

Trinity
C A F E

Food for Thought



"I appeal to all of you, wherever you are, whatever you are doing, to see the face of a brother or sister in every human being. What unites us is so much more than what separates and divides us: it is our common humanity."

Pope John Paul II

Reflections From Bob Mullen - A Founding Director of Trinity Cafe

Webster's New World Dictionary defines charity as "the love of God for man or of man for his fellow men..." The Catholic Catechism states "Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God." By either or any definition, Trinity Cafe represents the essence of this virtue. When I think of this virtue I imagine the scene of any noon meal at Trinity Cafe being the demonstration of pure charity in action.

As a co-founder of this now established institution, I never imagined that a few years into its fruition we would have served more than 300,000 meals to needy people by the grace of many tens of thousands of volunteer hours and hundreds of thousands of donation dollars which made all this possible.

As I recall all the self-effacing, loving, spontaneous interpersonal exchanges our wonderful volunteers have provided for people in need of not just a meal, but food served in a loving, caring

manner with a genuine outreach of unconditional acceptance of a needy person struggling to survive in challenging life situations, I am convinced we are carrying out a real charitable role with unconditional love.



Of course this could not have been sustained without the organization and skills of our wonderful Chef Alfred, the leadership of our volunteer board members and the dedication and perseverance of the many daily volunteers, many of whom have served since the inception of this service.

May God continue to bless all who have made and continue to make the Trinity Cafe possible. †

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OUR OPINION
**Local Acts Of Kindness
Enrich Our World**

On this Christmas Eve, we write not about the lack of peace on Earth, but about the people in our community showing goodwill toward man.

It's a reassuring sight to see so many who do so much to help others, but it's not surprising. Most of us try to live good lives. If sometimes we fall short, as is the human condition, we still hold the capacity for extraordinary acts of kindness and generosity.

So as families prepare for a holiday that celebrates hope, sacrifice and redemption, we honor a few of the many in our community whose simple acts of selflessness make our community a better place to live.



Tribune photo by KATHY MOORE
Claire Mielak, right, and her husband, Ed, drive from Sun City Center to the Trinity Cafe near downtown each week to serve meals to the poor and homeless, whom they treat as friends and guests.

Feeding The Hungry

Consider, for instance, a few of the regular volunteers at Trinity Cafe, who feed the needy every weekday at the Salvation Army building north of downtown.

This is no soup kitchen. Guests, as they are called, are fed at tables with silverware and dishes. Volunteers don't just serve food. They sit at the table and visit with their guests.

Yolanda Parise is the oldest volunteer, an 89-year-old widow who delights when guests try to guess her age. They're usually a couple of decades too young.



The Pittsburgh native heard about the need for volunteers at her church and decided to help, though with some anxiety.

"You hear about the homeless and I thought, 'Oh, boy, what am I getting myself into?' But then you do it and it makes you feel so good inside," she says.

Ed and Claire Mielak make the drive from Sun City Center to Trinity Cafe once a week. The New Jersey transplants decided to help after seeing a note in their church bulletin five years ago.

"We didn't think it would last," says Ed, 79. "But it kind of hooks you. It's very fulfilling. ... We were told to treat the people like they were guests in our home, and that's what we do. ... You can see that life can be kind of tough for them."

Says Claire, 76: "We had one fellow who had a college degree, but he was living in the woods in a tent. He was trying to get a job, but he couldn't get a foot in the door because he didn't have an address."

The Mielaks take some comfort in serving up a hot meal and friendly conversation.

"Some of the ones who come a lot know us by our first names," says Claire. "It's a very warm place, like a family."

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Change Is Good



Trinity Cafe Board Director Jennifer Jehn has proven that change is good – very good – for Trinity Cafe! For the second year, Jennifer has started placing her loose change in a jar at the end of each day. During the past holidays she contributed a bag of coins she collected to the Trinity Cafe. By simply emptying her pockets and purse each day, the coins added up to more than \$250! This recent donation was provided in addition

to her ongoing generous contributions to Trinity Cafe. Jennifer's story is a great example of the big difference a small gesture can make. Any and all donations are graciously accepted and help feed the homeless and hungry of Tampa Bay. Imagine the benefits to Trinity Cafe if all of us followed Jennifer's lead and daily started collecting our spare change. We'll even take care of rolling it for you! †

A Wish List For Trinity Cafe

When we invite guests to have lunch at Trinity Cafe during the week, our volunteer servers make sure that everyone feels completely welcome and comfortable. Our guests receive the benefits of a labor of love as they are being served a warm, nutritious meal in a caring environment. Behind the scenes, though, there is a reality that in order for our guests to be nourished and have a place to sit down and eat, various details must be worked out: the meal must be prepared, the tables and chairs arranged, the dishes and silverware placed on the tables, all using items that are bought or are donated.

We are sincerely grateful for any monetary donations, and as always, 100% of those donations are used to feed our homeless and hungry guests. There are also other oppor-

tunities to help. In each issue of this newsletter we will have a (hopefully short) list of items or services that are a "Wish List" for Trinity Cafe. If you are able to help with any of the items or services listed, please contact Tom Derzypolski at (813) 361-7572 or email volunteers@trinitycafe.org. Thank you and God bless you. †

Trinity Cafe Wish List

- Paint
- Tile work
- Sound system installation
- Quarterly floor stripping and waxing
- Silverware for 200

Photographs and Memories



Dorothy Derzypolski, member of St. Patrick's Catholic Church and pre-med student at Florida State University, helped during the Christmas break.



Long-time Trinity Cafe volunteer George Houck is always ready to serve with a warm plate and a smile.



Gail Hayes, also a member of St. Patrick's, volunteers each Tuesday bringing meals and joy to our guests as she greets at the door in addition to serving.

"We can do no great things, only small things with great love."

Mother Teresa

Small things have made a big difference over the past few months at Trinity Cafe. Gifts of time and service were evident as the Christmas season once again reminded us of our many blessings. Here are just a few stories:

small packages of care and love represented a young community of students making a difference and doing a great thing with great love. Their gifts were distributed at Trinity Cafe to a grateful number of nearly 200 needy persons. As the final touches were made getting the gift packages together, there were not enough toothbrushes. A quick thinking mom and a phone call resulted in hundreds of toothbrushes being donated from Feldman Orthodontics.

† Hundreds of volunteers called Trinity Cafe during the holidays to make sure that there was enough volunteer help. Many students, including girls from the Academy of the Holy Names, showed up to lend a hand. Incredibly, the new volunteer help allowed many of Trinity Cafe's weekly volunteers the opportunity to take some time off!



Rodgers Middle School teachers Melanie Daly and Cynthia DeHart, and Volunteer Coordinator Linda Derzypolski

† Eighth grade students at Rodgers Middle School adopted Trinity Cafe for a community service project to collect "personal care packages" for the homeless and hungry. Teachers Melanie Daly and Cynthia DeHart guided the "Socks and Soap" campaign. Students collected white tube socks, liquid body wash, toothpaste and washcloths. These

† Mayor Pam Iorio's children spent a day baking, decorating and hand-wrapping brownies, cookies and other goodies and showed up at Trinity Cafe with 150 individual packages. In addition, they brought extra cookies and brownies which were hand wrapped and placed in gift packages to be given out during Christmas. They even came in during their holiday break and helped serve the guests.

† When it was discovered that we had not completely replaced the salt and pepper shakers that were destroyed in the fire last May, Arco, a South Tampa business that also supports Meals on Wheels, provided a sufficient quantity that were immediately put to use!

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