



## Help on the Journey

**Emergency Assistance Workers help guests discover pathways out of poverty**



*Emergency Assistance Work (EAW) Director Denise Johnson works with a guest at the Capuchin Services Center.*

***“God is our refuge and our strength,  
an ever-present help in distress.”  
(Psalm 46:2)***

Guests at the Meldrum and Conner meal sites, as well as the Capuchin Services Center, know that a helping hand is never far away. Emergency Assistance Workers (EAW) are there to help guests discover ways to address needs, improve quality of life and find ways out of poverty.

Many root causes, or a combination of them, can trigger a slide into financial hardship. Among them: lack of reliable transportation, a scarcity of good-paying entry-level jobs, exorbitant rents, high taxes and skyrocketing auto insurance rates. And sometimes “life happens.” An unexpected illness, injury or accident can bring about financial hardship.

Deborah Starr-Hodges, a trained social worker, has been offering help to Capuchin Soup Kitchen guests for 21 years. Currently at the Meldrum meal site, Deborah advocates and works to identify and solve problems. “Feeding people – body and spirit – is what we’re about,” said Deborah. Seeing people attain sobriety and get their lives back on track is among the greatest things Deborah sees. Some needs, such as transportation, can be easily remedied with a bus pass. But often the immediate need is just a symptom of a deeper, more challenging set of circumstances. It’s here where a referral to another Capuchin Soup Kitchen site, such as the ROPE program, or outside programs, can help address root causes and find sustainable remedies.

“Seeing people having a life, something that they might not have even imagined happening, seeing dreams become a reality is powerful to me,” said Deborah. The pop cans in Deborah’s office serve as a reminder that even in the bleakest of situations, there is a way out. “As people find housing or income, I’d ask them: ‘Remember you’re going to owe me a Coca-Cola when you get back on your feet,’” said Deborah. “So I have people bringing me cans of Coca-Cola all the time.”



# Soup Kitchen Beginnings

By Br. Jerry Johnson, OFM Cap

This year marks the 90th anniversary of the opening of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen. As many of you know, Blessed Fr. Solanus Casey was part of the team that started the soup kitchen in 1929 at the start of the Great Depression. I thought I'd share a bit about the context of the times that led the soup kitchen to always adapt to the needs of people.



*Br. Jerry Johnson*



*Father Solanus and Capuchins help serve in the Soup Kitchen 1940*



Since the times of St. Francis of Assisi in the 13th Century, Franciscans have always worked out in the community to do Gospel service in whatever capacity was needed. The Capuchins are a type of Franciscan friar known for the hood on their habit, called a cappuccio in Italian. During the plague epidemics that swept through Europe, for example, Capuchins and other groups did the best they could to help people.

During the early 1900s, Fr. Solanus Casey worked as a porter, or doorkeeper, at St. Bonaventure Friary on Mt. Elliott Street. Many people came to him to share what they were going through. Fr. Solanus did his best to respond to people through listening and prayer, and would help with food when necessary. In the early 1900s, ethnic immigrants that had come to Detroit for jobs in the auto industry would come to see him. He opened the door for everyone: rich or

poor, and people of different religions and ethnicities. This openness and listening spirit have been a guiding principle ever since.

Our Capuchin Province (region) of St. Joseph itself was going through some change around the time the Capuchin Soup Kitchen was established. In 1911, it had accepted the mission parish of St. Ben's in Milwaukee that served African American families migrating north. Br. Jerry Smith now works there at the St. Ben's meal program. In 1926, the Province also accepted the St. Labre Cheyenne Mission in Montana which was meant to help people being displaced by homesteading. Internally at that time, the friars were adjusting from being mostly of German descent to now having friars of Italian, Irish (including Fr. Solanus) and other ethnicities. As the porter, Fr. Solanus tried to respect where each person was coming from and to offer his full attention and presence to whomever he was ministering.

Hopefully, during the last 90 years we, and by "we" I mean guests, volunteers, donors, staff, friars and all of our partners in ministry, have been able to carry on some of that tradition.

*Br. Jerry Johnson OFM Capuchin*



# “It gave us life.”

*Rosa Parks graduates reflect on program’s lasting impact*



*Sisters Sarbinthe Martin, 29, (left) and Nakita Martin, 30, (right) with Rosa Parks Children’s and Youth Program manager and founder, Sr. Nancyann Turner, OP*

For sisters Sarbinthe Martin and Nakita Martin, who grew up on Detroit’s east side, the Capuchin Soup Kitchen has been an oasis where they were nourished in mind, body and spirit. Sarbinthe and Nakita were among the first kids to participate in art therapy in what is now the Capuchin Soup Kitchen’s Rosa Parks Children’s and Youth Program, entering when they were still in grade school.

Today, Nakita works at an assembly plant for one of the Detroit three automakers and plans to study nursing, while Sarbinthe works full-time for the Macomb Meals on Wheels program, bringing food to vulnerable seniors. Sarbinthe and Nakita still keep in touch via social media with the people they met as kids in the Rosa Parks Children’s and Youth Program.

For Nakita, art therapy was transformative. “It challenged us to open up about ourselves and our feelings, and that’s something that we wouldn’t have otherwise had the opportunity or even the desire to do,” said Nakita. “Quite a few people who came through the program still do art to this day.”

“I always credit this place for the positive things that I’ve seen growing up,” said Nakita. The Martins grew up in a large household with six siblings, with all of

the challenges that go along with growing up in a large family. Home could be a chaotic place. “This place was an escape from that,” said Nakita. The Rosa Parks Children’s Program provided structure that the sisters agree was a necessary ingredient in order for them to flourish as they have.

As the Rosa Parks Children’s Program evolved, the Martins participated in tutoring, life skills, workplace readiness, financial literacy, gardening, teen support groups, summer camp and other program components. Eventually, they became junior counselors and helped the younger children in the program. As it grew and evolved, the program sought to involve and connect parents and guardians, giving parents and families the opportunity to get to know and support one another as neighbors.

Now, the sisters volunteer as tutors, helping youth along the way toward academic success. “Even after we got older, we came back and tutored other kids,” said Sarbinthe. “It was humbling to be there for others.” In addition, Nakita enrolled her two children, ages eight and nine, in the program last summer. “It was important for them to get to experience that I did, what I felt helped me along the way,” said Nakita.

# Capuchin Services Center makes the season bright



Volunteers give away hundreds of turkeys, fixings to families in need

Just two miles from where Henry Ford first thought up the moving assembly line for automobile production, volunteers employed an assembly line process to distribute hundreds of turkeys, pantry boxes, potatoes and other items to families in need during the holidays.

Your support of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen made the holidays brighter for hundreds of families. Thank you.





## The Beginnings of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen's Jefferson House



Father Bob Skeris  
and a resident

*Residential substance use disorder treatment program opened in 1976*

“From the beginning, Fr. Bob Skeris has been full-time Director of the house, which is situated on East Jefferson, in Detroit’s historic Indian Village, a mile and a half away from the Community Center (present Meldrum meal site). The large, handsome old building which houses the program has had an interesting history of occupancy. Before the halfway house, it served as a nursing home, a boarding house for Wayne State students, and the residence of Detroit’s Hare Krishna sect, who used the large room upstairs as their temple. Much of the extensive repair work inside the house was done by Fr. Bob and the first residents, who began arriving in June 1976.”

*Excerpted from Breaking Bread and Mending Spirits: Detroit’s Capuchin Soup Kitchen – 1929-1979 by Catherine Bicknell, Ph.D*

### Honoring MLK

***“We must discover the power of love ... the redemptive power of love. And when we discover that, we will be able to make of this old world a new world. We will be able to make men better. Love is the only way.”***

Dr. Martin Luther King. Sermon at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. Montgomery, Alabama, Nov. 17, 1957

Guests, volunteers, staff, friars and members of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen Choir celebrated Martin Luther King Day on Monday, January 21 with a prayer service and choir performance as well as readings from scripture and from the writings and speeches of Dr. King.



## Need knows no season



With the holidays well behind us, we’re trying to make sure we have enough resources to take care of all those who turn to us in need during our long winter. We’re going to need some help.

We get lots of donations for Thanksgiving and Christmas, and we serve up lots and lots of delicious turkey dinners, both in our soup kitchens and through our Capuchin Services Center. It’s wonderful to help so many people enjoy the communal meals we all look forward to, especially when many might not otherwise eat at all on these special days.

But then January and February come. The holidays are over, and donations to our Capuchin Soup Kitchen begin to drop off. The problem for us is, the poor families and individuals who turn to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen don’t stop being hungry in January. The people who show up at our doors usually don’t have any other options. They may be homeless, or not being paid enough at their job to make it through the month, or have mental health issues. For any number of reasons, our neighbors may need a meal or some other kind of help so they can stand up strong for another day.

Here’s another big reason your donation is so important: You may not just be helping a hungry person get a meal. You may be transforming someone’s life, so they become the ones feeding the hungry.

Food is just one of many needs we serve. The need for connection, for healing, for a second chance, for a path to a brighter future. To overcome social injustice. To move beyond the obstacles and barriers that poor people face. All are part of our ministry.

We are grateful for the support we receive from the community and we thank you ahead of time for being a friend to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen.

# Calendar of Events



**April 29th** from 11:00 AM to 10 PM

Buddy's Slice for Life

All Buddy's Locations except the Detroit Zoo location

Please join us for the 43rd Annual Buddy's Pizza "Slice for Life" benefit for the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in partnership with Buddy's Restaurants.

Come anytime between 11 AM and 10 PM April 29th to any Buddy's Pizza location. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$7 for children (ages 3-9), entitling you to all the pizza and salad you care to eat.

[www.cskdetroit.org/events](http://www.cskdetroit.org/events)

**May 9th** from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM (fowling games begin at 7:00 PM)

Capuchin Night Out

Fowling Warehouse, 3901 Christopher St., Hamtramck, MI

Capuchin Night Out is an event that brings young professionals together to support the work of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit, MI. Enjoy a night of fun, fowling, food, drinks and fellowship.

Early bird tickets are \$45. Tickets purchased after April 18th are \$55.

Groups of friends and coworkers are encouraged to form teams for the Capuchin Night Out!

[www.cskdetroit.org/events/capuchin\\_night\\_out](http://www.cskdetroit.org/events/capuchin_night_out)

**June 13th** from 11 AM to 10 PM

Celebration of the Feast of St. Antonio

Antonio's Cucina Italiana Locations

Join us for delicious food while helping support the Capuchin Soup Kitchen. Celebrate the Feast of St. Anthony at one of four Antonio Cucina Italiana restaurants: Canton, Dearborn Heights, Farmington Hills, and Livonia. The restaurants will be devoted to the mission of St. Antonio... helping those less fortunate.

Donate what you can and enjoy a free lunch buffet from 11 AM – 3 PM, or order off the regular priced menu 11 AM – 10 PM at one of four Antonio Cucina Italiana restaurants: Canton, Dearborn Heights, Farmington Hills and Livonia. A portion of the proceeds benefits the Capuchin Soup Kitchen.

[www.cskdetroit.org/events/celebration\\_of\\_the\\_feast\\_of\\_st.\\_antonio](http://www.cskdetroit.org/events/celebration_of_the_feast_of_st._antonio)

**June 22nd** at 7:30 PM

38th Annual Capuchin Souper Summer Celebration  
Comerica Park, 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI 48201

Join us for a night of live music, dancing and attractions.

Food will be available for purchase; there will be a cash bar, live entertainment, and fireworks! Dressy summer attire is suggested.

All are welcome to attend who are 21 years of age or older.

[www.cskdetroit.org/ahee/](http://www.cskdetroit.org/ahee/)

**August 23rd** 5:30 PM to 11:00 PM

26th Annual Benefit on the Bay

MacRay Harbor, Harrison Twp., 30675 N. River Rd.,  
Harrison Township, MI 48045

Join the Capuchin friars for the 26th Annual Benefit on the Bay! Enjoy a beautiful evening at MacRay Harbor on Lake St. Clair. Tickets are \$75 which includes appetizers, dinner, beer/wine, music, dancing and complimentary valet, as well as a chance to bid on items in a live and silent auction.

[benefitonthebay.org/](http://benefitonthebay.org/)

**September 27th** at 5:30 PM to 11:00 PM

47th Annual SOCK (Support Our Capuchin Kitchen)

Dinner

Cobo Center, 1 Washington Blvd., Detroit, MI 48226

Come join us for a beautiful evening as we celebrate and support the Capuchin Soup Kitchen's mission. Tickets to the event are \$275 per person and include dinner, cocktails, musical entertainment, silent auction and dancing.

[www.sockdinner.org](http://www.sockdinner.org)