

LOAVES AND FISHES



DULUTH, MN

VOL. 33—NO. 2

FALL 2022

Donna Earlene Howard,

76, prominent peace activist and homeless advocate of Duluth passed away July 31, 2022. Donna was a beloved mother, sister, aunt, friend, mentor, and a moral compass for those around her. Donna was born on July 3, 1946 to loving parents Earl and Charlotte Howard in Ames, Iowa. On the day of her birth, her proud big sister, Sally, announced to the neighborhood that the world was about to change, “I have a little sister! Donna’s here!” Donna’s childhood was full of love, action, energy, and adventure. She and Sally were best friends playing, hiking, camping, and founding the Daredevils Club, as Donna was known to climb trees and jump off breezeways. As the daughter of a pilot, she enjoyed traveling around the country from a young age, seeing the world from the air.

Throughout Donna’s adult life she lived intentionally, sustainably, and authentically. She unselfishly gave of herself, her resources, her time, and her energy to those around her. She lived in Berkeley, CA during the ’60’s and was immersed in the peace movement. She lived off the land on a farm in Iowa and raised her two sons, Jason and Ben, on a homestead in the woods in Grand Marais, MN. But it was ultimately Duluth, MN that she considered home. Shortly after moving to Duluth, Donna helped establish one of the houses of the Loaves and Fishes community, called Olive Branch, which offers short term housing and hospitality to women and families experiencing homelessness.

In her own words, Donna’s primary role was to listen, talk, and relate to people. She did this in mental health hospitals, group homes, with her family, with those in crisis, at food shelves, in war-zones, in jails, and in prison. It was through this listening and relating that Donna became increasingly attuned to the injustices that she heard in people’s stories and the disparities in the world. But Donna didn’t just listen; she internalized that she needed to take action to



make the world better. She believed that wasteful government spending on the military and weapons was money that should be put toward housing and ending poverty.

Donna participated in hundreds of peaceful actions and civil disobedience in opposition to weapons, war, poverty, and institutionalized racism; she demanded change, accountability, and dialogue with those in positions of power. Donna participated in a Plowshares action, disabling “ELF”, a Navy transmitter, which was built to communicate with nuclear submarines and launch a first strike. She was part of the inception of an organization called the Nonviolent Peaceforce in 2002, which provides unarmed civilian peacekeeping in countries where there is conflict and unrest. In her 15 years with the organization Donna traveled extensively, everywhere from Guatemala to Sri Lanka, as part of a civilian team guiding nonviolent

conflict resolution, negotiation, and protection for civilians under threat of violence. The Nonviolent Peaceforce continues to operate, with their work being nominated for a Nobel Peace prize and receiving accolades from the 14th Dalai Lama.

Steadfastly and humbly, Donna filled her life with action on what mattered most to her. After years focused on international work, she returned to the Loaves and Fishes community and helped establish the Bread and Roses house. She continued her social justice work and dedicated herself to local and national issues, which in recent years included Black Lives Matter, Stop Line 3/Water Protectors, and protesting the inhumane detention of migrants at our southern border.

In the face of these monumental challenges, she maintained an uncanny ability to laugh and enjoy life with her family and many friends. She loved good conversation, books, wildflowers, a fast game of Bananagrams and a glass of wine. As one of her dearest friends reflected, with her unwavering principles of nonviolence and loving service to those who had less, Donna inspired those around her to create positive change in whatever way they could.

In her memory, we can follow her example and act on our own principles. These lines from Mary Oliver, one of Donna’s favorite poets, may give us some perspective as we mourn our loss: “Doesn’t everything die at last, and too soon? // Tell me, what is it you plan to do // With your one wild and precious life?”

Donna leaves behind countless lives who have been touched by her love: sons Jason Husby (Leah Olson) and Ben Husby; sister, Sally (Dave) Sawyer; niece Martha (Brian Moen) Sawyer, and nephews Mike (Beth Sawyer and Nate Sawyer; 2 great-nieces (Emma, Arwen) and 4 great-nephews (Adam, Mikkel, Aaron, Erik); her family at the Loaves and Fishes community including present and past members; her friends at Grandmothers for Peace, Echoes of Peace Choir, Anathoth Community, Nukewatch, Nonviolent Peaceforce, the Twin Cities Hmong community, among many others.

Why I’m Still Here (or Here Again) - Spring/Summer 2014

By Donna Howard

Being a part of the founding of Olive Branch in 1991 remains one of the most joyful and meaningful parts of my life. In a catholic worker house, every day is about offering hospitality to people experiencing homelessness. Every day is about finding resources to meet the needs of our poorest citizens. Every day is about asking our country and society to act with justice and forswear violence. And every day is about doing it together. It’s a great way to live. Yet I left Loaves and Fishes and my home at Olive Branch

in 1996, as I prepared to do a Plowshare disarmament action at the Navy ELF base in Wisconsin. At that time, the Center for Defense Information reported that the US was spending \$75 million per day to prepare for nuclear war. As we in Loaves and Fishes struggled to assist people in finding food, clothing, and housing, this unconscionable priority of our country was a stinging assault to our own beliefs. How easy it would be for our nation to eliminate poverty by giving up the capability of nuclear warfare alone! The Loaves and Fishes community provided strong support for the direct disarmament witness undertaken by Tom Hastings and myself as we acted, testified against nuclear weapons at our trial, and underwent incarceration. *Continued on page 5*

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Remembrances

I can't imagine a world without Donna in it. I don't want to imagine a world without Donna in it. I don't want to move on from this point. Can't we linger here just a little longer?

I can safely say that Donna was one of the most important people in my entire life; I admired her so much. I'm imagining many, many of you could say the same thing. I admired how Donna showed up, placing her body in the direct line of any injustice and would put her beliefs into action. I loved that she lived intentionally, sustainably, authentically, every day of her life, and right up to her death. She unselfishly gave of herself, her resources, her energy, her sweat, and tears to those around her. Not to mention the fact that she did the New York Times Crossword with a pen. Of course I love and admire all those things about her. But most importantly to me, Donna made me feel seen.

When I was a little kid, Donna's face would light up whenever she saw me. You know those adults whose faces light up, genuinely happy to see you. She would play games with me, work on jigsaw puzzles with me, collect the eggs with me, bake snickerdoodles with me, talk to me, listen to me, and I knew that I mattered. She even took on my big brother in arm wrestling competitions, winning every year, until she didn't. And she was an amazing person to watch. So calm with my rascally cousins. So loving to her kitties and her dog Rufus. And Donna was a weaver, using a giant loom (from my childhood perspective), but she didn't just weave, she sheared her own sheep, spun the wool into yarn, dyed the yarn with natural coloring, and then wove the incredible wall hangings that are in my entryway today. Every gift she gave me was a homemade work of art. She made her own paper, she crafted bowls that she filled with daily blessings. She dipped her own beautiful candles. She made mobiles from drift wood. Dream catchers from boughs that she fashioned into a circle. As a little kid, she was magical to watch.

For Donna, nonviolence was a way of life. Her connection with the natural world, her commitment to live simply so others may simply live, her commitment to create safe space for women and children at Olive Branch and Bread and Roses, gave context for her public witness for peace and justice. Donna was not afraid to speak truth to power in the world arena, knowing that it often meant sacrificing personal freedom. Donna was no stranger in court, looking the judge and jury in the eye, giving them an opportunity to see a bigger picture than "the crime", inviting them to understand the necessity of addressing injustice in order to make societal change. At the Navy's Extremely Low Frequency facility, Donna cut an ELF pole, shutting down the trigger to pre-emptive nuclear war. She was charged with sabotage, interfering with national defense, as well as destruction of government property. Her eloquent defense and explanation of how ELF worked and why it was really what was illegal by international terms, inspired the jury to acquittal on both the sabotage and interference charges. She was



come, filling our house with laughter. She'd read her poems, hang out with us, play dominos, and we'd laugh till we peed our pants. We had a rivalry of pranks. I would toilet paper her room. She would leave a rubber rat in my bed. You know, just good fun.

Then after I graduated from college, I was lost. I had not passed the screening process to join the Peace Corp and I was devastated. I called Donna for comfort and support. I wanted to do good work. I wanted to make a difference and I wanted to make the world a better place. She quickly reassured me that I didn't want to work for the government anyway and that if I was looking to do good work, I was always welcome in Duluth, and Loaves & Fishes was always looking for help. The year was 1993 and I took her up on it. That beautiful summer day when she picked me up from the bus station, we went to the Park Point beach and dipped our feet into the lake. We were looking at the barges and the beauty, when all the sudden she shoved me into the lake, laughing hysterically, telling me it was the Loaves and Fishes baptism. Clearly the pranks would continue! We lived and worked together from 1993 to early 1995. It was an incredible time for me, watching Donna relate to people, and listen to people. Together during those years, Donna, my cousin Ben, and I brought many of our family traditions to those staying at the Olive Branch: making cinnamon rolls for Christmas morning, having Easter egg hunts, growing a vegetable garden. We laughed. We danced at the Irish Ceili. We sang. Oh my gosh, the hours we spent in the Olive Branch kitchen doing dishes and causing a raucous.

sentenced to 3 years.

In 1999, shortly after completing her prison term, Donna joined the core group that founded Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP). She was on the steering committee that formed the Peaceforce. She wrote part of the feasibility study which is the foundation of the work. Donna traveled to Guatemala and Sri Lanka on the first exploratory teams and helped set up the first field mission in Sri Lanka in 2003. Donna was on the board, wrote proposals for funding, and promoted in a world that so easily chooses war to solve problems, the need and timeliness of this third way, this nonviolent alternative to war.

Donna's gift to the NP went far beyond the fundraising and board positions. She embodied what the Peaceforce was about. When a co-founder in Guatemala was receiving death threats for her work on human rights, Donna dropped everything, flew to Guatemala and became her daily companion, sharing the risk of the work. When a fellow steering committee member had a heart attack in Sri Lanka, it was Donna

Donna and I had a silly, fun, and playful relationship as I grew into high school. She'd stay at our house in Minneapolis on the weekends when she was finishing her Bachelors degree at Metro State. I loved it when she would

But at the heart of it all, she was my Auntie Donna. It was such an honor to share those years together with Donna and my cousin Ben. We really became friends. Donna helped me see that everyone's version of making the world a better place looked a little different. I was no longer lost. I was launched from those years knowing that I would make the world better by focusing on my mental health. By becoming an Occupational Therapist. By raising amazing and thoughtful kids. By spreading kindness and generosity and to make sure I was having fun while I was at it.



Martha & Donna at the L&F 30th anniversary block party.

Through the years after I left Duluth, Donna continued her work and my admiration and pride swelled, watching her develop and collaborate on her international work with the Nonviolent Peaceforce. I was so proud that I knew her and loved her and that we shared genetics and blood. Her work was her life, but she still showed up for my mom, for her boys, for me, for our annual family picnics, to sit vigil with my mom at the bedside of their dad at the end of his life, to tell jokes and to continue with our pranks.

In the last 3 years, Donna's health began to fail. One thing after another. We were so worried. I cherish the girls weekends that we managed to squeeze into all our busy lives in the past 3 years, with Donna, my mom, and me, and that my daughter Emma was added to the mix this past May. By the end of those weekends we would all feel full, loved, and cherished. But here's the thing: this last girls weekend, she couldn't breath, her energy was poor, she coughed all night. The medical diagnoses were piling up. She was frail and fragile, and yet, still my Auntie, telling ridiculous Ole and Lena jokes.

Duluth and Loaves and Fishes was her home and I want to say thank you to all of you for being her family, too. Donna would want us to continue on. To keep up the fight and to march through this pain and this change and to build anew. To continue to shine the light on the arc of the moral universe, bending it toward justice. But before we do that, can't we just linger here for a little while longer? - Martha Sawyer

who stayed with him through surgery and the month of recovery. With her life so rooted in Catholic Worker values: the inherent dignity of every person, peace and nonviolence, justice and reconciliation, care for creation, simple living, and service to and solidarity with those who are poor, she brought sensibility to the NP that helped define its integrity and the mission.

At a recent international meeting of NP the group invited Donna into their circle, in gratitude for her work that has had a lasting effect and her tireless commitment to nonviolence that continues to guide and inspire. NP is a living legacy of all that Donna held to be true, just, and beautiful. Donna is so present with us and will continue to be, each time we choose love, understanding, respect, forgiveness in our everyday encounters. And this is the way we continue to honor Donna and all that she has meant to each of us. —Barb Kass, Nuke Watch

Donna was part of the core group that founded Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), joining the effort in July of 1999. During our first phone call Donna told me about the prospect of creating the NP "I have spent the last few years destroying things on behalf of peace now I want to build something on behalf of peace." And that she did. She was on the steering committee (that

My name is Nelsie Yang. I currently serve as the youngest and first Hmong American woman on the Saint Paul City Council. I was elected at 23 years old.

Many people have heard Donna Howard talk about a married couple who she and her good friends Julie Morgan and Tom Morgan sponsored to the United States in 1989. Those were my parents, Kong Yang and Nhia Vang. My parents were born in Laos and fled to the Thailand refugee camps to escape political persecution and genocide during the Secret War, which was a covert war during the Vietnam War. Duluth is where my four older siblings and I were born.

Donna holds a special place in my family's and my heart. She is an incredible person who made life and living possible for us. Because of her, we have been able to pursue our biggest hopes and dreams like higher education, employment, start up businesses, and run for office, just to name a few.

I keep thinking back to the words Donna left

behind for all of us before we lost her. She said that even though she's no longer here, she lives through us. She's exactly right. One of the many ways I will always remember and celebrate Donna is when I'm out in the streets and in the social justice movement, holding up my solidarity fist. We are the people carrying on the work that she dedicated her entire life to, and it's to build the world that we know we deserve. A world free from nuclear weapons, violence, and war. A world where all people are in safe and dignified housing and without hunger. A world rooted in racial, gender, and economic justice for all.

On behalf of the Yang family, thank you to Donna's entire family for sharing her with the community. Our hearts are with you all during this difficult time. I want to thank Donna for everything she did for us and the world. Even though we wish she was still here, we know she is in a better place now. We will always love, miss, and remember you, Donna. -Nelsie Yang



Tom Morgan, Donna Howard, Nhia Vang, Nelsie Yang, Julie Morgan, Bryan Yang, Kong Yang at Nelsie's 2018 City Council Campaign Kickoff.



SummerRain & Donna goofing around at Olive Branch.

I've known Donna since I was a little girl. My family and I moved up here when I was around 2 or 3, we were incredibly lucky to have the chance to move into Olive Branch. When I got older, I became closer with them. To me, Donna became my grandma. We would play board games and card games together. She would help me with homework when I needed help. She was always listening to middle school drama and whatever guy or girl I had a crush on. We had deep and meaningful conversations after dinner. She was one of my biggest supporters and I loved her so deeply. She truly changed my life for the better and I'll always keep her in my heart and mind. -Summer Rain Redbrook



Donna & Kate in MI

of me. We understood the possibility that we might startle someone sleeping or engaging in some sort of naughty behavior. Donna wanted to lead; she explained that it was because no one would want

once met in tents and another time was stranded in a blizzard in Quebec) that formed NP. She wrote part of our feasibility study (<https://bit.ly/3P4t6uK>).

When fellow NP co-founder, Claudia Samayoa, came under threat in Guatemala, Donna immediately accompanied Claudia, who wrote this week: "Donna is an important presence in my life; not only for her amazing work with NP as well as her loving and sweet presence during the years we shared the effort of building our nonviolent Peaceforce, but also because she shared with me the risk of the work of protecting human rights defenders in Guatemala."

Donna was on the first exploratory teams that went to Guatemala and Sri Lanka and then helped set up our first field mission in Sri Lanka in 2003. She helped convince several supporters who are still with us today. She co-chaired our International Steering Committee through a rocky transition.

NP elder, David Grant described how she, "had a fierce joyfulness in her that sometimes challenged me to

remember how far we had to go."

Some late-night drives she would keep us awake by belting out Broadway show tunes. True to her Northern roots, she reveled in sharing winter with her Southern colleagues. "She put me on a piece of wood in Minneapolis and gently pushed me down with the slide on ice (looking down from 320 degrees)," recalled her colleague Ramu Mannivanan.

Most importantly, Donna always brought a sensibility (influenced by her Catholic Worker community) to NP that helped define our integrity and mission. Rajiv Vora, NP's former coordinator for Asia offers a closing eulogy: "A soulful person with an independent mind, but never without a consideration for others. Her sense of independence was rooted in her quest for righteousness, a pure soul; as she was. It was a pleasure working with her. A soldier on nonviolence always rests in Peace. In fond memory of her I pay my heartfelt tribute to Donna. Om shanti, shanti, shanti!"

- Mel Duncan, Founding Director



to beat up a sweet, nonthreatening, little old lady. Tiny but fierce, my protector.

Donna had a powerful love of community, and her sharing that with me has left me better prepared to mourn her and be okay. If we lived side by side for 100 years, I'd still continue to be shocked by the number of folks I'd never met that would appear, and who had homes in her heart. Going anywhere with Donna was always packed with warm greetings, smiles and hugs; I was good at holding her backpack or beverage during many reunions. She loved us all that much and we loved her back. Over the past 5 years, I haven't gone more than a day or two without talking to Donna. Checking-in, asking for her opinion about something, venting, debriefing hospitality, house updates, or sending her a funny meme. It's staggering how many folks had a relationship like that with her. Donna Howard, Loaves and Fishes is forever grateful for your work and example. We love you dearly, and I love you dearly.

- Kate Young, Loaves & Fishes

Crossing—Fall 1996

Like the alarming sign
SLOW CHILDREN CROSSING
with no punctuation
to keep you wondering
what is wrong with the children,
I am a slow woman crossing
into wakefulness
never soon enough.

It has taken half a century
exactly
to cross to this hard place
where I sit in stubborn slowness
and demand someplace to go.

I can slide back easily enough
to sink my face in the furry comfort
of a childhood companion
or body into the flowered grass
where Earth swallowed my smallness
and sky sucked up my blue spirit.
Or further even
to dance a primordial earthsong
and swim in prenatal ocean.

But forward?
My bones are little fish
in a minnow bucket,
thick with silvery twitching
and going nowhere.
I have stopped in the middle -
a jail cell I cannot open.

So you'll have to excuse me
if I am in your way...
I am alarmed
and will sit here
demanding sacred ground
to cross onto
and pray with bare feet
on soil that yields mushrooms.

This hard place
is better than mushroom clouds
and ashes to bury my bones.
from jail
By Donna Howard

ELF Disarmed!! Earth Day, 1996

On April 22, Donna and Tom Howard-Hastings cut down three poles of the ELF antenna in the Chequamegon National forest in protest of our country's continued preparation for nuclear war, turning themselves in at the ELF site afterwards.

Some Words From Donna: It is painful to know that many will view my action as destructive or hostile, whereas cutting poles that hold the Trident/ELF antenna is simply the greatest act of love of which I am capable at this point in my life. And as always with love, I wish I could do more.

The threat of any violence is so wrong. What can we say of the threat, constant preparation for and willingness to use violence at this magnitude; first-strike nuclear war with destructive potential in this one weapons system 100,000 times greater than that with which we decimated the city of Hiroshima 50 years ago? This weapon, this willingness, this work, this investment is a blatant breach of International Law, which binds the United States. But worse, it is a sin against creation and Creator. If I could, I would take out the entire thing with my two hands and then move onto other military installations where the instruments of death are kept ready.

Our "democracy" has failed us here. It has refused to recognize our voices of protest through the court, polls, editorial, legislative processes or direct plea' but it does pretend to represent us in violation of International and Natural Law and in threatening global annihilation. Conscience will not allow me to be complicit or

Live Birth—Winter 1997

When the poles came down,
the wash of life through us
was so strong
I trembled in its current like a reed.
The salty waters broke
and poured through my eyes
as the last labor caught
sobbing in my throat.
Tom's saw harmonized with my own
in a psalm to Creation,
and triplet wooden wedges
were delivered into our hands.
We pushed, heard the birth groan
deep within the poles held captive
under a current of death,
and shook with joy in one another's arms
when they fell to the good earth.

For nine months we carried this
between us incubating life
as it wants to spring forth
and flow in this river.
we watched the signs:
chickadee, deer, whitepine:
walked river and snow
as we grew ripe with this gift
ready to deliver
into a sacred world of freedom
from nuclear death
triggered by this antenna
for this one holy day.

By Donna Howard



Tom & Donna with their saw.

passive in that system.

Every pole which supports this trigger for the most deadly and costly weapons system ever built does so in our names. I am simply removing poles which falsely represent me or my sons.

Faith, hope and love, these three are required. My entire life I have tried to learn how to express the passionate love I feel for more brothers and sisters, for every living thing on our planet, for Creation and Creator. I have given birth, I have worked with and lived with people who are homeless, mentally ill, survivors of violence, victims of a system which hasn't afforded opportunity for adequate wage-earning, health care, education, food, housing...I have done so as a volunteer, as an employee, as a life-style...

To be faithful to this love and the God of my understanding, I have trained myself in the ways of nonviolence and taken the saw in my own two hands. God help me, I believe I must.

I do so because I have hope and wish to create hope. We can choose a world without personal or global violence, without debilitating poverty, without untreated mental, physical, or addictive illness. But none of these things is possible under the shadow of an immoral and demonic nuclear weapon system which threatens to destroy all life as we know it and kills daily by consuming the resources which are needed to sustain life.

I promise I will be tried by a court system mandated to punish violence. I challenge that system to judge me for my small attempt to act as a responsible mother to Ben and Jason, Great-aunt to Adam, sister to women and men in all nations, and child of God. A just and faithful system would find that I have not done enough.

A Joint Statement: We go to the ELF antenna in Wisconsin, where signals are generated to utilize the Trident submarine nuclear weapons system. We take with us copies of international law that show Trident/ELF to be illegal, photos of babies in whose defense we act, our saws, and our love for the Earth.

We place decorative stakes around small sapling trees under the Trident/ELF antenna (seedlings that are doomed to the cutting bar unless we cut Trident/ELF poles instead) and affix the photos of beloved children to the stakes, declaring that both humans and trees deserve to grow up without the shadow of unclear death over them. We choose to disarm that war machine instead, to the best of our puny abilities.

Then, with a prayer, a handsaw, and hope for a better world, we cut down three Trident/ELF poles. The line we choose to dismantle includes some poles that are well-removed from any road and cannot cause an accident to vehicles. We scout the area for people first, watch very carefully, and exercise all possible measures to assure that these poles fall harmlessly onto land already cleared for the antenna line.

Then we cut off a part of one of the poles and carry it a mile or so to the main facility with indictments under international law and other laws of the universe nailed to it. We sit in blockade of the transmitting facility and let them know that the system is shut down and must, pursuant to international law, remain turned off. We declare that all personnel who work with these weapons, except those actively engaged to dismantlement, are violating international law. We recommend that they petition their employers for rehabilitation and retraining (provided courtesy of the billions

saved by not buying weapons of death).

We assume at that point the agents of law enforcement will come to arrest us and take us prisoner under laws against property damage, good laws that can only be broken with excellent reason. We have the required excellent reasons. In fact, we are obligated and cannot excuse ourselves in waiting as long as we have.

Olive Branch, Fall 1993 By Donna Howard

Over 100 Catholic Worker "hospitable places" can be found around the country; others are sprinkles around the world. In early October, the Midwest Catholic Workers gathered in Sugar Creek, Iowa, as they do annually. Richard, Frank, Bobby, Ben and I decided to check it out; no one from our community had ever attended. Folks were there from over a dozen houses in Chicago, Milwaukee, Rock Island, Bloomington, etc., for potluck-style discussion, fun and food. I found it energizing to meet others living within this tradition, helpful to exchange joys and sorrows. Regretfully, we did not win the skit competition, though we gave it our sincere and outrageous best.

There have routinely been 12 or even more around our table lately. My favorite moment of the day is always the one when our hands form a circle around that table. Then, because someone says "amen" or gets the giggles, it is over, and we feast. We eat well, thanks to our volunteer caterers, usually amid laughter, live-

Ash Wednesday - Spring 1993

(after taking Terri to the emergency room last night)

I woke this morning
ancient as the first act of violence
lifting these scarred bones
painfully,
painstakingly,
as if they were hand blown glass.

But turning back to straighten
the old quilt which comforted me,
I find my sheets covered with ashes.

This is not gallows humor:
this brief day,
this breath I draw and cast to the wind
as if another waits in line.
Is it possible
to mark myself with these ashes
and yet breathe
into the constricted throat of another?

What does Teri feel this morning,
bruises burning
with a cremated idea of love?
Does she remember our awe
seeing the ultrasound image of embryo
beating its hope
for enough blood and breath
to rise from the ashes
before having to return?

Terri will return to the violent ashes of
what she calls love
squinting red eyed into the light.
I carry this sacred urn of my body
to the window
praying the ancient sun will warm me.
By Donna Howard



Ben, Donna, John, Liz, and Martha during the early days at Olive Branch.

Continued from cover page After that action and its resultant prison time, I did not rejoin the community, but got my own home on the hillside above downtown Duluth. It had been a privilege to witness against the crime of nuclear weapons and their threat to all life on Earth. I was certain that we needed to disarm the weapons of mass destruction, and certain that we needed to create new tools to intervene when warfare occurs - alternatives to the tanks of NATO or bombers of powerful nations.

I wanted a nonviolent alternative that would protect civilians according to international human rights law, keeping them alive and free to participate in building a just resolution to their conflict. Shortly after my release from prison I met others who were working on a viable option and joined them in establishing Nonviolent Peaceforce, an organization which provides unarmed civilian peacekeeping. Nonviolent Peaceforce has successfully demonstrated that it is quite possible for deeply trained civilian internationals to work in conflict areas in a nonpartisan way with all warring parties and significantly reduce violence while increasing citizen participation in building peace.

We have demonstrated this with field projects in Sri



Barb, Donna, and Loni around the Olive Branch table.

Old Growth at Olive Branch, Spring 2019

The story starts in 1991. It starts with two Loaves & Fishes houses that were going well but turning people away regularly for lack of room. It starts with a strong community, plus Donna Howard (Husby) and her sons Jason and Ben, who were ready to move in. It starts with a 100 year old house at 1614 Jefferson and the dozens of volunteers who pitched in to renovate it.

Renovation included refinishing all floors and walls, much new wiring, completely gutting and rebuilding the kitchen, building a three story fire escape on the back, putting a ½ bath on the first floor, outside scraping and painting, and a new roof. Whew! Thank heaven for the churches and other groups who donated money and did the work!

We opened to women and families who were experiencing homelessness November 9th, 1992. We opened our hearts with the intention of creating space for all the love we would need. We blessed the house and asked it to hold all of us in security, health, and hope. We sang, we hugged, we began.

My son Ben, then a Junior at East, and I were the first two to move in, along with our lop-eared bunny Serrit. Jason came home the following summer to help work on the house. Liz Carlson moved over from Dorothy Day to join us living on the third floor. The fourth community person to join us was John Heid.

That was a long time ago, but those original hopes

They mended and strengthened the back porch first and built upward two stories with amazing speed and efficiency. Still, it's a story too short, and we're looking for ways to finish it.

In our last letter we mentioned that Martha had joined us as an intern. Since she has categorically refused to leave, we have come to realize that she is an honest-to-goodness community member who slipped in and made herself indispensable. Thank goodness for the added person now that John is in jail! Thank goodness anyway!

It is difficult for people to find affordable housing. During the year that our house has been in service, our guests have stayed longer, on the average, than the "under 30 days" goal of the community simply because

Lanka, Guatemala, Mindanao Philippines and South Uganda, and have also worked in Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, South Caucasus and the United Nations. I'm proud of the organization we created and grateful for the opportunities I worked alongside others from all over the world to deepen my understanding of nonviolent intervention. But after thirteen years I felt fatigued from the responsibility. I resigned in order to convert that time and energy back into local projects.

I had continued, over the years, to volunteer at Loaves and Fishes, always drawn back by the richness of relationships with guests. But I became more and more involved at this point and found that Olive Branch still felt like an emotional and spiritual home for me. I kept increasing the time I devoted to the community's hospitality and organizing.

So in early February of this year, I moved out of my little house and into the 1900 block of Jefferson Street to be back at

the side of the community. We are discerning ways in which this house might serve both the community and its mission. It's deeply satisfying, at this point in my life, to make a life change around these facts: I need the community and the community (its work of hospitality, activism and organizing) needs me. I haven't been gone, but I'm glad to be home.

and dreams have held strong, and the house has welcomed so many lives. Many things have changed, though. At that time we asked our guests to move-on in 30 days, and most of them did. They were able to jump through the hoops of getting funding and finding affordable housing in that amount of time unless there were unusual circumstances. Now, there is such a shortage of housing in Duluth that guests need months of hospitality, and some have stayed up to a year. This makes relationships long-term, requiring greater depth. This results in little turnover and consequently we can accept fewer people.

It would be fun, here, to give you numbers: how many guests have stayed with us, how many babies have been born to mothers who were staying with us, how many meals have been prepared by volunteers, how many hours of labor have been invested in the maintenance of the house, how many kids we've sent off to school, how many dishes we've washed, how many birthdays we've celebrated... But keeping statistics has not been our focus. We've tried to love each person who came to us, offered what we could, and kept it all very personal.

The needs have been heartbreaking; the joys overwhelming. From just one of the notes we received in the first year: "When we met I was in crisis and needed someone to help with me and my 3 year old son. And my Creator lead me to you... I love the fact that Ian knows he is truly safe in all of your arms and that he does not have to have any worries when we are with you... I needed to know I had family to support me and that was who came: my family. God I love you guys. From Melissa" -By Donna Howard

they are unable to line up places to go. And while we allow them to stay, we are turning others away. Duluth AFDC families typically spend 85% of their income on rent; a single person on General Assistance or Work Readiness cannot afford even a cheap efficiency. Please support all efforts to increase the availability of affordable housing in Duluth!

We are only one small house on one out-of-the-way street. And the flood of need and injustice sometimes seems overwhelming. We look to our community for hugs and continuing discernment of how to live out a definition of justice, ethic, and love. And we look to you, our greater community, for the support without which we could not provide hospitality, let alone sing and dance while doing it.

Olive Branch

By Kate Young

Hello Olive Branch friends and family. I want to start by saying how grateful we are for your care and support, and how you have continued to show up for us in so many ways. Our community is grieving. We have lost Donna Howard, a light of love and strength for so many of us for so long. Included in this news-



Yoda-nna during one of her many weekly house duty shifts at Olive Branch.

letter is a remembrance from her memorial gathering on September 25th, which I had the privilege of reading aloud. Donna's loss is the most poignant change that could befall Olive Branch. She founded this hospitality house for families 30 years ago, where she shared space with her community in need as well as her own family. We have lost our north star, but will continue to make her proud. Shelly, Sarah and I will honor her memory by continuing to labor and grow, love bravely, support our vulnerable neighbors and stand against violence and injustice.

Before Donna passed, we had decided as a team that it was time to upgrade Olive Branch by adding a much needed first floor shower. The construction has been going on for the past two months and will be especially helpful for folks without homes or access to hygiene facilities. We have had as many as 15 folks spending the long winter in this house at the same time. Hooray for a second shower!

Sarah Kilbarger-Stumpff, a beloved live in volunteer at Olive Branch for the past 3 years, will be moving on this year. She's brought so much to our community and our neighbors in need. Thank you for your care and hard work! We will miss you and your contributions dearly.

We do our best to make sure our guests living with us at Olive Branch, as well as day guests, have their needs met. The lack of affordable housing in Duluth has been a crisis for years, and the pandemic has made the situation worse. Rents continue to skyrocket, barriers continue to be erected. Guests will need to stay with us longer as they look for housing they can sustain, and by no fault of their own. Thank you for standing up with us; we all deserve a home that is warm and safe.

Dorothy Day House Notes

By Dave McComas-Bussa

This fall there is rarely a dull day at Dorothy Day House. Every morning folks are up before dawn brewing coffee, ready to take on the day. Most of the men work long hours, trying to save up enough money for a deposit on an apartment. Others spend most of the day on the phone talking to case workers, pharmacists, and prospective employers, securing the support they need to move forward. It's a chatty house, and there is always good conversation to be had. People here support each other. A lot of the guys have comparable life experiences, and know they can confide in each other. Everyone here walks their own path, but they aren't walking alone.

Drop in hours remain as busy as ever. With cold weather on the way, people are in greater need of hot food, hot showers, and clean clothes. Many visitors are making vital preparations and securing the supplies they need for the coming winter. Dorothy Day House has remained a place of comfort and community for those who need it most.

There is a housing crisis in Duluth. It does not often make the news, but it impacts everything we do at Dorothy Day House. There are simply too few housing units in the city; more people live on the street than ever before. With more people forced to live on the street or in their cars, there is an increase in drug use, suffering, and despair. Every week, calls come to Dorothy Day House from folks looking for emergency housing that we are unable to accommodate. The people we are able to take in are forced to stay with us longer because there are almost no affordable apartments. Many landlords in the city won't rent to people with section 8 vouchers, greatly limiting the efficacy of government assistance. Most public resources are understaffed and overwhelmed. It's going to be a hard winter, and there are tough questions we as a house and a community are going to have to answer. How best can we serve those most in need? What do we offer that other organizations cannot? What is the best use of our energy? What needs do we not have capacity to meet? These are vital questions to ask when the crisis is so great.

Thankfully we have a very supportive network of outside volunteers that make what we do possible. Every week they share their kindness, knowledge, and food, making us richer and healthier. We are so fortunate to have their support, and I myself am grateful as a newcomer to the community to be able to meet such wonderful humans committed to love and justice. As the days grow colder and shorter we must hold each other closer, and never forget that love comes with community.

I should also announce that I, Dave, have joined the community! I moved into Dorothy Day house back in June and haven't looked back. I learned a lot this summer and look forward to learning more and continuing to build relationships this winter!



Dave, Drew, and Tone working together to press our Jefferson Street apples.

Bread and Roses House Notes

A Season of Goodbyes

by Kohti

When Donna adopted me and my brother Wandu from Animal Allies in 2003, we were 8 weeks old. She named me "Kohti" which means "tiger" in Sri Lanken. After Wandu passed several years ago, I said goodbye to him and claimed Donna for myself. We would hang out on her sofa for many happy hours. Just like her, I've found it in my heart to love everyone. I also accept (and demand!) affection from anyone who sits down for more than 30 seconds.

Donna was my perfect human. Even after she slowed down, was on oxygen, short of breath and had a bad cough, we stuck together day and night. Well okay, she did leave me frequently to attend book clubs or do house duty at Olive Branch and Dorothy Day House. She fed me like clockwork, 8 am and 8 pm and accommodated my "old cat" deafness and yowling.

As you all know, on July 31st, we had to say goodbye to Donna. With Donna gone, Anne, Tone and Shannon tried hard but couldn't live up to the standards I was used to. Melissa and Loni helped a lot and they all finally found me a new home with Dorothy and David Wolden. Dorothy spent many hours waving signs with Donna for Grandmothers For Peace. David caught on quickly to my prefer-



Kohti. Photo credit Gunes Henderson



Kohti and Donna in their favorite spot.

ences and knows to turn on the shower on just enough so that I can drink from water off the shower floor. I'm now contentedly eating 6 (not a typo!) small meals a day which is perfect for my delicate constitution.

As happy as I am in my new place, I do miss Bread and Roses- especially Game Nights with Kate loving me up and lots of laughter, snuggles with Shannon (but her eyes would swell shut and she looked really scary whenever she petted me!), overnight guests and

community gatherings. Anne got some grant money to plant a pollinator garden in the backyard. The apple and pear trees had a bountiful year. The grapes didn't produce well this year but that'll give everyone some extra time to get ready to carry on Donna's grape juice making tradition next year. Later this month Tone will be moving to Bread and Roses and Shannon will return for good in the spring.

So if you're missing Donna, please take time to slow down, pet a kitty, listen deeply, play dominos, be silly. She's still here, in all of us.

Hannah House Notes

By Drew Anderson

I hope you've been out enjoying the autumn changes. On our section of Jefferson St. the sugar maples turned their crimson red and our apple trees have finally yellowed after another epic fruiting this past year—think gallons and gallons of cider, loads of dried apples and many batches of apple sauce. If you happened to walk near the corner of 17th Avenue East and Jefferson St. this October, you probably noticed people on the Hannah House roof.

In late September, as our garden went to seed and the squirrels took it upon themselves to harvest our corn (bastards), four layers of asphalt shingles came off our 133 year old house, to be replaced by gleaming white steel. The Metal Roof Company worked tirelessly, sun up to sun down, literally! One night as I read books with Alahna before bed, we were distracted by beams of light flitting from behind her curtains as the roofers, in headlamps, wrapped up some work outside the 2nd story window. It was a long project, due to the steepness of the roof, odd angles, and the unevenness that developed over a century's time. Thankfully, we had

plenty of cold apple cider to share with them on hot days and coffee on the colder ones. Not long after the roof was complete, a solar array was installed by Benson Electric (thank you Jeff and Chase!) and now Hannah House resides with its foundation in the 19th century and its top in the 21st. Our household remains chaotic but stable: our daughters Alahna (5 and ½ years old) and Gavia (1 years old) outpace the solar panels in wattage and weekends at home often leave Chelsea and I looking forward to the week. But we're

having fun: We make a point as a family to enjoy the outdoors, music and exercise, mainly bicycling, and we anticipate a winter full of sledding, skiing and skating. We made it to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness as a family along with our community mate, Sarah and community alum Michael Elderbrook. We entered through Ely via the Moose River and had the pleasure of spending our first night at the home of Peggy and John, newly formed friends of the Loaves and Fishes community, who have been providing monthly respite to the hospitality house live-in volunteers. On trail, Alahna and Gavia were the main enter-

tainment and worry for us all, but the adult to child ratio was in our favor and the kids managed just fine. Chelsea and I remain licensed as foster parents and await a placement that will work with the needs of Alahna and Gavia. In the meantime we continue to provide respite to other families and keep our extra room ready for guests and prospective volunteers of Loaves and Fishes. We had the privilege of hosting two of our former foster children who were on a ten day visit from Florida. We specialized in bicycle rides to ice cream destinations, swimming in the big lake, and had so much fun just being together again. The Bike Cave thrived this season in most part due to the tremendous support Chelsea and I received through our dedicated volunteer mechanics: Daniel, Justice, and Ken and a vibrant community of bicycle enthusiasts and donors.

Alahna has begun kindergarten and continues to maximize play time with her neighborhood buddies. Gavia is teething while discovering her likes and aversions, e.g. scrambled eggs, good, hard boiled eggs, bad. Chelsea stays busy balancing childcare and L&F commitments. As for myself, I'm behind on innumerable projects in the community but am enjoying the ones that I'm taking on. My part-time electrical work is fulfilling and I'm venturing into the public ear/eye with my guitar at local coffee shops. Winter looms ahead for us all, but here at Hannah House we look forward to active days and warm nights with open invitations to our neighbors and friends.



The Hannah House crew enjoying a visit with previous community mates: the Hendersons!

Board Report

By Mark Brown & Doris Malkmus

Mark Brown, a new member of the Loaves & Fishes Housing INC board who also serves on the Projects Committee, has been volunteering with the Loaves and Fishes Community for a number of years on small projects and repairs through the supportive relationship between Loaves and Fishes and St. Paul's Church.

Earlier this year the board asked Mark to join the Board. He readily agreed --his experience operating a business is seen as a helpful to Loaves and Fishes.

Much of his work career was as a project manager, and while it wasn't specifically in the construction area, much of what he did has application in the projects the board are looking at for the houses of Loaves and Fishes. Projects, no matter what size, all have similar requirements and issues, and he looks forward to helping with the projects during his time on the board. He has now been a part of a few meetings of both the board and the Project Committee and feels great about his decision.

Over the summer, before joining the board, Mark and his family hosted a fundraiser for the benefit of Loaves and Fishes, specifically toward the installation of the solar panels at Hannah House. The lawn party with great food and music and perfect summer weather was a great success. Members, friends and supporters of Loaves and Fishes attended and had a really good time. He proved that doing good can also be a lot of fun. He gives a special thanks to the musicians, especially Charlie Parr for making the event a big success. The board thanks him and in turn, he thanks Loaves and Fishes for the opportunity to work with, support, and meet the wide Loaves and Fishes community as well as its current members.

The current remodeling project at Olive Branch connects us deeply with Donna Howard. She was a co-founder and loving, guiding presence at Olive Branch until her death this summer. She lived at Olive Branch with her children when it first opened, and since the early 2000s, she had been a tireless volunteer and long-time friend to its many families. She urged the board to fund the addition of a shower to the downstairs bathroom. Olive Branch had only a small half bathroom on the first floor while the upstairs bathroom was shared by almost a dozen resident families and volunteers living on the third floor. There has been a need for quite some time for an additional shower that our drop-in guests, especially folks sleeping outside, can more easily access.

The L&F Board made this project a priority. Plans were drawn to eliminate the pantry in order to add the shower and to remove an unused back stairway to enlarge the kitchen space. The Board raised funds; volunteers removed the back stairway in preparation for the contractor. This August, Olive Branch was closed and the contractor began. At the time of this publication, the shower, plumbing, and wiring are installed and sheetrock hung. Flooring, trim and installing additional kitchen cupboards are underway. The Board extends a hearty thank you to Shelly who has supervised the project from conception to completion.



Removing shingles on the Hannah House roof.



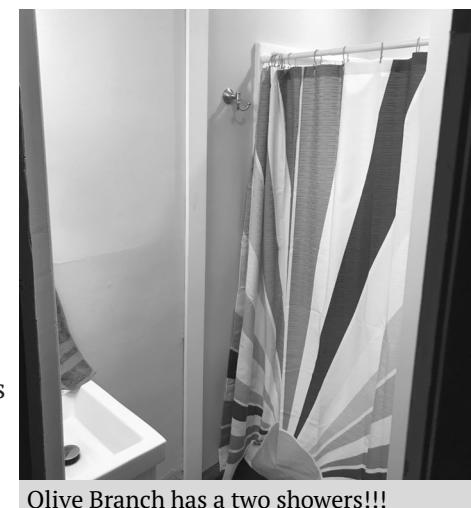
Solar panel installation at Hannah House.



Demolition in Olive Branch Kitchen.



A new cabinet in the Olive Branch kitchen.



Olive Branch has a two showers!!!

Dorothy Day House
1712 Jefferson Street
Duluth, MN 55812
(218) 724-2054

Bike Cave
1712 Jefferson Street
Basement/Backyard
(218) 302-5523

Olive Branch
1614 Jefferson Street
Duluth, MN 55812
(218) 728-0629

**Loaves & Fishes Housing INC OR
Hannah House**
1705 Jefferson Street
Duluth, MN 55812

Current Needs:

- Eggs (home raised is ok!)
- Socks (adult sizes)
- Men's underwear (not white, medium and large)
- Laundry detergent
- Butter
- Winter coats, gloves, mittens, hats (adult sizes)
- Bus passes
- Gas cards
- Dish soap
- Baby Wipes
- Toilet paper
- Hand warmers

Donations can be delivered to 1614 or 1712 Jefferson Street. Ask for the volunteer on duty.

Monetary Donations:

Checks can either be made out to *Loaves and Fishes* (NOT tax deductible) for unrestricted needs of the community and our guests, OR to *Loaves and Fishes Housing* (tax deductible) for house maintenance and repair only. Send donations to 1705 Jefferson St, Duluth, MN 55812. Online donations can be made at www.loavesandfishesduluth.com



Volunteer Needs:

- Live-in volunteers at both Olive Branch and Dorothy Day! Come share life and help run the houses. Feel free to contact us at duluthcatholicworker@gmail.com for more info.
- Plumbers, electricians and carpenters to assist with small projects around our four houses.
- Volunteers with trucks or trailers to help occasionally with dump runs, donation deliveries and helping guests move into new apartments.
- Meal angels to bring a prepared meal for 12-15 people once a month.
- Volunteers to set up (7-9pm) and clean up (7am-9am) at the Warming Center November-April.

For more information email us at duluthcatholicworker@gmail.com

Who We Are:

Loaves and Fishes is a community of people inspired by Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement to build "a new society within the shell of the old." We believe in a world that is abundant with resources and love, and that there is enough for everyone if we share. As a community we offer family-style hospitality to people experiencing homelessness; operate a no-cost neighborhood bicycle shop to promote shared economics; organize with our neighbors to protect everyone's right to housing; and study and practice nonviolence in our interpersonal relationships and in our politics. Loaves and Fishes is entirely volunteer-run and receives no government funding.

Current live-in members of Loaves and Fishes Community are: Drew Anderson, Shelly Bruecken, Chelsea Froemke, Sarah Kilbarger-Stumpff, Joel Kilgour, Tone Lanzillo, David McComas-Bussa, Anne Schepers, and Kate Young. Many other people are part of our community as volunteers, donors, meal providers and advocates.

We'd love to hear from you. Please email your pictures and stories to rememberingdonnahoward@gmail.com



Donna had such a profound influence on me during such a crucial, formative time in my life. Her way was not one of a top-down, didactic, preachiness but rather the way of the horizontal "come along, check this out, see how you feel about it. Meanwhile, I'll just keep doing my thing...." She was the consummate leader by example, not by orders.

It was through Donna's non-directive based influence that I better understood my role and capacity for social justice: the power of nonviolent protest, the tactics of civil disobedience, the power of unconditional love. I can trace several of my pivotal inflection points to Donna's presence in my life, as well as her role in the creation of several lasting friendships.

Donna keenly understood that we all need to decide how we feel about the world at large and our role in it all, according to how we uniquely process the things we are exposed to. I am lucky to have such a lodestar, and will forever have immense gratitude for her role in my life. I can't say rest in peace, because all of us that knew Donna knew her to be the embodiment of peace. Telling Peace to "rest in peace" just doesn't make sense here. So I will simply say thank you teacher and friend. You are treasured, loved and missed. -Jonathan Livingston

I will miss Donna's laughter the most, and will always smile thinking about the one time when we had cooked a lot of chicken nuggets at a community retreat and Donna (a vegetarian) popped one in her mouth. As we stared at her in astonishment, she looked at us and said "What? I wanted to know what all the fuss was about!" As clear as Donna could be in her convictions, at times she could be the most hilarious paradox. -Gunes Henderson

I was nine or ten when I first met Donna. My teenaged big brother had just left home to begin a lifetime of work at the Loaves and Fishes Community alongside her and other mentors and friends who would quickly become family. Somewhere in my teenage years, after a day of demonstrations at the ELF Transmission Site, I was encouraged to catch a ride home with Donna. (Had Joel been arrested that time? Maybe.) I had a deep fear of being noticed at that age. An hour long car ride of one-on-one conversation sounded like torture. After a good 20 minutes of utter panic and self loathing I began to relax - Donna had a way of making the uncomfortable comfortable.

During my first meeting with Donna, I was 19 years old and she asked me a question I have never forgotten: "what do you think the world could look like if we shared what we have?" Even my cynical anti-hippie tendencies and personal biases couldn't shake this question as I navigated the next thirty years of my life. As it turns out, from the day that question was proposed to me, it became the foundation of how I've lived my life ever since. Damn you...but not really dear one. I will always miss you and your beautiful soul Donna and thank you. Thank you for letting me call you Mom and for accepting a scared child exactly as he was. Bless you and your fire always. -Steven Saari

For years, I was unable to discuss my mental illness in public. Even working as a psychiatric nurse, I was embarrassed and afraid to speak out. While on house duty at Olive Branch, I remember Donna being vulnerable about her own struggles with mental health issues. She opened up space for sacred conversations that allowed myself and others to share our own experiences with mental health issues. Donna's courageous spirit helped heal my heart and make it possible for me to share my own story. I am forever grateful to her. -Ali Shulstad

She was funny and earnest and gently persistent. She was a mother in every sense of the word. By the time she dropped me off at home I felt like I had grown up a little bit. A more capable version of myself had emerged with thoughts and opinions and emotions worth sharing. It was a feeling she left me with time and time again, well into adulthood. I'm so grateful for her life and for the indelible mark she has left on the world. Her tireless advocacy, her willingness to put herself on the line in the pursuit of justice, her warmth in friendship and community, her fierce defense of the dignity of every human life. You are so loved, Donna. What a life well lived. -Rachael Kilgour



Chelsea, Drew, Sarah, Joel, Shelly, Anne, Kate, Dave, & Tone