

LOAVES AND FISHES

DULUTH, MN

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FREE

Hospitality During a Pandemic

By Kate Young

The first thing that we are as members of the Loaves & Fishes community are human beings. Our collective and individual experiences during each stage of COVID-19 awareness and response, begins and ends with us remembering we are growing with this crisis. Our collective passion for doing better together is arguably our strongest binding force. We recognize the honor and responsibility we have chosen and received. We recognize our power to bring caring, safety, and dignity to our most vulnerable neighbors, especially in times of crisis. We continue to ask ourselves, "if not me, who?" with a sense of practicality and gratitude.

We have the opportunity to care for one another in a way that none of us alive, here at Loaves & Fishes, has ever experienced before. Catholic Workers are dedicated to re-asking difficult questions ranging from how our movement may unintentionally benefit from existing structures of white supremacy to how to best offer hospitality and care to our community. It's essential that we answer these questions with the least violent, most loving solutions while continuing to address the needs of many empty hands.

In a time of pandemic, how does a community whose heart is in hospitality respond? How do we do no harm to our guests and neighbors? How do we protect one another from burnout? How do we sterilize our houses? How do we quarantine ourselves from each other? Can we or should we do that? Which services that vulnerable folks count on are closing or changing? What is the future of housing advocacy? We hold all of these questions and concerns in our minds constantly as we discuss how our guests' needs are changing, and how we can change

with those needs amidst this reality. We are grieving things we have always known about: inequality, violence, and neglect amongst our indigenous friends, our friends of color, our LGBTQIA friends, our impoverished and marginalized friends. We know the worst for them is yet to come. Folks are trying to find warm and dry places that are free of violence, and now they must do it during a pandemic with the subsequent economic ramifications. We all have things we are afraid of losing which are real and meaningful; some of us will be losing everything and poverty will point the way.



Hannah House Notes

By Drew Anderson

Along with the rest of the world, life at Hannah House has been unexpectedly turned upside down these past few months. When you last heard from us, Drew and Chelsea were providing foster care for a 10-year-old and a 6-year-old who are still with us. January saw the addition of two more people: Sarah joined us from Indiana for the spring semester and a few days later a 3-year-old moved in. Although it's been challenging adjusting to an additional child's schedule, we have benefited from the presence of a third adult, especially with the advent of remote learning: As adults pair off with the school-age kids, another adult

is free to give the 3-year-old all the attention she craves (preferably outside). This is a precarious arrangement at best as the kids seem to compensate their loss of important school relationships with episodes of defiance or resentment toward their new reluctant "teachers."

From a foster care standpoint, the shelter-in-place has had damaging effects on family connections. The 10 and 6-year-old are no longer able to visit their older sibling and the 3-year-old can no longer visit her parents. As spring approached, the older kids were getting closer to moving in with a relative, but that plan and its timeline are now uncertain due to coronavirus. Further, if they do move, there will no longer be opportunities for closure at their school, with their friends and with the wider community.

From a household standpoint, virtual meetings, face masks and social distancing have made it hard to navigate how to be a true community if we can't be together in person. It's exhausting to imagine this way of life continuing much longer, yet with warmer days we find relief in long bike rides and time in the garden. We are all excited to see the green shoots of aspiring broccoli, cabbage, peppers and tomatoes in our home-built starter garden. Our ten-year-old, an aspiring top-40 radio phenom, just learned how to create similes in her writing homework. If she were writing this update, she might say Hannah House is like the starter garden, eager for the world to open and the light to shine.

Loaves & Fishes needs

Because of the pandemic, please call ahead and make arrangements for us to meet you at the door with donations. 218-724-2054 (Dorothy Day House) or 218-728-0629 (Olive Branch).

Day-to-day needs

- Eggs (home raised are a-ok!)
- Sugar
- Butter
- Healthy breakfast cereal
- Coffee
- Men's socks
- Deodorant
- Laundry soap
- DTA bus passes (single-use, 7-day and 31-day)
- Gift cards to area gas stations (\$15-\$25 preferred)
- Gift cards to SuperOne and Whole Foods Coop
- Go to the following link for information on giving monetary gifts <https://duluthcatholicwork.wixsite.com/loavesandfishes/donate>

Special requests

- Working car, station wagon or small truck
- Sleeping bags (we no longer need tents or other camping gear)
- Volunteer handy people for small, socially-distanced carpentry, dry-wall, plaster and painting projects. Call Joel at (218)340-4356 for more information)

Bread and Roses House Notes

We (Gunes, Donna and Mo) consider ourselves lucky at Bread and Roses to have a calm and safe environment to live in. We continue to do our shifts at the hospitality houses which is a slight concern for Donna, who is 73. Esin and Eren are doing really well with their homeschooling in the mornings and enjoying some outdoor time in the afternoons. The only big changes are a new water heater (big thanks to Mike Hendricks!) and the removal of our three beloved cherry trees, which were unfortunately infested by flies. We'd love your suggestions for what to plant in their place. The Hendersons still plan to move to Turkey this summer, and hopefully international travel will begin by July (Mo and Gunes wish they could rent a place with 10 bedrooms and host Catholic Workers who need a Turkish vacation). In the meantime, Anne Schepers is joining the community and moving her belongings into our basement in anticipation of living upstairs when the Hendersons move out.

Dorothy Day House Notes By Joel Kilgour

Like you, we are walking through the pandemic with caution and worry. For those experiencing homelessness, it is especially concerning: homelessness is a risk factor itself, and the aging homeless population has higher than average rates of heart, lung and autoimmune conditions. Adding to this, initial data from the federally mandated Point in Time count of homeless individuals show a huge uptick in the homeless population, particularly unsheltered people. Loaves & Fishes community members and guests provided the backbone of CHUM's warming center staff this winter. Even us old timers were shocked to see 50-80 people sign in nightly for what is essentially an overflow shelter. The program wound down for the season on April 1, just as the pandemic hit the US with force. Thanks to generous donations from the community, CHUM staff and Loaves & Fishes volunteers have so far provided 82 people with outdoor gear to keep them as warm and as isolated as possible through the still-cold Northland spring. While we celebrate the outpouring of community support, the fact that our best option for 82 human beings is a tent and sleeping bag is nothing short of moral failure.

At Dorothy Day House we are making the best of these times, taking hard decisions and thinking creatively about how to meet people's needs. Two-thirds of the people staying here in March were at high risk for serious COVID-19 complications. As people moved out we reduced the number of guests to one per room. We have told friends who

Olive Branch House Notes By Kate Young & Shelly Bruecken

Life is different at Olive Branch as we continue to discuss and explore what hospitality looks like during the pandemic with our community, house volunteers, and guests. The pressing nature of every question that may arise due to COVID-19 is lost on none of us. Discussions begin and end with the understanding that our guests are vulnerable human beings that will be the first to feel any crisis. Keeping folks fed, giving them access to hygiene facilities, and attending to their human emotions is more important than ever. We juggle this idea while also managing immunocompromised guests and community members. Now, more than ever, it's important that we talk everything through step by step, day by day. We are glued to local press conferences and emerging scientific data as we work with our neighbors, grassroots organizations, and local agencies.

As a result of so many discussions, we have encouraged more hand sanitizing, cleaning with bleach water, and mask wearing throughout the house. We also have reduced the number of people around the table at once, limited open hours to 9am to 8pm to allow for more sani-

Dear friends, in light of our current circumstances we do not have the capacity to deliver our standard newsletter at this time. Thank you for your understanding and unwavering love and support.

Who we are

Current live-in members of the Loaves & Fishes community are: Drew Anderson, Shelly Bruecken, Chelsea Froemke, Gunes, Maweja, Eren and Esin Henderson, Donna Howard, Sarah Kilbarger-Stumph, Joel Kilgour, Tone Lanzillo, Anne Sheppers, and Kate Young. Many other people are part of our community as volunteers, donors, meal providers and advocates.



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have housing to stay away, even as we see the heavy weight of the pandemic, lost work and reduced access to mental health services bearing down on their shoulders. The house is open for two hours twice a day to anyone experiencing homelessness needing a hot meal, shower, laundry, or to charge their phones. After the meal, we quickly move to sanitize the first floor. We are able to meet most of the basic needs that present themselves to us, in large part because of kindness from housed and unhoused people alike: the guests who share tips on camping with recently homeless; the restaurant employees who cook food for our house in the downtime between takeout orders; the nurses and hair stylists who pooled resources to buy out the tents from a struggling local store to give to people without a home.

COVID-19 has exposed a great deal of brutality in our society. The risks it presents would not be so great if we didn't warehouse our elders, if healthcare were available to all people, if families had the resources to weather a disaster without draining their life savings... and if everyone had a home. And yet, this little virus has brought us to our knees and forced us to rethink our values. We put our lives on hold not necessarily to protect ourselves, but to protect the most vulnerable members of our society. From all of us at Dorothy Day House, thank you for staying home if you can, for your generosity, for your solidarity, and for your steadfast belief that another world is possible.

tizing, and added new COVID-19 literature on the walls. With all of these changes, we are still able to welcome guests to food, hygiene facilities, WI-FI, and provide needed company or counsel.

These discussions and changes have not come without challenges for guests and live-in volunteers alike. Our relationships with our significant others, families, friends, and work places have changed. We hold the responsibility of being present and healthy to this house with great thought and humility. We keep trying to find ways to hold each other up while allowing patience and grace for the stress and responsibility we feel. We lift up our fellow community mate Kier Waskey as they move out of Olive Branch to rejoin family. We are grateful for their contributions and love, while mourning the departure of a dear friend.

Though we have been able to adapt in ways to our new environment, we are well aware of what the future may hold. We are expecting an acute housing crisis any moment now. We know many local food services have diminished over night for the poor, especially for the unsheltered homeless. We continue to watch as mental health resources dwindle and become more limited as the population of people in poverty or homelessness increases. We watch as our current society fails to support or encourage so many of our friends. We hold our breaths and then ask ourselves to be calm and effective. The air feels thick with growth and fear, but so far there is no COVID-19 confirmed in our house.



It's with a heavy heart that we've decided to temporarily close the Bike Cave. Emergency bicycle repairs can be serviced on Wednesdays (1-5) by one of our volunteer mechanics. Call (218)302-5523 to schedule an appointment. Unfortunately, we are unable to offer any bike adoptions or accept donations until the Bike Cave reopens. Keep an eye on duluthcatholicwork.wixsite.com/loavesandfishes/bike-cave for updates.