

Hospitality of the Heart: Still Going Strong For 30 Years

In spite of many bumps along the 30-year journey, SA-CWH continues to provide 3 meals per day on weekdays (or about 1000 meals per week) with the help of many partners, especially St. Mark's Mobile Loaves and Fishes. Our lunch club broke 2000 members in April; thank goodness they do not all visit us every day! And thanks to many donors, we are able to provide hygiene supplies, new socks and underwear year-around. Thank you so very much for your continued support.

The two biggest "bumps" so far in 2015 have both involved our buildings. The original CWH building purchased in 1985 became "dangerous" due to its gravitational pull downhill to the west. See the previous newsletter for all of the details. As much as we had wished we could have "saved" it, two independent structural engineering companies and Coding Compliance all felt that it was not reparable and, was in fact, dangerous. Thus safety issues prevailed. It was with sadness that we watched the demolition. Although it took months to build and it provided 30 years of loving service to both our guests and volunteers, it came down in less than three hours on May 7th. It was a very skilled operation and there were no damages to any nearby structures. We were blessed! We hope to plant another garden and landscape the area so that it is a beautiful space to sip coffee, play chess or chat with friends.



The second "building bump" regarded our proposed new 800 sq ft accessory building in the back of the garden at 626 Nolan or Day House, our current home center of hospitality. Although it was approved by the Office of Historic Preservation, City Development Services denied a building permit because they felt that the proposed bathrooms, shower and laundry facilities represented an "expansion of an approved non-conforming use". CWH holds that it is not an expansion, but simply a recovery and relocation of the existing services that we provided in 622 before the demo. We appealed to the Board of Adjustment; however, the Board upheld the original decision. Thus, we have had to decrease our laundry and bathroom availability by half. We did purchase a 180 sq ft shed that is housing our refrigerators and freezers, but even this is in question. Discussion is ongoing.



The BIG GIVE



Thank you so very much for your most generous donations. CWH received \$2790 from 36 donors. Compared to last year, this represents a 30% increase in both funds raised and number of donors. Thanks again for your continued support. We appreciate every penny!! Our total annual operating budget is only ~ \$50,000, so the donations will go a LONG way!

First Annual CWH Music Festival

Thanks to Anthony and Abraham for planning this event and making it happen. This is not a fundraiser... simply a fun maker. Come and join us for the festivities. Several local bands and individuals will be there to entertain you. Dress cool; it will occur in the courtyard.



Save this date!!!!

Catholic  Worker

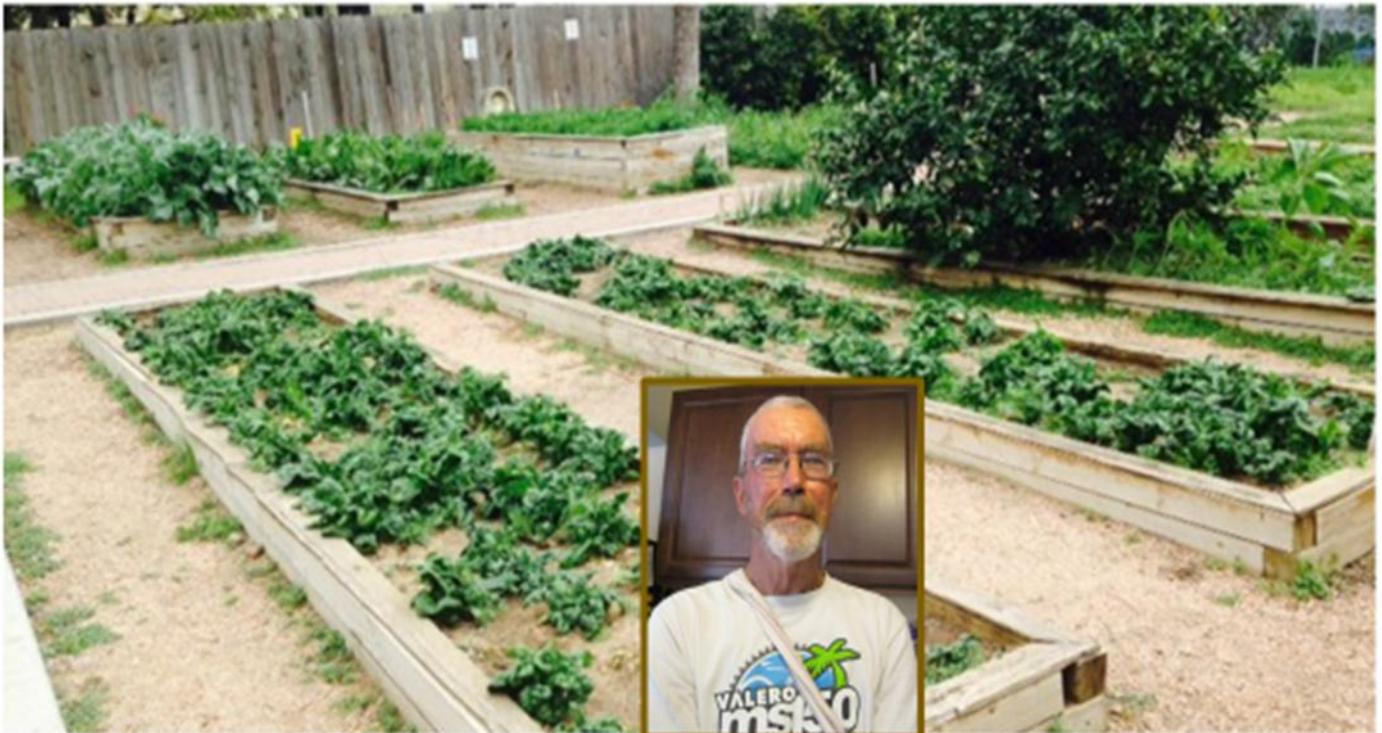
Saturday,
May 30th
4—8pm

Fest

Garden
of
626 Nolan

Free admission Free music Free food

Thanks Jack Elder for his continuing TLC of CW garden. We had healthy scrumptious spinach salads, mint tea, and much more, all year



We hope you are still saving this date at Oblate!!!

THE GREATEST CHALLENGE OF
THE DAY IS: HOW TO BRING
ABOUT A REVOLUTION OF THE
HEART, A REVOLUTION WHICH
HAS TO START WITH EACH ONE
OF US?"

DOROTHY DAY



November 6th-8th, 2015

San Antonio, Texas

DOROTHY DAY FOR TODAY
A CONTEMPORARY MODEL OF COMPASSION IN ACTION:
SPIRITUALITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ETHICS

Things CWH Needs

- Monetary donations to pay the bills and to buy salad fixins
- Coffee, sugar and creamer
- New socks and men's boxers (especially medium and large)
- Toothbrushes and medium toothpaste tubes
- Small plates for morning pastries
- Snacks for bag lunches (individually wrapped chips, peanut butter crackers, etc.)
- Your used plastic grocery bags

Social Justice Internships

Formalized “internships” were initiated in the Spring of 2012. Over the past two years we have been a “training site” for almost 600 trainees. They are from local high schools and colleges but mostly students, teachers and youth leaders from colleges and churches throughout the country sent by DOOR. They not only help to prepare the meals and serve the food, but they attended classes focusing on the challenges of those facing homelessness and various ordinances and laws that affect them. For the first time THIS year, the volunteers administered surveys (prepared by the National Coalition for the Homeless and Western Regional Advocacy Project) that assess the nature and frequency of discriminatory laws and practices as they pertain to those who are homeless. Last year, we shared the results of the pre and post evaluations from the 2013 interns in the SA-CWH newsletter. Below are similar evaluation results and insights from our 2014 trainees. Following this are the results of the 86 one-on-one surveys they conducted with our guests. The surveys gave the volunteers an opportunity to engage in some very deep (sometimes uncomfortable) conversations with our guests. The internship evaluations revealed that many of the volunteers felt that the discrimination survey engagement was the most valuable aspect of the internship as the process helped them to discover the deeper challenges of being homeless.

A big “hi” from one internship group!



Perceptions Before and After the Internship Experience (n=198)

PROBE: What do you think are the three most challenging aspects of being homeless?

BEFORE INTERNSHIP

- Finding food 94%
- Finding a place to sleep 82%
- Little money 62%
- No bathrooms 45%
- Lack of job 32%
- No place to shower 20%
- My looks and smells 15%
- Making friends 10%
- Getting clean clothes 10%
- Being accepted 10%
- Health care 8%

AFTER INTERNSHIP:

- Police harassment 92%
- Discrimination; being profiled 74%
- Not feeling accepted/wanted 68%
- Safety, protection of belongings 53%
- Loneliness 22%
- Finances, getting a job 20%
- Nice clothes-job interview 10%
- Medical care 8%
- Going to jail for no reason 6%
- Lack of an address for mail 5%
- Lack of love (emotional care) 3%

Challenges mentioned less than 5x

- Prostitution
- Addictions
- Temptations

- Doing the right thing
- Getting help for addictions
- Getting social acceptance
- Finding a place to rest during day
- Being respected as a person
- First impressions of them
- Not being seen as an equal
- Getting a replacement ID
- No opportunity for pets
- No voice; no one listens
- Divorce and child support
- Transportation
- Staying out of harm's way
- Being treat as criminals b/c of something they can't control

How will this information/experience change what you do/are in the future?

Common Comments on the Majority of Questionnaires: most replied with a variation of these 4

I will be more understanding of those going through homelessness...try to get rid of biases and be less judgmental

I will treat people who are homeless in a kinder way, listen, talk with them, look them in their eyes, ask their name

I will begin to volunteer for homeless programs in my hometown

I will see them more as fellow human beings, not so different from me ...or ... I no longer have stereotypes

Selected Individual and Unedited Unique Comments:

I realize that they have no space to just "be"

I will spread the prayer for a more compassionate life.

I will now be mindful of what I can do to help others that may need it. If I can reach just one person by just spending time with them it will make all the difference in the world.

It let me see life from a different point of view.

My whole perspective has changed about people who are homeless. It encourage me to do more to help give them a better sense of hope for their lives.

I really didn't know what it was like to be homeless and seeing these people and being able to talk to them was extremely inspiring and eye opening. Some history was so deep, it made me tear up. Their knowledge of life, the world, etc. was impressive and the experiences they had were mind-blowing. Many have been in the military, and have done incredible things....like one guy got his pilot's license and teaches history. He's really educated and wants to make a difference in this world. I was very concerned and annoyed that so many places so strongly dislike the homeless and won't help them. I hope/strive to do something for these people in the future, like Dorothy Day did.

It made me realize that I want to change what I do for an occupation. I want to work to strive for equality between different economic lifestyles.

I think that now that I know more about the homeless problem in America, I will start to work harder to make sure that I have enough energy, strength, time and money to help them.

I think I'll be more open to talking with a person who is homeless instead of being afraid to.

I now understand the importance of the "ministry of presence" (pastor)

I do my best to not judge someone just because they live differently than me. I will not accept the "One Story"

Now that I know that people really do try to get a job and work, they are just denied because of their renovations(?). I always assumed that they took the money and drank. Now I know that they try so hard and do everything in their power.

The experience will definitely impact what I do and think in the future. I have heard these people's stories and they are NOT A DIFFERENT SPECIES!!! I need to remember that a homeless person is actually a person who had the bad luck of being homeless. I am really moved now to help them more frequently.

I will no longer just take pity, but will offer them a hand as a friend.

I now realize that homeless people are cool and nice.

Yes, it has made me more aware of the homeless person near me and I will be more aware of the city laws against people who are homeless.

Everyone is a child of God and sometimes life throws bad things your way. I want to help more.

I will no longer judge a book by its cover

I will stop being afraid and will step out of my comfort zone more and tell friend to do so too.

It has taught me that a smile and warm earnest welcome will go a long way.

I want my voice to be heard, I believe to do this we need to start small. I want to get involved and help out.

I will no longer be fearful of homelessness or homeless people. They are normal people who have just had some unfortunate events happen in their life. I would also like to make an effort to help the homeless in my town.

To walk in someone else's shoes changes me. I want to try to see the face of Jesus in each individual face.

Internship Effectiveness Evaluations (n = 198 for 2014)

1. Did the experience help you to breakdown stereotypes?
Definitely 70% Yes 21% Somewhat 9% Not Much 0 No 0
2. Did it raise your awareness about the challenges people who are homeless face?
Definitely 64% Yes 32% Somewhat 4% Not Much 0 No 0
3. Did conducting the Discrimination questionnaire help you understand the challenges of homelessness?
Definitely 92% Yes 8% (concern was that it was a bit uncomfortable asking such personal questions) Rest = 0
4. How much of today's information was new to you?
90% 5%
75% 65%
50% 27%
25% 3%
None 0
5. Has the experience inspired you to make an effort to help people who are homeless in your hometown/state?
Definitely 40% Yes 48% Somewhat 12% Not Much 0 No 0

Reflections on the Results of the NCH Discrimination Surveys Administered to Catholic Worker House Guests in San Antonio (4/25/15)

CWH acted as a field-site for research conducted by the National Coalition for the Homeless in Washington DC. Eighty-six surveys were conducted with our guests by college and graduate students locally and by students from all over the USA who had come to CWH by way of the Mennonite DOOR ministry whereby students plunge into the issues and experiences of homelessness as an alternative to the more traditional Spring/Summer/Christmas vacations. These interviews were conducted in 2014 between the months of March and December.

Demographics: The demographics of the 86 questionnaires represent the overall demographics of CWH guests.

Race: About 1/3 of those interviewed were Af Am, 1/3 Hispanic & the remaining 1/3 white or a mixture of Asian, American Indian, and mixed races.

Age: As expected from our overall demographics those of color answering the questionnaire were older whereas those who were white and mixed were somewhat younger.

Gender: 84% were males and 16% female

Housing Status: 63% were homeless and 29% lived in a shelter. Most of the remaining were whites who lived in an apartment or house, often doubling up with friends or family

Duration of Homelessness: 36% less than 6 months; 33% one to two years; 17% two to five years and 14% > 5 years. Unlike the other races, Af Am were more likely to be homeless > one year. This may represent our unique circumstances in that we are located in an African American neighborhood and "cater" to those who are chronically homeless. That is, we do not require them to show identification, enter rehabilitation programs, or other similar requirements. We simply try to be a "family-like cozy" center where they can enjoy three meals per day, watch movies, play chess, make phone calls, surf the web and do laundry. Many of our guests tell us that they have been "kicked out" or suspended from other agencies. We feel it our unique mission to serve those have had to face homelessness on a chronic basis.

Question 1: Frequency of actions of discrimination in the various professions

Discrimination was felt to be much more frequent among officers of the law

Secondarily by for-profit businesses, and much less frequently in health and social services.

54% of persons of color VS 40% of white/mixed experienced discrimination VERY OFTEN (at least 1x/wk)

Approximately 20% of persons of color VS 11% of whites (0 of mixed) experienced discrimination OFTEN (1/mos)

28 % of Af Am, 17% Hispanic and 35% of white NEVER experienced discrimination

Question 2: Personal experience of discrimination by police

About 2/3 of African Americans VS 1/2 of all other races felt they had been discriminated against.

These percentages greatly increased when answering the question regarding police telling one to "move along"
81% of Af Am, 82% Hispanics, 65% whites and 56% of mixed races had been told to "move along"

The frequency of being told to "move along" within the past year was the same across all races (5-10x).

The frequency with which they were asked to show an ID paralleled the number of times asked to "move along".

Question 3: Have "move along" and/or "stay away" orders by the police impeded one from obtaining services.

24% of Af Am felt such orders VERY OFTEN interfered with housing and less so with employment.

25% of Hispanics stated that such orders VERY OFTEN interfered with all 4 services listed.

This is contrasted with rare positive responses from white/mixed races.

Question 4: Negative encounters with park police

66% of Af Am and 57% of Hispanics responded "yes" VS 35% of whites, and 11% of mixed races.

Question 5: Incarcerations during the past year

28% of African Americans, 35% of Hispanics, 6% of whites, and 12% of mixed responded “yes”.

Question 6: Whether possessions were taken and were they given back

Difficult to tally...yet belongings are always taken away and not given back without jumping through hoops that are almost impossible for someone experiencing homelessness without money. One must go to a warehouse a long distance from the county jail, not accessible by bus and then pay \$25-35 to get them back. Most responders said they did not have the money or the ride to get their possessions back.

Question 7: Number of citations/tickets/fines over the past year

56% of African Americans, 75% of Hispanics, 58% of whites, and 44% of mixed received an average of 1 – 10 tickets per year. 3 African Americans and 1 each from the other three categories received more than 10 tickets.

Question 8: Denied services or treated badly by “for profit” business because of the status of homelessness

28% Af Am, 32% Hispanics, 18% whites and 11% mixed felt they were denied services at least 1x/week
34% Af Am, 32% Hispanics, 12% whites and 44% mixed felt they were denied services at least 1x/month

Question 9: Denied housing due to the status of homelessness

28% Af Am, 43% Hispanic, 18% white, & 22% mixed believed that they were denied housing b/c of homelessness

Question 10: Denied employment or fired from a job due to the status of homelessness

44% Af Am, 36% Hispanic, 12% whites, and 11% mixed thought this to be true

Question 11: Denied medical care due to the status of homelessness

32% persons of color, 29% whites and 11% mixed thought this to be true

Note: it seemed that lack of insurance or ability to pay was the primary factor rather than the status of homelessness since some of those homeless do have Medicare and/or Medicaid to pay for medical care.

Question 12: Voting while being homeless

63% Af Am, 50% Hispanics, 52% whites, and 56% mixed did vote.

Note: the primary impediment for voting was lack of photo ID which is common in the state of homelessness

Conclusion:

These results concur with other studies in other cities nation-wide, that persons of color endure more discrimination than whites or Asians or mixed. In most cases the experiences of those who are African American paralleled those who are Hispanic. Similarly, those who are white had similar outcomes as those of Asian, American Indian and mixed races. In most cases there was a slight degree more discrimination in African Americans than Hispanics except in the area of housing denials and tickets/fines where Hispanics faced more barriers and discrimination.

All in all, those who are homeless not only experience the “routine” challenges of being homeless...lack of shelter, food and bathrooms, but also face the added challenge of discrimination as a consequence of some city ordinances (directed at those who are homeless) and mainly by the police force and to a lesser extent by businesses. Even accessing charitable services like medical care and social services are not without challenges.

The 21st Century “Boogie Man”

The Catholic Worker House (CWH) is staying open not because we want to “master the art of civil disobedience” (San Antonio Express News, Sunday April 26th), but because we feel that we have no other choice but to stay open. Additionally,

on December 14, 2013, then our Councilperson, Ivy Taylor, spoke at a neighborhood meeting and stated that the city attorney ruled that CWH was indeed protected by the Texas Restoration of the Freedom of Religion Act. So we felt justified in staying open, but why do we NEED to stay open? We are the only day center of hospitality other than the Prospects Courtyard at Haven For Hope across town on the Westside. From 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., we strive to provide a “homey” environment because CWH is the closest thing to home our guests have. They can sit in the garden, sip coffee or mint water, eat a meal, chat with friends, play chess or cards, watch a movie, surf the internet, wash their clothes, and use the bathroom. It is a place where no one tells them to “move along”, “keep walking”, “go away,” “you are not welcomed here”. These are phrases they hear many times per week. Why are those experiencing homeless not wanted in our neighborhood, or really in any neighborhood or any tourist area? Because of fear.

As children, we are taught to be afraid of the mysterious entity known as the “boogie man” (or “bogyman” has no set appearance, but is simply a non-specific embodiment of terror [Wikipedia.org]). We are not sure exactly who the boogie man is, we just know that we should fear him. It is a fear of the unknown. “We fear things in proportion to our ignorance of them.” (Christian Nestell Bovee, BrainyQuote). This fear is bigger than the issue of homelessness; the “unknown” can be the immigrant, the released prisoner, or the person who simply looks different. A person who is homeless seems to be just one of the many new boogie men of current times. Laws that restrict the movement, sleeping, eating, and excreting of people who are homeless are creeping up in many cities across the nation, chiefly tourist cities. Why? Out of fear — fear of personal harm, theft, loss of tourist trade and profits, and fear of the unknown.

Not unlike many neighbors across the USA, our neighbors state that they do not feel safe with the clients we draw into the neighborhood. They assume that most were criminals. I agree, some might be criminals – criminals because they violated one of our city’s quality of life ordinances that tend to criminalize body function activities in public spaces. These are the same activities all humans must do: sleep, sit, lay belongings down, excrete – we all do these same activities, but we have the luxury of being able to do these things in the privacy of our own homes. Where would we do these things if we had no home? We would do it on public property because we do not own any private property, of course. Where would we relieve ourselves if nearby public restrooms are closed? Where ever we could find some degree of privacy in outdoor public spaces (and perhaps we HAVE done this on a long road trip). Since 2006, it has been a crime to do these things in public; one may get a ticket and a fine and/or go to jail. Why? How can one avoid these activities when they are essential for all the Earth’s 7.1 billion humans? So yes, I agree with the neighbors that some of those who are homeless may be “criminals.” They are criminals for doing the same things that we ourselves do because such activities are absolutely necessary to all humans.

Why are people afraid of this 21st century “boogie man”? They just assume; they hold stereotypes of homelessness as if they are absolute truth. This perpetuates fear. Why? Because they might not really personally know anyone who is experiencing homelessness. It is a fear of the unknown. It is often said, “Fear is our worst enemy”. They live in fear of a perceived homeless stereotype - lazy, dirty, drug users, alcoholics, prostitutes and thieves. Actually those who are experiencing homelessness are much more likely to be the victims of theft rather than the perpetrators. And when they are the victims, it is not a broken window or a destroyed lock that they must fix. When people who are homeless are victims, it is often a broken jaw, nose, or rib that needs fixing. Additionally, when people who are homeless are robbed, they lose their entire “house” (backpack), as well as, photo ID’s. Obtaining a replacement ID may take months since they don’t own a filing cabinet to store important supporting documents needed to get one. And they may miss out on months of no work because they can’t be employed without an ID. Thus, the cycle of homelessness is perpetuated.

It is those who are homeless who actually should be the ones living in fear. And they are! They live hard lives, unprotected by doors and locks; they are society’s most vulnerable citizens. Hate crimes (crimes motivated by bias) against the homeless are three times more common than those against all five FBI monitored legally protected groups (religious, sexual orientation, disabilities, race, and ethnicity) combined. Assaults on people experiencing homeless have resulted in 375 deaths over the past 12 years as compared to 132 deaths in all the protected groups combined (Vulnerable to Hate: Survey of Hate Crimes, National Coalition for the Homeless, June 2014). Another surprising fact is that many of these homicides have not been investigated nor the perpetrator prosecuted. Thus, these crimes have resulted in no consequences. For

those where the demographics of the perpetrators are known, 93% were males, 82% were under the age of 30 yrs and 48% under the age of 20 years. Regarding the homeless victims, 90% were males and 72% were over the age of 40 yrs.

For every one homicide, there are hundreds of bullying episodes, some could be defined as torture. Amazingly some of these episodes end up as videos on YouTube. One clip showed 3 young men in a pickup truck drinking beer searching for a homeless man. When they spot one walking down an unlighted street, they jump out of the truck, tackle him, bind him with rope, put a pillowcase over his head and then proceed to wrap his body in strings of firecrackers. They light the fuse and watch the victim writhing in pain as each cartridge fires. The men cheer, clap, and continue drinking beer. Afterwards, they unabashedly post their deed on the internet. The deed itself was horrible and repulsive, but even worse, there was no evidence of shame or guilt. And by posting a video, they showed they had no fear of being identified and prosecuted.

How can people bully, torture, and kill persons who are homeless with no shame or guilt? A study conducted at Princeton by Drs. Harris and Fiske*, demonstrated that well educated students processed photographs of "homeless people" as if they were objects instead of persons!! In this study, students underwent functional MRI scanning to determine the area of the brain that processed certain images: various objects and social classes of humans. Although other human images representing various social groups stimulated activation of the medial pre-frontal cortex (the area of social cognition), images of persons appearing homeless did not. Instead homeless images stimulated activity in areas of the brain (amygdala and hippocampus) that process the emotion of disgust. Brain activation results of the "homeless" images were similar to results obtained when students observed images of objects such as vomit and an overflowing toilet. The authors concluded that this study provides neural imaging evidence, confirming earlier behavioral studies, that our culture has de-humanized those who are homeless. They state that these studies "begin to explain how one can commit atrocities, such as, hate crimes, prisoner torture and genocide."

Why do people view someone who is homeless as less than human? Why does the brain register disgust when one views an image of a person who looks homeless? Disgust is a synonym for hatred and hatred is fueled by fear. Why are we afraid? Most of the time we are afraid of the unknown, the unfamiliar, the different. If one fears long enough, fear will eventually produce hate. Love is the opposite of hate. How can we change this fear of those who are homeless into love before the fear fuels the hatred? Maybe the first step is transforming the unknown into the familiar.

Dorothy Day (the Founder of the Catholic Worker Movement in 1933; now there are about 250 houses) explains that "you cannot love one another unless you know the other." In order to respect and love a person who is homeless we must personalize them. We must get past "the homeless" stereotype and see their unique personhood. We must learn their name, listen to their story and come to the realization that "Johnny" or "Susan" is first a person – a person who happens to be homeless. At CWH, we have seen the transformations of hundreds of people who have volunteered at our soup kitchen. On the first day, they look like a deer in the headlights, wide eyed, bewildered, and scared. Their eyes dart this way and that scanning for any imminent danger. Then after a few hours of interacting with our guests, they relax, and their nervousness and fear melt away. When they prepare to leave, they cheerfully embrace guests and other volunteers alike, expressing their eagerness to come back. The "homeless" regained personhood. The "boogie man" was de-boogied.

To know the "other" restores human-ness to the dehumanized, transforms disgust into acceptance, and eventually changes fear into love. We can love those experiencing homelessness in all of their brokenness because we too are broken; we are all broken in some way. Peter Marin (Dorothy's CWH co-founder in 1933) proclaimed that CWH should "create communities where it is easy for one to be good". And the San Antonio CWH is trying to do just that. It is not all about hospitality for those who are homeless, it also is about breaking down stereotypes and about unmasking the "Boogie Man" to discover a warm, breathing, heart-beating human who longs to be loved and also to share love. It is about building bridges between the housed and the houseless, and about transforming fear into love.

*Harris, L. T., & Fiske, S. T. (2006). Dehumanizing the lowest of the low: Neuro-imaging responses to extreme outgroups. *Psychological Science*, 17, 847-853.