

TROUBADOUR

The Newsletter of St. Francis House, New London, Connecticut



Center Section:

New London—City of Murals

Summer Celebration of Garden Murals at St. Francis House

Francistide 2013

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A COMPASSIONATE WITNESS TO PAIN

Reflecting on the dedication for the Homeless Hospitality Center

by Len Raymond

The Homeless Hospitality Center is dedicating its new location on October 16th, 4 to 6 p.m. This new location, 730 State Pier Road—325 Huntington Street for parking—was recently purchased by HHC and brings into one location, the overnight shelter and the daytime hospitality center. But more than that, it is also a witness to an uncommon struggle—a struggle on how to connect with those who are homeless.

We engage the struggle

I find the road to 730 State Pier Road is symbolic of many struggles. On the surface, it has been a struggle of raising money to purchase and then renovate the sanctuary and rectory of the local Polish National Catholic Church, founded in 1921. But first the congregation, with dwindling numbers, struggled to face their future. With a generous sense of community they made it possible for HHC to acquire the property while retaining one room as a chapel. At its heart, however, there remains the struggle of those who are homeless. Often overlooked, it is also the struggle of staff not to get burned out and the struggle of a greater community on how to hold homelessness.

...too often we're led to believe that struggling is a bad thing, or that we struggle because we're doing something wrong. - Danny Dreyer, an American ultra-marathon runner and t'ai chi practitioner

The New London community struggled over how many beds the new shelter would have. The shelter which for the last five years has been housed at St. James Episcopal Church had 50 beds. Two years ago, the city approved 25 beds for the new shelter—not enough. Recently the Rev. Cathy Zall, Executive Director of HHC, went back to the City Council which had been having its own struggle over how to deal with homelessness. One councilman who had been formerly critical of the shelter's willingness to house all those in need announced that he had changed his mind: HHC was doing a good job and he and other members of the council agreed to support whatever bed count HHC said it needed.

Struggling *with* those we serve

Homelessness is a state of vulnerability—to health risks, violence, and harassment by police; heightened exposure to the elements; and the absence of privacy. *From the website of The Suitcase Clinic, Berkeley, CA*

Homelessness is a painful situation—both painful to be homeless and painful as a witness to homelessness. I am a student of restorative practices—an approach to situations of unequal power. In restorative practices there is a general tenet that people are more likely to be successful “when those in positions of authority do things *with* them, rather than *to* them or *for* them.”

I serve the small subset of homeless persons who are also individuals with a significant incarceration history—case manager for the FUSE program. I find it can be tempting to do things for a person I serve with no concern for healthy boundaries. Conversely, the temptation is out there just to autocratically de-

clare that this is how something is to be done. Meetings with the FUSE participants are a good example of these temptations. We all meet together every three weeks. I have some rules that I initially set up for the meetings. I told them that they are in charge of the rules and that I made some just to jump start the process. Occasionally, there is some rule that they choose to look at and possibly change. My role is only to enforce the rules and veto any that might somehow be abusive. At one meeting they tried changing a rule to make the discussion less structured. I doubted the change would work—it did not. It wasn't long before one person ended up feeling so offended that he left the meeting. I asked how well the rule change was working—not well was the consensus. We chose to go back to the structured approach. The key thing in all this is summarized in the notion that although I am the “expert in the room,” as the case manager, I am not the “smartest thing in the room.” The smartest thing is our micro-community—all of us together.

A genuine struggle

There are some things that have become recognized in the last one or two decades as new ways of doing things—new ways that work better. One is that “housing first” works better. That is, a homeless person is more likely to get their life moving forward if they have a home, a place to hang their clothes and make their own space. It has also become recognized that social work has better outcomes if it is client driven. That is, a homeless person is more likely to get their life moving forward if the community of support around them supports the goals they have set for themselves, rather than accept goals that might emanate from the caseworker. These are not only common sense notions but also approaches backed up by research saying they work.

The part that is often overlooked is the role of courage. Courage is needed all around. In my work I often find an individual who is depressed or racked with anxiety over what to do or even over whether or not there is anything to do, anything that would work to get him or herself a better life. I tell them two things: (1) they have the courage in them to do it and (2) no one has all the needed smarts in them to take advantage of that courage. I then ask them to try an experiment. Try engaging with others over one's issues. Let others engage with you as friends, professionals, mentors, sponsors or whomever. They will connect in a way that makes you smarter and better able to have a satisfying life.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep
with those who weep. - *Romans 12:15*

And in the spirit of learning from struggle, this permanent home for the shelter and hospitality center testifies that our greater community—New London and Southeastern Connecticut—has grown in strength and courage... grown by the act of struggling with the pain we call homelessness. At the coming dedication, Wednesday October 16, I suspect all will stand as a witness to that difficult yet genuine and worthwhile struggle.

Len Raymond lives and works at St. Francis House. He serves as staff with the Homeless Hospitality Center's FUSE program and continues his work in Restorative Practices.



CLARIFICATION OF THOUGHT

Friday Schedule: Fall/Winter 2013

5:30 Evening Prayer; 6 Supper; 7-8:30 Conversation

Bio-technology and Genetic Engineering

*Is Genetic Engineering Replacing God or
Co-operating with God?*

*Do the benefits of Bio-Tech and Genetic
Engineering outweigh the risks?*

*Are Bio-Technology and Genetic Engineer-
ing here to stay?*

Sept. 13: Orientation with films

Sept. 20: Bob Burns, Aiki Farm

Oct. 11: The Rev. Norm Faramelli

Oct. 25: The Rev. Catriona Grant

Nov. 8: Prof. Albert Kausch

Nov. 22: Research Issues / film excerpts

Dec. 6: Gladys Rodman, RN

Dec. 20: Wrap-up reflection:
Answering the questions

CHRISTMAS PARTY January 3, 2014

New London: City of Murals

This summer two mural projects were undertaken at St. Francis House. In June Guido Garaycochea of Expressiones Cultural Center on Bank Street contacted us to see if we could provide a wall. Argentinian artist-in-residence Anali Chanquia was scheduled to work with New London youth to produce a mural. Our community garden site on Cottage Street was chosen. In August Sarah Jarrett who is now in her second year at the Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts undertook a mural project for our Butterfly Garden on the basement wall of 30 Broad Street.

For this issue of the *Troubadour* we decided to show how the life of St. Francis House intertwines with other murals in the city. For example, for St. Francis House's 10th Anniversary Celebration in 2008, Sarah Jarrett, then a senior in high school, did a painting entitled "St. Francis Comes to New London." It featured the Wyland whale mural located at the corner of State St. and Eugene O'Neil Drive. Her painting hangs in the St. Francis House dining room; we used it for the front cover of the book *Broad Street Blues* featuring *Troubadour* articles 1999-2010.

(Left) Anne and Paul hold Sarah's painting under the watchful eye of a Wyland painting in downtown New London. Page 6 features the mural on the wall of the Homeless Hospitality Center's Homeward Bound Treasures. St. Francis House has utilized the moving van services of Homeward Bound Treasures on many occasions as well as shopping there regularly. Across the street from that mural is the one featuring Eunice Waller who served as Mayor of the City of New London and many years later on the St. Francis House board. All of us in the SFH extended community enjoy smiling back up at Eunice who died last year. The centerfold tells the story of the August party we hosted to celebrate the two SFH additions to the murals of our city. Anne was part of founding the Drop-In Learning Center in 1970 located across the street from St. Francis House on Broad Street. Reona Dyess who is the Center's director also sits on the SFH board. Over 40 young people from the Center came to bring their mural paintings created with the support of Expressiones to join our August party to celebrate the summer of Broad Street murals!





Above: Sarah Jarrett with her rendering of William Blake's "Ancient of Days" and (right) "Book of Urizen."

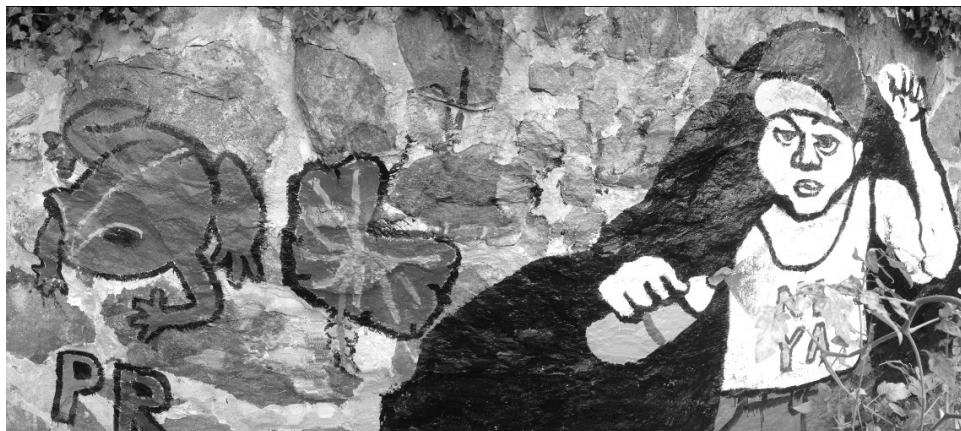


Drawing inspiration from the art work of English artist, poet and visionary William Blake (1757-1827), Sarah Jarrett did three panels. The Butterfly Garden includes a fountain donated in memory of the Rev. Emmett Jarrett. In the late 1970's, Fr. Emmett who died in October, 2010, did doctoral work on the theology of William Blake at King's College, London. It therefore also seems very fitting that Sarah inscribed Blake's poem "London" on the door located next to the panels. Blake's poem begins "I wander thro' each charter'd street Near where the charter'd Thames does flow, And mark in every face I meet, Marks of weakness, marks of woe." The poem ends with the words, "In every voice, in every ban, The Mind-forg'd manacles I hear."

Below and below left: Youngsters from the Drop-In Learning Center in front of the murals they created this summer with Expressiones. The Center has a longstanding tradition of participating in mural projects. Some years ago students from the Center helped create the two murals located on Water Street across from the Waterfront Park and the ship on Eugene O'Neil Drive.

Bottom center: Paul Jakoboski meditates on the bench in front of the fountain behind which is Sarah's interpretation of William Blake's "Daughters of Job."

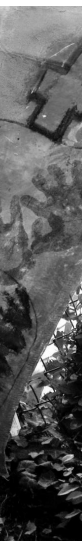




CELEBRATING MURALS

This summer young people from the Drop-In Learning Center had the opportunity to work with four artists from Expressiones. The Expressiones artists and Greg Bowerman facilitated art projects that encouraged self-expression and symbol development. Banners and panels were on display in upper and lower garden sites at the Celebration on August 16. St. Francis House hosted the Garden Party and tours were led by Guido Garaycochea of Expressiones who also took these photos of the party. Len Raymond took the downtown New London mural photos and the rest of the photos on this page.

This mural (above and below) was created by young people sponsored by the New London Department of Youth Affairs who worked with Argentinian muralist Anali Chanquia. Ms. Chanquia explained, "The mural depicts young people's need to publicly reaffirm their roots through Central American street art.. The boy, the central character with a can of spray in his hand around these symbols of Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico: the flower, the frog, the drum and the bird. Both ends meet with the colors of the flags of each country's initials in English: DR and PR." The wall itself is stone with mortar in between.



Living and Working for SE CT

by Hannah Gant

The Francis Fund for Southeastern CT has taken on new life in 2013. In 1998 Equity Trust, a national social change organization currently based in Massachusetts, helped finance through its community loan fund the purchase of St. Francis House and four years later the adjacent property at 32 Broad which became Victory House. In 2010 an expanded partnership emerged with the creation of the Francis Fund for SE CT. St. Francis House committed to the on-the-ground work of finding borrowers and projects to promote a sustainable and just regional economy. Equity Trust reviews loans recommended by the local Advisory Committee recruited and coordinated by SFH and then manages the loan process. (See *Troubadour*, Vol. 13, No. 2 on the SFH website.)

To date money from the Francis Fund has helped the New London Homeless Hospitality Center buy houses for people transitioning out of homelessness including housing for veterans and provided a bridge loan for the new shelter complex being dedicated this month. Another loan in Groton with the Community of Hope enabled the purchase of a sober house for women. Our first loan helped keep Alice Acres Farm in Gales Ferry in business.

Last December I came to visit curious to know about this small regional loan fund. At the time I was completing a Masters of Business Administration program in local economic development and entrepreneurship at the Bainbridge Graduate Institute, a low residency program based in Seattle. For the past two years I have divided each month between Connecticut and the Seattle area where I grew up.

I have lived and worked in Hartford since 2007, first managing farmers' markets and making cheese at Cato Corner Farm in Colchester. Since that time, I have owned a farm business and also a candy bar business. I love starting things and bringing people together to make good things happen. I was partly motivated to pursue the MBA experience to deepen my understanding of what money is and how it

works. This inquiry, along with my entrepreneurial drive, had me considering initiating a statewide loan fund to support food and agricultural-based businesses. This is what initially brought me down to New London to meet Anne and Paul. Through our conversation it became clear that there was an opportunity to help one another.

I joined the team in the New Year and by March I was in part-time residence at Victory House, still dividing my time between CT and WA for school. Through June, I worked with Paul, Anne, and Jim Oldham, the director of Equity Trust, to get myself and the Francis Fund more grounded in its knowledge of the contexts, culture, and people doing good work in Southeastern CT. We conducted a series of interviews leading to two June Community Conversations in North Stonington and New London.

Through this initial phase of work we have come to better know where the momentum is. This has also been the start of building new relationships with individuals and other institutions so that the work continually evolves to serve all of New London County. Our primary goals for the rest of 2013 are to re-constitute the Advisory Committee and improve our workflow processes as we work toward making SE CT a more vibrant place. We hope to have some new loans underway in 2014.

I have also begun to contribute to the life of St. Francis House by working with current residents to generate a plan to be more intentional about our own development. I believe there are people locally who are hungry for a shared Christian community experience that do not yet know about SFH.

Moving forward I will be writing a regular column in the *Troubadour* about the work of the Francis Fund. I am excited about what lies ahead and look forward to sharing updates.



Left: This portrait of Eunice Waller is part of the "One Place—Many Cultures" mural visible below (second row from the top on the left). Mrs. Waller served on the first Advisory Committee of the Francis Fund for SE CT. The mural is located right across the street from the Homeless



Hospitality Center's second hand furniture store Homeward Bound Treasures which features the deep sea divers' mural on its wall. The store provides furniture when shelter guests find housing as well as employment opportunities.

Broad Street Blues

by Paul Jakoboski

The blues coming from Broad St at this time in September, with the fall equinox just occurring, are full of the rhythms of changing leaves. The color burst is once again filling our lives with reflections and anticipations.

Hannah's reflections on the newly reinvigorated Francis Fund for Southeastern Connecticut, leads me to recall how much has happened since the initial agreement with Equity Trust to have part of our repaid mortgage set aside for work in SE CT. Back in 2007 - the year we repaid that debt - Emmett convened a meeting in our newly renovated Victory House conference room to respond to the city's decision to eliminate the jobs of the two social workers who organized the City's temporary homeless shelter each winter. That winter St. Francis House served as the interim administrative structure for the shelter. Resident member and Viet Nam veteran Mark Auer brushed up his banking background to develop a payroll system on less than a week's notice grouching all the way that it could not be done and then doing it.

So here we are now six years later with the local work on the Francis Fund centered in Victory House. It feels as if we are on the path of making significant progress through our work with Equity Trust on the Francis Fund towards our continuing commitment to supporting the development of a just, sustainable regional economy.

I've spent the past four months pursuing a long sought dream of my own. I've owned a beautiful little sail boat for over fifteen years. My illness has grounded it on the "hard" as they say. This late spring as I was feeling better I got it out and started assessing its condition. Consulting with two very loving, knowledgeable friends regarding the efforts necessary to make it seaworthy the very strong consensus was, "it's not for you". My illness has left me unable to take on certain assignments, especially ones that require sanding, strenuous scrubbing, painting, fiberglass restoration... i.e. exertion beyond my capability. So the advice was to look into personal resources set aside for later years and see about acquiring an appropriate boat that by design would facilitate my singlehanded sailing. With much help and efforts from others a boat was finally found and acquired.

It took three more weeks on the dock at the marina from which the boat was purchased, repairing and replacing components as necessary. My boat and I were ready to leave the dock the second week of August, and head over to my newly secured mooring on

the Thames River near Green Harbor. This was a tremendous moment for me. For the last five or six years, my illness took precedence over all other things in my life. It was just this past June that I flew for the first time in that many years to attend the Franciscan Convocation in Minnesota. So pushing off from the dock that day was as a huge statement of independence, fortitude and collaboration with many very dedicated, very loving friends who saw this as their mission as well.

As I pushed away from the safety of the dock, the fear, anxiousness and welling up feelings of being overwhelmed by the demands of life were quickly and joyously supplanted by the exhilaration of a leap of faith into freedom. A freedom from the doctors, medications, and limitations, along with the freedom from debilitating fatigue of years of illness, dis-ease. A leap into that Celtic tradition Rick Bellows so aptly describes in his book, *Peace That Passes Understanding – Hope and Healing For Anxious Times*: "The Thin Place. In Celtic Spirituality, a thin place is where the barrier between heaven and earth is thin. The term describes naturally mystical places where people tend to sense the presence of God..." Sailing. Sailing is for me a thin place. This boat, my friends and I found, is especially set up and rigged for single-handed sailing. With further help we reworked the rigging a little to be even more accommodating for my breathing disabilities and exertion limitations.

Now I just need to take my time, be deliberate; proceed with caution and sail away, resting in God. Discerning my direction and tack comes with contemplation and prayer. Being rooted in daily, Morning Prayer, focusing on scriptural insight, while still being engaged with the tasks of each day is a lifestyle here at St. Francis House that enables me to follow my rule and live my life with anticipation.

Paul Jakoboski lives and works at St. Francis House. He serves on the board of the Homeless Hospitality Center.



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Center Section: New London: City of Murals
Celebrating Our Garden Murals at St. Francis House



October 16, 2013 4-6 pm
DEDICATION
&
Open House for the new
Homeless Hospitality Center
730 State Pier Rd.
(parking at 325 Huntington St.)

The former rectory which has been transformed
into office, meeting and chapel space
is being dedicated as
"The Fr. Emmett Jarrett Hospitality Center."

"Let us see the invisible poor, and live together
with all our sisters and brothers in the Beloved
Community the God of justice invites us to be-
come." Sermon preached by Emmett Jarrett at
the Memorial Service for Bill Walsh who died
in the woods on April 5, 2006.