



## Joyful Service Shared With Guests

### *CSK's Conner location offers Prayer, Food, Hope & Fellowship to Guests*

The Capuchin Soup Kitchen, Connor location, welcomes guests for more than meals. Guests can come to Connor for prayer, connection, and helpful resources, a whole experience meeting physical and spiritual needs. Br. Robert Wotypka is the chaplain at the Connor site and began serving guests at this location about a year ago. At the beginning of the meal, Br. Robert welcomes everyone, reads scripture, and prays over the meal.

Throughout the time for the meal, as Br. Robert, staff, and volunteers welcome more guests; the friars offer prayer time in the chapel. As Br. Robert said, "My main ministry, besides launching every meal with prayer and thanksgiving, is to invite people into the chapel all during breakfast and lunch." During his ministry in the chapel, he has "a short scripture reading from the lectionary from the readings of the church, and some wisdom." He then "invites quiet time and reflection."

Br. Robert gives prayer-filled support to the guests during the chapel ministry and even reaches out to those who need it in exceptional circumstances. Br. Robert tells of a man estranged from his family who "didn't feel comfortable going to the funeral for his son, so we had a little service in the chapel here, and thank God he did that." Br. Robert added, "I'd like to think our little service was a nudge." While not all guests partake in the chapel services, some faithfully join, and all are welcome.

As the chapel is a way for guests to build their spiritual connection, the relationships with friars, staff, volunteers, and fellow guests provide a human connection. Howard, a guest at Connor, said,

"The soup kitchen keeps me in touch with the world instead of being isolated and confused because I don't have friends because I'm a long way from people I know." He said it "gives you a place to get a warm meal and also to interact with people that's right here, and at least you can get a little quiet time, and you get to pray a little bit to yourself."



▲ Br. Robert Wotypka, OFM Cap., top right, leads the blessing over the Meal as guests bow their heads. Br. Fred Cabras waits in the top left corner to call each table to the serving line.

The connections with guests are also crucial to those who work at Connor. John, who is a volunteer, said Br. Robert and Br. Brenton are "very supportive" and says, "They'll come and get a little bit

of food at some point and be sitting at the tables talking with some of the folks there." He said, "You can tell that they're very engaged and involved and dedicated, which is great." While Br. Robert and Br. Brenton connect with guests, and the staff and volunteers do the same. Peggy works in the kitchen and said, "It's a good thing to be able to, you know, meet and greet the people and hear their life stories."

While the hardships that lead to the need for meals, prayer, and other assistance could bring sadness to guests, the Connor site helps bring joy. As Peggy said, "People who need a meal, it doesn't have to be a sad place; Connor is a happy place." It

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# WORKS OF MERCY

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

The Capuchin Soup Kitchen depends on others in the community who share our concern and commitment to people in need. You can view and sign up for the volunteer opportunities below here: <https://ofmcap.cc/CSK-Vol>

SCAN ME



### Capuchin Soup Kitchen – Meldrum & Conner locations:

- Preparing food & trays for guests
- Wiping and sanitizing dining room tables and chairs
- Special events & projects

### Capuchin Services Center:

- Sorting and organizing clothes
- Stocking and organizing food items
- Special events & projects

### Rosa Parks Children & Youth Program:

- After school tutoring assistance
- Art therapy program assistance (no art skills required)
- Special Events & Seasonal Activities
- Volunteers are asked for a weekly commitment per academic semester

### Earthworks Urban Farm:

- Mixing soil/making soil blocks or germination trays
- Planting/seeding/thinning seedlings
- Cultivating/weeding beds & flipping compost
- Other tasks related to gardening or farming



## A Shower of Blessings

by Br. Gary Wegner, OFM Capuchin  
Executive Director



Last month, powerful storms knocked out our power. St. Bonaventure Monastery, the Solanus Casey Center, the St. Joseph Center, and the Meldrum Soup Kitchen had little or no electricity for five days. Awakening to the reality that my morning shower was going to be cold did not encourage me to get out of bed!

As always, I learned something about myself from the experience. When I was 27 and serving in our mission in Nicaragua, I managed pretty well with a shower from collected rainwater or a bath in cold rivers while on mission trips. At 65, I have grown far more accustomed to the creature comforts we appreciate and may even expect. A shower that, in the words of Goldilocks, is “just right” is a pleasure.

I am embarrassed to say I grumbled when the power was out. Complaining in a text to Br. John, he replied with this counsel “At this time, all we can do is hope,


pray, and adapt.” Realizing I had revealed my sense of entitlement, I responded: “As always, I am reminded that most of the guests who pass through the doors of the Soup Kitchen have many challenges, whereas we have inconveniences.”



▲ Fr. Gary speaks at opening of greenhouse

An occasional cold shower is an inconvenience. Many of our guests lack access to a hot or cold shower, which can be a crisis or a health hazard. Our renovations at the Meldrum site will include a place for them to have a safe and dignified shower experience.

In September 2022, CSK’s portable showers were moved from our Meldrum site to Conner. Our plans to renovate the Meldrum and Conner sites include permanent showers at both.

Volunteers willing to help us with the shower program at Conner and eventually at Meldrum are needed and will help share a blessing we too often take for granted. 

## Warm Holidays Drive

We are holding a blanket and winter clothing drive now through Friday, December 15, 2023.

We are seeking gift cards, new blankets, scarves, mittens, hats and coats. If you would like to help, you can find the online gift registries on our webpage for the Warm Holidays Drive.



Scan the QR code below or visit:

[www.cskdetroit.org/warm\\_holidays\\_drive](http://www.cskdetroit.org/warm_holidays_drive)





# CSK Program Empowers Youth

The Rosa Parks Children & Youth Program (RPCYP) impacts, empowers and provides resources for children in the Detroit community. Program Director Davon Mann said, "[The Capuchin Soup Kitchen] focuses on several different Capuchin values, and a key one is empowerment."

Davon continued, "RPCYP empowers its staff with the resources to address those fundamental needs for our families, and really, the east side community as a whole..." Empowering the staff empowers the program and that empowers the children to learn from all the program offers.

The RPCYP provides children with after-school tutoring services, art therapy, support groups, onsite gardening, and summer camp. At the end of the summer, the program held a school supply drive. Davon said, "[We] gave out nearly 350 book bags full of school supplies." Impacts from the program are shown not only in providing supplies to children who need them but also in the improvements in their academic and social progress.

Miss Williams, whose two sons and nephew participate in the program, said of her oldest, who has been in the program for seven years, "My oldest son is on the spectrum for autism, and he was struggling with social anxiety, just really that social part of growing up." She saw the program's

impact and said, "His being engaged with other students and staff members has really helped him gain those social skills." In addition to gardening and social skills, her sons benefit from the tutoring services. Her younger son works with Miss Stephanie, who she said is "very supportive of the plan that we have from the teacher, and that's increasing his reading skills."



▲ Summer campers take a break from the fun to hydrate

The program's success also takes a team that works with teacher plans and parent input to find suitable resources for each child, even those in high school preparing for college or trade school. Davon said of the Leadership Camp for teenagers, "I wanted to create a program that allowed us to

take teen topics and dive deeper into them over a given period." To broaden their experience and knowledge, Davon explained that they "made several field trips to talk to entrepreneurs in their actual business settings about not only how they got to start the particular business they chose, but all the ins and outs of being a business owner." It doesn't stop with field trips; the program also brings in investors for the teens to learn about investing.

With all they offer, it's no surprise that the Rosa Parks Children & Youth Program impacts kids in the community so positively. In the Fall of 2024, the Program will celebrate its 25th year of empowering and teaching the children of Detroit.

## Conner brings joy to those who struggle

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even extends to Br. Robert's interaction with staff and volunteers. Harves, the dishwasher, tells of how fun and lighthearted Br. Robert keeps the kitchen, using his humor to make what could be gloomy fun.

A regular guest of the Connor location summed up what Br. Robert, Br. Brenton, staff, and volunteers bring to the community they serve: "When you walk in here, I feel the love that people have for one another, and that's great."



▲ Friars & staff create a positive environment for CSK's guests

# Partnering to help our guests

by Br. Tien Dinh OFM Capuchin  
Assistant Executive Director



Many articles in this edition of Breaking Bread highlight the diverse programs at our Capuchin Soup Kitchen – Conner Site.

At Conner, we serve our guests hot, nutritious, tasty meals and provide those who wish for a warm, refreshing shower. Our Rosa Parks program, housed at the Conner site, offers participating young people life-changing after-school tutoring and art therapy.

Besides these services, we partner with many different organizations to help our guests overcome the hardships and struggles they experience. One of the organizations that we



▲ Participants of the SOCD with SOCD and CSK staff

partner with is Street Outreach Court Detroit (SOCD). SOCD “is a program of 36th District Court that offers individuals who are homeless the opportunity to resolve certain civil infractions

and misdemeanors by crediting their efforts to improve their lives toward their outstanding fines, costs, and jail time.”

This program has helped many guests of the Soup Kitchen to change their lives for the better. We are happy to partner with such an organization whose mission is similar to our mission of helping others. If you visit our Conner site, you will see that it hums with activity.



## Book Donations Needed

The Rosa Parks Children & Youth Program has a small library for use by the children. We'd like to expand our collection to include more books with a focus on African American history and spirituality. Here are some of the titles we would like to be able to add to our student library. Could you please donate one or more?

### African-American Catholic Books

1. Saints of Africa Paperback – September 2, 2001, by Vincent J. O'Malley \$13.95

### Folktales from Around the World

1. The Night of Las Posadas (Picture Puffin Books) Paperback – Picture Book, September 24, 2001, by Tomie dePaola (Author, Illustrator) \$7.99

### African-American History Books

1. The 1619 Project: Born on the Water Hardcover – Unabridged, November 16, 2021, by Nikole Hannah-Jones (Author), Renée Watson (Author) \$8.79

### Catholic Saints

1. Saint José: Boy Cristero Martyr (New Vision Books) Paperback – May 22, 2019, by Fr. Kevin McKenzie (Author) \$12.95

There are 44 titles on our list. We have set up an Amazon wish list for the books. To review the titles needed and donate some, scan or visit: <https://ofmcap.cc/CSK-Books>

SCAN ME



## CAPUCHIN SOUP KITCHEN

### CSK Conner Meal Site:

4390 Conner  
Detroit, MI 48215  
313-579-2100 ext. 4216

### CSK Meldrum Meal Site:

1264 Meldrum  
Detroit, MI 48207  
313-579-2100 ext. 2205

### Spiritual Care:

Offered at both CSK Conner & Meldrum Meal Program Sites  
313-579-2100 ext. 2209

### Capuchin Services Center:

6333 Medbury St  
Detroit, MI 48211  
313-925-1370

### Rosa Parks Children and Youth Program:

4390 Conner  
Detroit, MI 48215  
313-579-2100 ext. 4224

### On The Rise Bakery & Cafe:

1780 Mt Elliott St  
Detroit, MI 48207  
Phone: 313.922.8510

### Earthworks Urban Farm:

1264 Meldrum St.  
Detroit, MI 48207  
313-579-2100 Ext. 2204

### Jefferson House:

8311 E. Jefferson  
Detroit, MI  
313-331-8900



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