

## FROM SISTER MARY:

Dear Friends of Emmaus,

Albert Einstein wrote:

*There are two ways to live:  
you can live as if nothing is a miracle;  
you can live as if everything is a miracle.*



Mark Fainstein

I prefer to live life as a miracle. And at Emmaus I try to be aware of the countless miracles that take place every day before my eyes. Something as simple as a kind word directed by a volunteer to a difficult guest who has come to the kitchen. Or maybe it's a child that walks in holding a bank full of pennies that he's saved for the soup kitchen. It's always the daily devotion of the staff who make Emmaus a labor of love.

In this issue of *The Companion*, we want to share with you some of the ordinary miracles that occurred at Emmaus in the past few months.

You, of course, are a great miracle. Because of you we have been able to provide a hearty and nutritious meal to our guests for 41 years. You have made it possible for us to serve over 1,500,000 meals to the poor of Erie. Now, there's a miracle that fills me with awe.

Let me close by telling you of a miracle that I experience whenever I serve at the soup kitchen. Jim, one of our regular guests, lives on the streets. He has nothing. Yet everyday, after he's eaten the soup kitchen meal, he thanks me and says, "I'm blessed, Sister Mary." It is an exchange that keeps me going and reminds me to "live as if everything is a miracle." Because it is.

*Sister Mary*

## *The Emmaus Miracle*



## FACE TO FACE: *the Emmaus Miracles*

There are a few miracles in the Bible about fish. They multiply. They are caught in abundance. They feed the multitudes. Emmaus Soup Kitchen had its own fish miracle this summer. The **S.O.N.S. OF LAKE ERIE (SAVE OUR NATIVE SPECIES)** managed to “catch” enough perch, bass, walleye and trout to host a fish fry dinner for over 200 guests. How did they catch so many fish? **CHUCK MILLER, EVENT ORGANIZER**, put out a request to 3,000 members in his organization’s newsletter, “The Bucket,” that began, “If you have any extra fish that you can spare or catch more than you need, we can use them. We are planning to put on a fish fry for the Emmaus Soup Kitchen sometime in August...” The members generously responded and just like in the Scripture story of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, each gave what they had and together it fed a multitude.



Jack Bock, a director of S.O.N.S of Lake Erie

For **CAITLIN SNIJEZEK, A VISTA VOLUNTEER WITH MERCYHURST UNIVERSITY**, the miracle of Emmaus Soup Kitchen are the guests. “One day, Tom, who is a kitchen regular, asked me to pack him a loaf of bread and some peanut butter and jelly,” Caitlin said. “Then he added, ‘I could use a bar of soap, too, if you have one.’ Caitlin said that she found a small personal care pack filled with toiletries. When she gave them to Tom, he said, “Why I don’t need all this. Is it all right if I share them with some of the other guys?” “The kind of care the guests have for each other—and I saw it repeated over and over again—blew me away,” Caitlin said.



But for the Emmaus Soup Kitchen, Caitlin herself is a small miracle. “She coordinated the soup kitchen meal every Saturday for a whole year on behalf of Mercyhurst University,” said Sister Mary Miller, and I never had to worry about it. She was so organized, dependable and good with the people that when her Vista year expired, I asked her to stay on during the summer and beyond.”

Caitlin and Soup Kitchen guest



Barbara Ann and Soup Kitchen guest

During cold Erie winter nights, you will find **BARBARA ANN LEWIS, RN**, in mobile shelters around the city checking the blood pressure of the homeless, assessing their health needs and making referrals.

“We built such good relationships with so many of the homeless that our group wanted to stay connected,” she explained. “So we contacted Emmaus to see if we could help their guests.”

And that’s how **FAITH COMMUNITY NURSES OF NWPA**, became a new Emmaus partner. Once a week six nurses set up a make shift clinic at the soup kitchen and attend to the basic health needs of those who eat there.

“Collaboration is always a miracle,” explained Sister Mary, “but this one feels like it dropped straight from heaven.”

Chia seeds and coconut oil and apple cider vinegar are currently labeled “miracle foods” because purportedly they are so good for your health.

Lots of people in Erie, including the children from the Kids Cafe, feel that meals served at **RICARDO’S RESTAURANT** are also “miracle foods” because they taste so good.

**CHEF PETER WEST, CO-OWNER OF RICARDO’S RESTAURANT**, serving Erie since 1936, recently began donating meals once a month to the Kids Cafe. Mmmm... chicken parmesan...meatballs and rigatoni.... Kids Cafe cook, Becky Kathman, is coordinating with Peter to schedule the dinners. “Our children give the meals a ‘thumbs up,’” she said. “Just think, our kids are getting the chance to enjoy a delicious meal from one of Erie’s favorite restaurants.



Kids Cafe child





Mate with Kids Cafe children

My name is **MATE JURKOVIC** and I am graduating this summer **FROM LOYOLA UNIVERSITY IN CHICAGO**. I came to the Kids Cafe in July to complete a project for my final class, Health Care in America. I chose to examine how food insecurity affects at-risk children. I knew about the Kids Cafe because when I was at Cathedral Prep we had a volunteer day here. We cleaned the building when it was empty and all I knew was that the Kids Cafe was an after-school free meal program.

But after spending three weeks here, I now think it's more of a Kids Miracle Cafe. The children here receive so much more than a healthy daily meal. This was not a desperate environment even though it was obvious that many of the children were very hungry, often going back for seconds and thirds. Instead I found it was a place filled with joy and smiles and caring and supportive adults. The children just don't go to the Kids Cafe—they are members of the Kids Cafe. It is their club, their community, a home away from home.

Do at-risk children need food? Absolutely. But what I discovered this summer is that they need more. And the Kids Cafe is providing them with a strong foundation. In the fall, I begin my studies in law at the University of Pittsburgh and I think this experience was a little miracle in my own life, one that prepares me to be a better person and a better citizen.

What's in a name? Quite a bit of work if you volunteer at the Emmaus Food Pantry. Almost 1500 households are registered here to receive weekly food bags, and once a year the state requires that they be interviewed to verify eligibility for subsidized government food.



Barbara Cullen and Food Pantry guest

For the food pantry that means updating personal information for people from Somalia, Iraq, Russia, Mexico, Ukraine, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Egypt, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Sudan, El Salvador, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and the United States.

"To get this done, we needed a miracle," said Sister Claire Marie Surmik, pantry co-coordinator. Somehow the miracle happened. **VOLUNTEERS, INCLUDING TRANSLATORS**, heard there was a need and came forward. After 7 weeks only 250 households had not been renewed.

"This was a task inspired by great generosity and love," said Surmik. "And isn't a genuine act of love always a miracle?"

## FOOD FOR THE SOUL:

*Why try to explain miracles to your children when you can just have them plant a garden.*

Robert Brault



ALL ARE INVITED

# Harvest Fest!

Sunday, September 27—1-4 P.M.  
214 East 11<sup>th</sup> St.

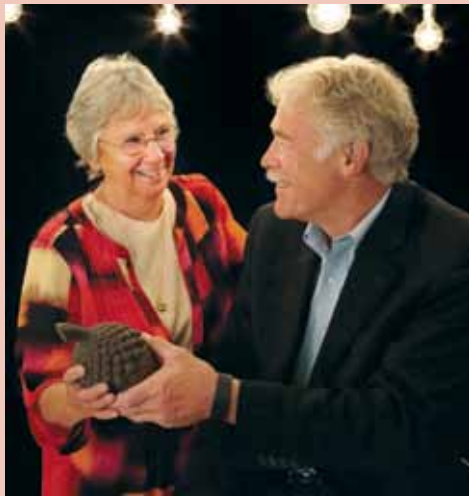


Music by  
TENNESSEE BACK PORCH  
Free picnic food and drinks



## FOR THE RECORD:

**ERIE GIVES** ...and gives...and gives to the people served by Emmaus Ministries. Emmaus placed 5th in number of contributors and 12th in total amount given during the annual Erie Gives Day sponsored by The Erie Community Foundation. Over \$35,000 was donated to Emmaus during the designated 12-hour period of giving on August 11. "Erie Gives is a blessing, a unique and creative event that enables so many good works in the area to benefit," said Sister Mary Miller, Emmaus director. Each donation of \$25 or more receives



Mark Fainstein

Sister Mary Miller with Mike Batchelor



a prorated match from a funding pool of \$220,000 made available to 337 local charities by gifts from The Erie Community Foundation and the projects' corporate sponsors. To promote the event Sister Mary Miller appeared with the Erie Community Foundation President Michael Batchelor on the August 2015 cover of *Lake Erie LifeStyle* magazine, a publication of WQLN public broadcasting and the *Erie Times-News*.

**ANNUAL SUMMER OUTING:** "For most of the children this is the biggest and best day of summer vacation," said Matt Gregoroff, coordinator of the annual summer outing for Sister Gus' Kids Cafe children. "But it's a great day for our church, too. We would not pass up a chance to give the kids a summer memory they can hold on to for days and weeks to come."

For ten years the Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ has raised money to take two busloads of children for a free pair of shoes and an afternoon at Splash Lagoon indoor water park, complete with a pizza party. "This year we raised \$1,500," Matt said, "and had \$500 left over that we gave to the Kids Cafe so the children can purchase new school uniform shirts."

Rachel Gregoroff and Kids Cafe child



The annual event was begun by Dennis Oswalt in 2001 and adopted by the Church of the Nativity when Dennis died unexpectedly in 2006. Members of Dennis's family are among the volunteers who participate each year, helping the children choose shoes at Payless ShoeSource, 3702 Liberty St., Erie and chaperoning the children at Splash Lagoon. Payless ShoeSource and Scott Enterprises, help sponsor the August event.



**NEW WHEELCHAIR RAMP:** An additional wheelchair ramp was built at Emmaus Soup Kitchen this summer. "A significant number of soup kitchen guests utilize wheel chairs, walkers, mobility chairs and motorized scooters," explained Margaret Kloecker, administrative assistant. "We also widened the entrance and this, too, makes it easier for all guests to access the dining room."





**ICE CREAM SUNDAES FOR EVERYONE!:** One of Martha Hilbert's birthday gifts did not have a big bow on top but it did have maraschino cherries, chocolate syrup, sprinkles and peanuts. Thinking ice cream sundae? Then you are correct. Emmaus Board member and soup kitchen volunteer Martha Hilbert celebrates her birthday twice—once on the actual day in March and then again during the summer with guests at Emmaus Soup Kitchen.



John, Tim, Martha, Olivia, Nancy and Johnny Hilbert

For four years and counting Martha's birthday gift from her son, John, daughter-in-law, Nancy and grandchildren Johnnie, Tim and Olivia is an ice cream sundae day at the Soup Kitchen. The family provides all the ingredients for her birthday present—Connie's chocolate and vanilla ice cream (locally made and Martha's favorite), whipped cream, sprinkles, maraschino cherries, peanuts and chocolate and caramel syrup. They also volunteer to prepare the desserts for guests. "Each sundae is made to order," said Emmaus Director Sister Mary Miller. "That is Martha's way—make it a special summertime treat—for everyone."

## In Memory

We are grateful to family members who asked that memorials be made to Emmaus in the names of their deceased loved ones.

Jacklyn E. (Schall) Baumann	Susan K. Granetto
Margaret "Peggy" S. (Davitt) Bucceri	Mary Elizabeth (Betty) Kennerknecht
George J. Burbules, Sr.	William E. Kuhler
Gerry I. Bryan Buser	Anna "Anne" (Podolski) Kwiatkowski
Barbara J. Dopierala	Margaret "Peg" J. Smith Martin
Salvatore J. Grack III	Jean Popoff

We also remember Emmaus Volunteers:

Johanna M. Heher • Margaret "Peg" J. Smith Martin

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Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, OSB; Rita Scrimenti; Shirley Whaley and Stephanie Gear  
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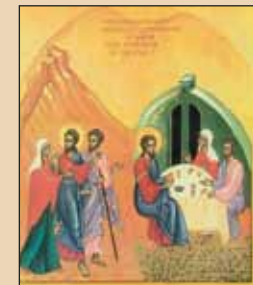
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### EMMAUS ICON

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Iconographer: Sister Marie-Paul, OSB  
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They came to know Him in the breaking of the bread.

Luke 24:35

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