



The Companion

September 2021
Vol. 31 No.3

www.emmauserie.org



The visions we offer our children
shape the future.

Carl Sagan

From Sister Mary . . .

Dear Friends,

I do believe Sister Joan Chittister's words, "We can only live in such a way that every night there is something for which to be grateful and every morning there is something for which to get up." But lately it's been more difficult to put into practice. The ongoing pandemic, the rupture of the country into vile rhetoric and lack of concern for the common good, the agony of Afghanistan and Haiti, the dire reports and daily evidence of climate change...all of these can paralyze hope. All of these can make me want to pull the covers over my head and stay in bed when morning arrives. Purpose? What purpose?

Then I take a walk to our Kids Cafe and am renewed. I like to listen to the stories that Breanna Mekuly, the coordinator of our program, tells me about the children. If anyone should be discouraged it's these children who often don't get enough to eat and whose lives teeter on the economic margins of society.

And yet...Breanna's accounts are filled with resiliency, wonder, creativity, and gratefulness. So, I thought we'd share a few with you. Perhaps you, too, are discouraged and anxious about the relentless headlines of violence and tragedy. If so, take a few minutes to be with our children as they laugh and jump in the fountain at Perry Square in downtown Erie. Or join them on the Victorian Princess and wait wide-eyed to see a dolphin or shark leap from Lake Erie waters! Or have the youthful openness and chutzpah to challenge a U.S. Senator to a game of one-on-one basketball. And who doesn't remember what it felt like to be sprayed by a garden hose on a hot summer afternoon? Wow, what would a firehose feel like?!

These are the simple pleasures and gifts of life. These are the reasons to end each day with a grateful heart and greet the dawn with purpose. Sometimes it just takes the children to remind me of life's blessings. And, once reminded, I must do whatever possible to shape a future that God intended for these expectant little ones.

In peace,

Sister Mary



Sister Mary Miller, Director of Emmaus



For the Record . . .

SPRUCING UP THE SOUP KITCHEN AND FOOD PANTRY

“If we needed any more proof that Emmaus has some of the most dedicated volunteers in the city, we got it this summer,” said Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry coordinator, Catherine Simon. Both in May and July, food pantry volunteers Debbie Shoup, Debbie Robertson, and Tom Lieb showed up in their work clothes to paint both the pantry and the kitchen a calming light blue.

Debbie Shoup paints the soup kitchen walls.

BENEDICTINE SISTERS HOST A GIVEAWAY AT THE FOOD PANTRY

Sister Jacqueline Sanchez-Small helped a young man carry the treasures he found. One item, in particular, stood out: a piece of art that Sister Jen Frazer had drawn of a mother holding her infant child. Sister Jacqueline listened to him as he said, “I have an eye for art. Now I have art. I am proud.”

Sister Judith Bohn added a dollar bill to a purse that she gave away, “I hope someone can buy a cup of coffee with it.”

Sister Mary Miller, the director of Emmaus,

walked up to a woman who was one of the first people to arrive. The woman told Sister Mary that it was her birthday the day before. Sister Mary found flowers among the items to give her as a way of celebrating.

These three encounters occurred during the Erie Benedictine Sisters Giveaway at Emmaus Food Pantry in June—a time when items “given away” by the sisters are offered free and freely to food pantry guests. The Sisters have held these events in the past, and Sister Stephanie Schmidt, prioress, encouraged the community to begin the tradition again.



Sister Diane Rabe assists a food pantry guest.

JOIN EMMAUS
FOR THE WALK
SEPTEMBER 26, 2021
AT PRESQUE ISLE



FOR MORE INFORMATION
CONTACT THE OFFICE
AT 814-459-8754

For the Record . . .

Summer at the Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry



Dave Holmes at the Food Pantry

Summer at Emmaus Food Pantry means fresh produce from Emmaus Grove. With over 100 pounds of vegetables harvested weekly during the peak of the season, the 200 guests who come through the food line each week receive tomatoes, beans, eggplants, onions, squashes and more in abundance. Food pantry volunteer Dave Holmes explained what it’s like to share the Grove’s bounty each week: “It’s easy to see on our guests’ faces. They perk up. The Emmaus Grove harvest is a treat for them because it’s something they don’t normally get. They are even willing to try vegetables they normally wouldn’t try because they know it is fresh and healthy.”



FRESH FOOD FOR EMMAUS

Good, consistent watering means good, consistent produce according to Mike Bailey, co-coordinator of Emmaus Grove. And good, consistent produce means more fresh food for Emmaus Food Pantry guests. To that end, an irrigation system was installed at the garden in springtime. The irrigation system, designed to offer regular watering, came in part from a donation by Tony Gilmore, a volunteer at the Grove.



Emmaus Grove volunteer, Deb Totzke (left), and co-coordinators and Master Gardeners Mike Bailey and Ellen DiPlacido show off a week’s harvest.

We Give Thanks . . .

ERIE GIVES DAY 2021

More than 500 donors contributed a record total of \$109,417 to Emmaus Ministries over a 12-hour period during the annual Erie Gives Day on August 10th. On this day, sponsored by the Erie Community Foundation, over 400 local non-profit organizations receive donations to support the work they offer throughout the city and county. "Once again I am humbled by the outpouring of generosity from the Erie community," said Sister Mary Miller, director of Emmaus. "To say thank you seems insufficient, but it means that we will repay your goodness by sharing it with those most in need."



GOLF TOURNAMENTS SUPPORT EMMAUS MINISTRIES

ERIE INSURANCE swung high for Emmaus Ministries and other local non-profits gifting \$10,000 to ten organizations as part of its 2020 Charity Challenge Golf Tournament. Since the tournament could not

be held last year, team captains from the 2019 tournament chose organizations to receive the \$100,000 that Erie Insurance committed to the event.



Golfers and Emmaus volunteers honor Barb Esper's life at *Swing with Bling*.

benefiting Emmaus Ministries. On August 9th, the all-women's tournament took place at Lakeshore Country Club. "Emmaus was Barb's favorite charity. She committed herself to preparing an entire Greek feast each month at the soup kitchen," Teresa Agnello, one of the tournament's coordinators, shared. "Barb died during the pandemic last year, and it was so hard to not be able to celebrate the lives of those who died during the height of Covid. This tournament helped us commemorate her generosity and her love of Emmaus. Barb always treated each person like they were the most special; she is an example of how we can live like Christ."



Sister Valerie Luckey (center) receives a \$10,000 check from Erie Insurance.

The equally elegant, charming, and generous personality of the late Soup Kitchen volunteer Barb Esper inspired a group of women to organize **SWING WITH BLING**, a golf tournament created in her honor with all proceeds ben-

We Give Thanks . . .

EMMAUS SAYS "THANK YOU" TO:

Kyle Bohrer and Gordon's Butcher & Meat Market for donating 400 pounds of ground beef to the Soup Kitchen...**AmeriHealth Caritas** for giving a \$500 grant to the Emmaus Grove...the

Whole Foods Co-Op for taking up their customer collection for Emmaus Ministries...

Ken Krein for donating plants to Emmaus Grove...

Kingsley United Methodist Church for choosing Emmaus to receive their Coins for Missions funds...

Melanie Shufran, Ralph Edes and the Shufran family for donating to-go containers throughout the pandemic as well as apples for soup kitchen meals along with

snacks and gifts for the children of the Kids Cafe...**South Hill Child Development Center** for dedicating their summer program to learning about and fundraising for the Kids Cafe...**Stan's Garden Center** for giving plants to Emmaus Grove...**Darrell Meyers and the Young People Who Care** group who spent the day at Emmaus cleaning the soup kitchen and food pantry and preparing dinners for guests.



Darrell Meyers, top left, and volunteers from Young People Who Care group at the Soup Kitchen

Emmaus Ministries Remembers

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

Dolores L. Ackerly Suminski

Joseph A. "Joe" Borawski

Robert David

Neil Dietrich

Charles W. "Charlie" Farrell, Jr.

Francis J. "Fran" Forish

Corinne Ann Haglund

Joan Menosky

John Ott

Joan Felege Rutkowski

Andy Shufran

Jay A. Smith

Bertha Mae (Sherwood) Weismiller

We also remember Emmaus volunteer Margaret Rose Mitchell Richir.

Summer at the Kids Cafe

NEW CHEF AT KIDS CAFE

Carly DiFuccia recently joined the staff of the Emmaus Kids Cafe as the Kitchen Manager. Bringing a wealth of experience in various restaurants, Carly's love of cooking began much earlier. Emmaus staff member, Sister Valerie Luckey, talked to Carly about her passion for food and cooking for others.



Carly DiFuccia

• **Sister Valerie: Why do you love being in the kitchen?**

Carly: I grew up cooking, and it quickly became a creative outlet for me. You get into a flow while you're preparing a meal. It becomes a product of love when you get to serve others. I remember being in the kitchen with my nana. I was so small, but I made pasta salad for a family gathering. My nana noticed how I had cut the vegetables with precision. She announced, "Carly is going to be a chef one day."

• **What is an experience that stands out to you from the Kids Cafe?**

There was one child who started showing up in the kitchen early on in the summer. He struggled with the social aspect of the program, but he was so sweet. Kids often migrate over to the kitchen when they need a break from the action. And they often want to help me.

• **Why do you think the children want to help you?**

I think the kids feel at home in the kitchen here. Food and being in the kitchen are so often the center of a house. Some children tell me that they help their mom cook. It's good to know that they are helping with something communal. I think it's a good sign when children want to help in the kitchen.

• **Do the kids have a favorite meal that you serve?**

The kids love chicken and biscuits. The cafeteria always gets so quiet when I make it and they start eating! They also get really excited about tacos. Tacos can be tedious to make because there is so much prep work, but it's worth it because they really like them.

SENATOR BOB CASEY VISITS THE KIDS CAFE



When Senator Bob Casey of Pennsylvania visited the Kids Cafe at the end of June, he said, "No public official should be satisfied when there are so many children without enough food to eat." This statement came as he unveiled new legislation, Five Freedoms for America's Children. The senator used his visit to the Kids Cafe to highlight

Breanna greets Senator Casey upon his arrival.

Summer at the Kids Cafe

one of the five freedoms in his legislation: the freedom from hunger.

While giving the senator a tour of the facility, Breanna Mekuly, Kids Cafe Coordinator, told him about the food insecurity she witnesses daily: "We have families who aren't certain when they will have a next meal. When a child arrives crabby, I ask them when they last ate. Sometimes, they haven't eaten since the last meal they had with us."

Senator Casey made it a hands-on visit by washing his hands, donning gloves and helping prepare the meal the kids would later enjoy. He even took time to sit down with the children and answer questions they had. One boy asked him to play some one-on-one basketball, but the senator declined. He said that he does enjoy the game, but explained that age wasn't on his side!

A DAY ON THE VICTORIAN PRINCESS

BY BREANNA MEKULY, Kids Cafe Coordinator:

As the kids were getting ready to leave the Kids Cafe and walk to the Victorian Princess, they were each asked why they were excited to go on the boat. This is how it went:

- *Ra'Naziah, 12:* "I've never been on a boat before and I want to know what it's like."
- *Aloney, 8:* "Me neither. I want to see the fish."
- *Jaheim, 9:* "Maybe a shark...?"
- *Jailayah, 7:* "Or a dolphin!"
- *Andrea, 9:* "I'm excited to see the water."

Once we got on the boat, we sat on the lower level and ate our packed lunches. Then the children explored the two other floors of the boat, looking out at the water and the land as we got further from shore. They pointed out other boats and laughed and danced to the music playing. They asked the Captain questions about why the boat was named "Victorian Princess" and how fast it could go. When the boat returned to Dobbins Landing, they stood on the top level and waved at the people like they were in a parade. We took a city bus back up to the Kids Cafe and celebrated the great day with ice cream sandwiches from our neighborhood place, Denny's!

When I asked them what they enjoyed most about the boat ride, ten-year old Jonathan summed it up: "My favorite part was everything."

Kim Wierbinski, a soup kitchen volunteer, treated 24 children from the Kids Cafe to this summer boat ride. "The Victorian Princess has been part of the Erie community for over 20 years! I was delighted to have the opportunity to help children see the beauty of Lake Erie on it and create memories!" she said.



Kids Cafe children wave as the Victorian Princess pulls away from Dobbins Landing.

Summer at the Kids Cafe

THE SEASON ENDS AT THE KIDS CAFE

The Kids Cafe ended its summer program with an outdoor party where children enjoyed an afternoon of picnic food, jumping in a bounce house, and cooperative and competitive games. A highlight of the event was a visit from the City of Erie Firefighters Engine 8. “The fire fighters were wonderful – they engaged with the children, allowed them to climb around inside the fire truck and spray water from the hose, too. We are grateful!” said Breanna Mekuly, Kids Cafe Coordinator.

In addition to games and activities, each child received a bag of new clothing with donations from Denny Oswalt, Jr., some sweet treats, and even a lunchbox donated by golf professional and photographer from Erie, Karen Bukowski.



The children enjoy outdoor activities.

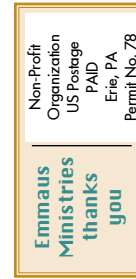


A Kids Cafe child displays her bag of gifts.



Engine 8 Firefighters enjoy time with the kids.

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EMMAUS ICON
Icon *Road to Emmaus*
Iconographer: Sister Marie-Paul, OSB
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They came to know Christ in the breaking of the bread.

Luke 24:35