



Miracles on 32nd Street

2022: Volume I

26 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE CLIENTS OF WSCC

“I started working for WSCC in 1996...”

Marie Tables has been on the staff at the West Side Catholic Center for 26 years. This in and of itself is a remarkable feat in the current workforce, but even more impressive considering the vast amount of changes that have taken place at WSCC in her time with us.

“...At the time I was working for Metro Health in the Mom’s First program and Aggie Hoskins was my supervisor. She became the Director here and asked me to come and work part time in the shelter as a Shelter Advocate. When I first started it was only 10-12 beds and we only accepted single women or mothers with children, and at the time the Resource Center only served peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.”

In 2000, WSCC underwent a capital campaign and purchased the building on Lorain Ave which became the Moriah House and provides interim housing that can accommodate up to 34 residents. In the years since it has adapted to fit the needs of the community we serve; at times serving women and children, survivors of domestic violence, and currently families and female military veterans.



Much like our shelter has grown, changed, and adapted so too has the agency as a whole. At the time Marie joined WSCC there were two primary programs: the Resource Center and the shelter. Today, there are five with the addition of Zacchaeus Housing Solutions, the Workforce Development Program, and Family Engagement (where Marie is currently serving as a Family Coach and is featured in the next article of this newsletter).

“The agency has grown so much in the

different programs that it offers. We’ve been able to expand not only the resources to the community but able to touch more lives in the process. I would like it to continue to expand and reach and help as many individuals/families as possible so we can continue to provide a safe and open place so this can feel like their second home.”

Truly, Marie represents the best of what we are at WSCC: relationship driven, service oriented, and mission focused. Taking the philosophy of meeting people where they are in their journey and assisting them on their path is at the heart of the work done at WSCC each day, as it has been for the past 45 years of the agency’s existence. We are blessed to have a staff that embodies this and provides continuity in offering our services in meeting the growing needs. It is also why we proudly made it through the past two years without having to lay-off or furlough a single employee or position. It was necessary to serve our community and all who depend upon us, and provide the compassionate care and service delivery that we pride ourselves upon.

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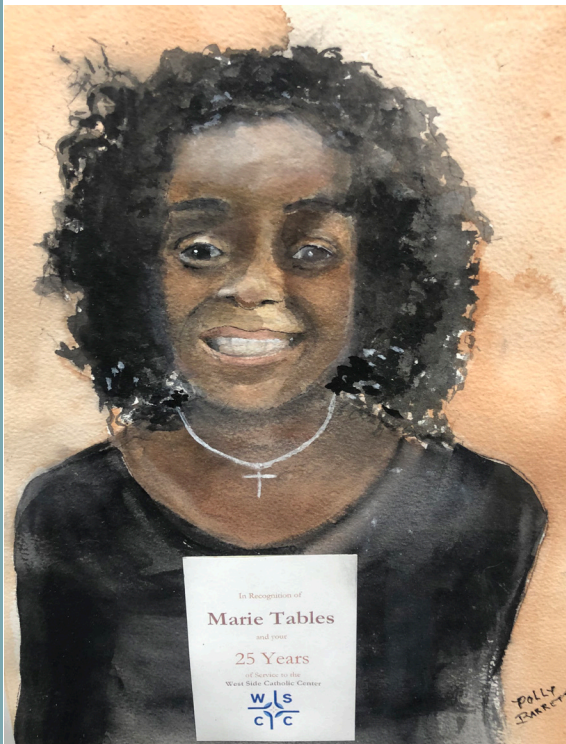
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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

One of the things I've tried to focus on during my time here at the West Side Catholic Center has been making our staff feel like they are a part of a team and a family. I have observed and believe that our dedicated staff do this job for more than just a paycheck. What does that mean? It means our staff are mission driven, and take pride in their craft for the ways it helps others. It also means that people get recognized for their gifts. I hope that the staff here feel like we know the good work that they do. We also started to honor years of service, and have a number of 5, 10, 15+ year staff over the past few years who have been recognized. Last year it was an absolute joy to honor Marie Tables' 25 years of service with our center, additionally, this process showed us that Linda Falkner who works in Moriah House is also celebrating 25 years next year! One of the ways we showed our appreciation to Marie for her service was to ask Polly Barrett to paint one of her amazing watercolors of Marie to be hung in our center. Polly's paintings of WSCC clients and others fill the walls throughout our center and this one will join them.



This year and last, the following staff were honored for their years of service:

2022

Verena Umazor, Finance Department – 15 Years
Rachel Acevedo, Family Engagement & Diversity Equity & Inclusion Coordinator – 10 Years
Dana Donegan, Family Engagement – 10 Years
Charlene Nichols, Moriah House – 5 Years
Scott Wissel, Resource Center – 5 Years

2021

Marie Tables, Family Engagement – 25 Years
Judy Kern, Director of Programs – 15 Years
Jenny Fisher, Family Engagement – 5 Years
Frank Johaneck, Workforce Development – 5 Years
JoAnn Neal, Moriah House – 5 Years
Denise Sears, Moriah House – 5 Years

There are great people out in this world who are former employees of the West Side Catholic Center. Lots of them! My hope is to continue to recognize our current staff's gifts while they're still here so that we can keep them with our center, rather than to be a

stepping stone. I'm also proud that thanks to some donations as well as a commitment to it, we now have a minimum wage of \$15/hour here and have been able to offer raises each of the past four years.

As we work to emerge from the pandemic, we have a staff (like many of you) who have also been challenged by the many adjustments they've had to make, challenged by loss and challenged by sheer exhaustion. Please keep them in your prayers as we continue to do this work during unique times with an undervaccinated population.

Being a family as a staff is also a reflection of the work we do across programs for families. It takes one to know one!

Lastly, stay tuned in June for additional announcements regarding WSCC as a "best" workplace!

Thank you for all you do to support our family, and in turn those we serve.

John Litten | Executive Director

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With so many interactions that have taken place over her 26 years here, and all the individuals and families she's assisted during that time; there is one that stands out to Marie among the others, and it underscores the meaningfulness of the relationships that develop at WSCC.

"My favorite memory is happy but also sad at the same time. Back in 1998 while working in the shelter there was a single mother name Pat with her three year old son. While in shelter she was going through treatment and had just been diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer.

At that time, families only stayed with us for two weeks, but because of the circumstances she was able to stay longer until she could move into hospice. Her son was placed in Providence House

because she didn't have any relatives here to care for him and his father was not involved.

One Saturday morning Pat came to visit me at the shelter after moving into Hospice and just expressed her thankfulness to me and my co-workers for being her forever family in her hardest time in her life. That day we laugh and cried. She was that type of person that felt like she has been here before and wasn't scared of the outcome that was soon to come for her, and instead was grateful for the time she was here to touch and reach as many lives as she could.

We found out two days after that visit she had passed away. I was sad, but I felt at ease because on that last visit she told me that her life, as well as everyone

else's, is already written and what you do in the middle is what has a lasting effect. So at that moment it made me realize how important it is to touch every person with love and empathy."



WHAT IT MEANS TO US



Illustrated by Dalen Evans

A COLLECTION OF ORIGINAL
POETRY & IMAGES

2021

West Side Catholic Center
Poetry Group, 2021



WSCC POETRY GROUP PUBLICATION

Over the course of eleven weeks from August to October, ten adventurous poets formed the West Side Catholic Center 2021 Poetry Group with the goal of creating their own book of original poetry.

The WSCC 2021 Poetry Group was designed and led by artist and writer, Meredith L. King, through a creative partnership with **Cuyahoga Arts and Culture** and the **Center for Performance and Civic Practice**. The group worked under the supervision of Resource Center Manager, Barbara Taylor, and with the assistance of Jesuit Volunteer, Megan Chelling.

Through laughs, tears, fist bumps, grief, confusion, joy and memory, the Poetry Group brought the power of community and sharing our stories to the page with their whole hearts.

The final product of this artistic initiative is What It Means To Us, A Collection of Original Poetry and Images. Copies are available for purchase at \$20.00 per copy with all proceeds directly benefitting the 10 contributing poets.

ORDER AT WWW.WSCCENTER.ORG/POETRY-BOOK

PROGRAM FEATURE: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Cleveland's child poverty rate has consistently been among the highest in large U.S. cities. The Greater Cleveland Foodbank reports that since the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic they have served over 154,000 households with 62,000 of those utilizing an emergency feeding program for the first time. As a partner agency and distribution site, our program staff at WSCC can attest to the growing need that has arisen with over 5,100 households utilizing our food pantries in 2021. Family Engagement has been addressing food insecurity for families since 2014 through the Family, Food, and Fun Summer Program. This program expanded during the pandemic by providing additional food boxes and hot, to-go meals, and extending the program length by additional weeks.

Though the summer program is likely the most visible of our Family Engagement team's initiatives due to the various, incredible volunteer groups that assist with the service delivery, it is just one of many programs and services they provide to the parents and children in our other programs at WSCC as well as our greater community. The newest of the five major programs that WSCC offers, Family Engagement is unique in that it provides support services to clients in each of the other four – The Resource Center, Moriah House, Zacchaeus Housing Solutions, and Workforce Development – while also providing their own unique programming for parents and children.

The growth and expansion of Family Engagement has been based on continually exploring needs and desires with families for services and working with families through a



trauma-informed and strength-based lens. Utilizing the Strengthening Families Framework, developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, staff were trained in this evidence-based approach and the agency became one of the initial agencies to participate in a countywide initiative to integrate it across services provided.

This approach focuses on five Protective Factors:

1. Parental Resilience
2. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
3. Social Connections
4. Social and Emotional Competence of Children
5. Concrete Support in Times of Need

Research has shown that improvements in these Protective Factors increase family stability, enhance child development, and reduce child abuse and neglect. Family Engagement staff participate in the Greater Cleveland Family Strengthening

Network, the Ohio member of the National Family Support Network.

Further insight and direction for WSCC's Strengthening Families initiative, program design, and facilitation is gathered through a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) composed of parents participating in our programs. This group has proven to be a vital component in ensuring that program delivery and topics are relevant and address family needs. Their ideas and feedback were what helped to identify and develop newer programs, and instrumental in receiving new sources of funding.

What has resulted from these approaches is a unique set of current offerings by the Family Engagement Team that encompass groups and events focused on the whole family rather than mainly child- or adolescent-specific activities. These include case management, support

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services, and goal planning for the children and youth provided by our Family Coaches, events like an annual Holiday Dinner and Trunk-or-Treat, item distributions throughout the year, as well as the following five key programs.

Building Block for a Strong Start

A one on one program and workshops for parents and caregivers of children up to 5 years of age. Participants work one on one with a family coach to address some of the most important topics faced with a child such as Rules & Discipline and Listening & Attending. Additional workshops are held four times throughout the year on supplemental topics specific to the needs of young children such as School Readiness and Healthy Routines.

Family FUN-damentals

A five week series and family skill-building program designed for families with school-aged children. Each week family members learn and practice new skills to strengthen family relationships and well-being.

Parent Café

A parent support group. This 3-week program allows parents to connect in a



space that appreciates each individual's contributions. Parent Cafés are driven by the knowledge that parents can, must, and do tap into their wisdom and resources in order to strengthen their own families.

Safety Place

Funded by the Ohio Children's Trust Fund, this parent safety education program promotes creating safe spaces in the home for children to grow and thrive. This is an ongoing program for participants to complete at their pace and is designed for parents with children up to four years old.

Eligible participants who meet program requirements and complete the safety education program can receive safety support items like strollers, pack and plays, and childproofing kits.

Family, Food, & Fun Summer Program

A 10 week program during the summer months to provide nutritious meals, provisions, and activities to children and families. Each week families are provided a hot, nutritious family meal onsite, games and activities to promote family bonding, and a bag of healthy food for each child and family to cook at home over the weekend. Bags are filled with

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DONOR GRATITUDE

You can make donations to WSCC to celebrate a special occasion, to ask "in lieu of gifts" or to honor someone special. WSCC expresses gratitude for the recent donations made in memory of the following individuals.

IN MEMORIAM:

Leona Anter
Joseph Bryan
Elmer Borzi
Theresa Marie Chimes
Joseph Ginley
Nick Del Giudice

Sheila Harrison
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groceries and also contain a health tips sheet and easy healthy recipes to match the ingredients in the bag. At the end of the 10-week program, families receive backpacks filled with school supplies to ensure their children start their school year with everything they need to learn and grow.

Truly, the proverb “It takes a village to raise a child” is embodied through Family Engagement at WSCC. It takes many hands and relationships to execute all these offerings, and it is all done with a cognizance of reducing duplication of services, and maximizing the utilization of

resources and partnerships. Volunteer groups, partner agencies like Shoes and Clothes for Kids, local businesses like Dave’s Market and Sanson Company, corporate sponsors like NESCO Resources, and foundation partners like Dominion Energy and the Thatcher Family Fund are just a few of the primary components that create our village and make all this work possible. But more so, we are blessed to have a team of caring, compassionate professionals leading the charge to ensure the families in our community always have an advocate and resource in us at the West Side Catholic Center.

The WSCC Family Engagement Team is:

Jeanette Mazzola
Family Engagement Manager

Rachel Acevedo
Strengthening Families Coordinator

Dana Donegan
Family Coach

Marie Tables
Family Coach

Jenny Fisher
FE Project Coordinator



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The programs and services provided at the West Side Catholic Center are free of charge to all clients. We are able to operate under this model due to the incredible dedication of our staff and volunteers, and the generosity of our support community. Your gift is 100% tax deductible, and ensures our mission continues.

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CATHOLIC CENTER ASSISTS
ALL WHO COME IN NEED OF
FOOD, CLOTHING, SHELTER,
ADVOCACY AND A PATH TO
SELF-SUFFICIENCY.**



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