Open Gala & Golf Tournament, presented by Triad Financial Group, for making it one of the most successful fundraisers in our history. We are thankful for your continued compassion and support.



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SECOND CHANCES

Basia Skudrzyk is on a mission to change the narrative

around incarceration and re-entry. Having had her own traumatic experience with the incarceration system while a mom to 2 young children, Basia knows what it feels like to navigate reentry into society. She knows the feelings of hopelessness, sadness, and anxiety that come with the stigma of incarceration.

Her first-hand experience is why her work is impactful as a case manager for the Workforce Development program at St. Patrick Center.

The US has the highest incarceration rate of any country in the world. Even when people are released, the rate of recidivism, or the tendency for a prior inmate to reoffend and return to prison, is 44% - almost half of all people released!

The Workforce Development program, in partnership with other programs at St. Patrick Center, is on a mission to change this. Leaders know that providing training, education, and employment decreases crime rates overall. They also know that a return to incarceration ensures that people impacted by life in prison can't share their voice and experience, which is the most important piece in changing the narrative around incarceration.

So how does the Workforce Development program work? Taking a people-centered approach, the program operates with the understanding that people re-entering society after incarceration [and starting St. Patrick Center's workforce development program] need more than employment, they also need to find a passion and meaning for the work they do. This ensures they stay connected, interested, and have the ability to influence the lives of others - things we ALL need and want in our lives.

The program understands that people need a choice in what they do with their time spent working because much of their lives have been spent feeling voiceless without an identity.

To accomplish this, the program begins with each client completing a full questionnaire about their interests, skills, and passions. Case managers then use this as a guide to look for jobs aligned with their questionnaire results. They create short-term and long-term employment goals and coach clients to reach their goals. The program also offers an option to obtain a GED (many employment opportunities require a GED), keyboarding and basic technology classes (i.e. setting up an email account), and they provide telephones and even bicycles, as transportation is a huge barrier.

Most clients are placed within 2 months and ideally find employment based on where they are located geographically. Working with groups like Second Chance Employers and Roots of Success, clients have found employment in all major industries including:

Healthcare, entrepreneurship, cooking/baking, manufacturing, and social work (St. Patrick Center has a record of hiring their own clients!).

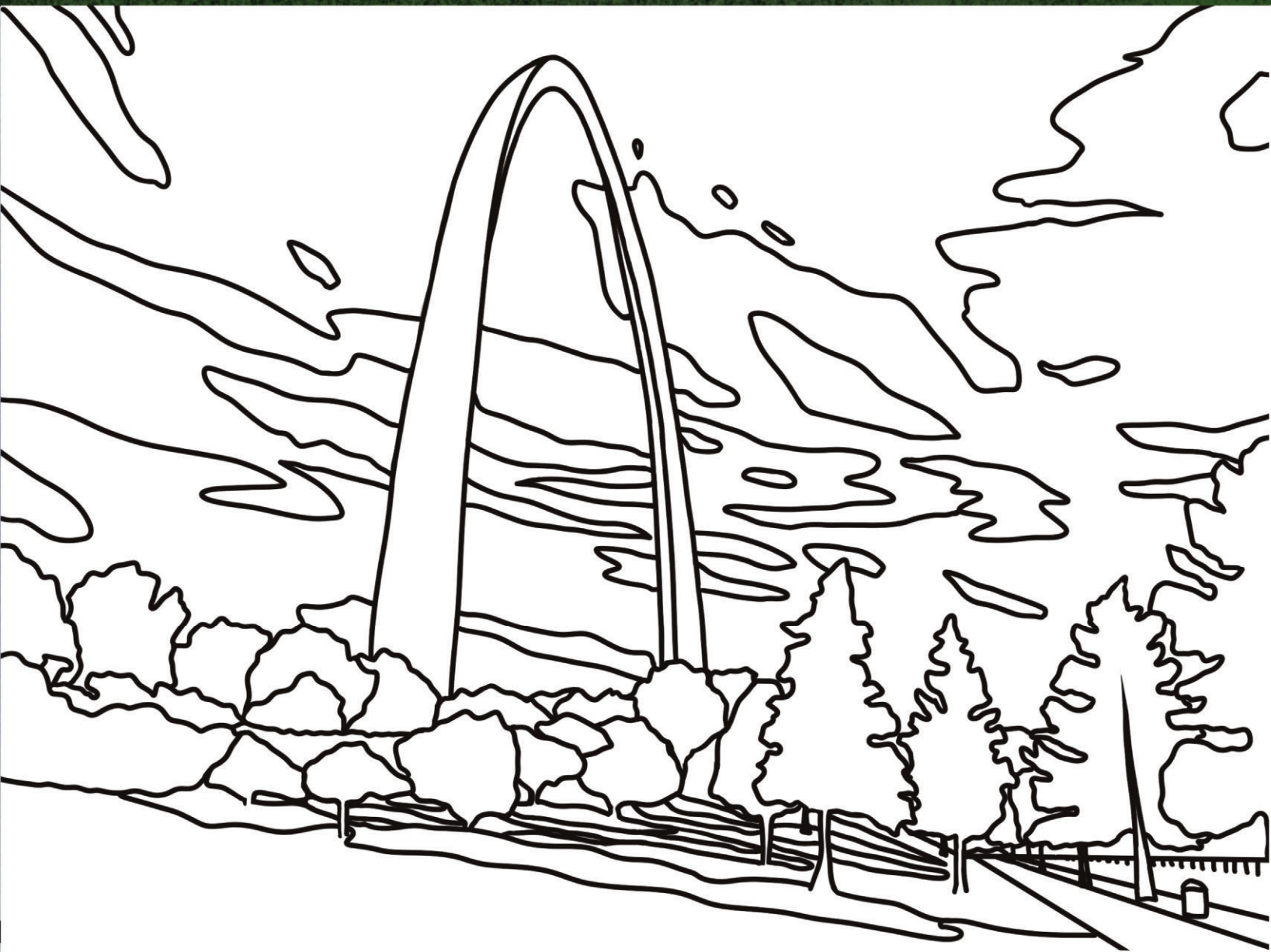
One amazing option for clients looking to work in construction/renovation is through Precision Recovery, a program designed to teach clients to renovate homes, with the goal of giving them mentorship, skills, and tools to restore and rebuild communities. Once clients reach a certain level of knowledge and autonomy, the program gives them the opportunity to go out on their own.

Basia is part of a multi-talented Workforce Development team that includes Job Developers and Employment Navigators. They take a people first approach to workforce business development. In the future, Basia would love to start a reverse mentoring program where clients would mentor St. Louis leaders. If she has unlimited resources for the program, Basia would give each client their own car, ensuring that transportation is never a barrier to staying employed.

"When we lift each other up in this process and provide ample support, we experience a beautiful transformation for everyone involved. Let's change the narrative," Basia Skudrzyk.

"PEOPLE RE-ENTERING SOCIETY AFTER INCARCERATION NEED MORE THAN EMPLOYMENT, THEY ALSO NEED TO FIND A PASSION."





Mission Statement:

St. Patrick Center transforms lives through sustainable housing, employment and healthcare, following the compassion of Jesus.

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BSI Constructors is one of St. Patrick Center's long-time corporate partners. BSI Constructors has generously supported St. Patrick Center for 30 years by giving time, talent and treasure in many ways. This includes supporting St. Patrick Center's employment programs, Rosati Place and McMurphy's Café. BSI employees and executives have also supported the Irish Open Gala & Golf Tournament and given back by volunteering and advocating in the community for St. Patrick Center clients.



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