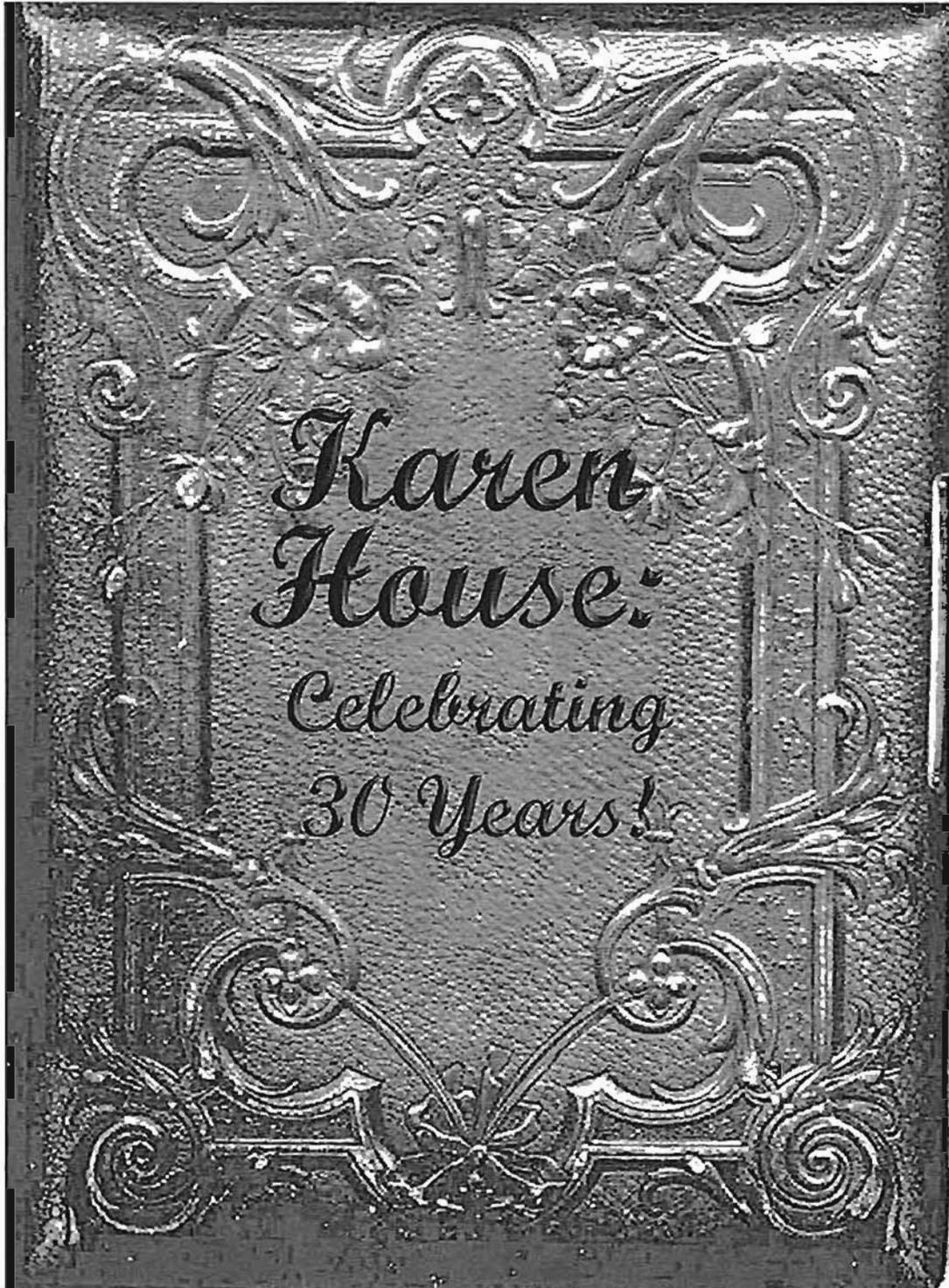


THE Round Table

Winter
2007

"...a path from where we are to where we should be." --Peter Maurin





Through The Years

by Teka Childress



Photo of Ann Manganaro by Merv Puleo

In looking back over thirty years at Karen House, many thoughts and images come to mind. There is the time when a woman came to the door wearing only an American Flag. There is the memory of the set of sisters that, God forgive us, we called "the terrible twins." We had to put them out and one of them kept lighting matches and flicking them at Pat Coy's toes, which were unhappily exposed in a pair of Birkenstocks. This experience gave Pat a unique opportunity to put into practice his years of seeking ways to respond nonviolently. There is the picture of Lee Carter, who had been a cook and came to stay with us at Karen House. She soon joined our community and cooked almost all our meals for a while. In addition to her

culinary skills she loved animals. But when her encouragement of stray cats led, at one point, to us having twenty white cats in our backyard, the rest of us, even the most diehard cat-lovers had had enough. What these and many more memories, bring to me, is a heart of thanksgiving.

I think of all the communities I have lived in or been a part of. I was remembering all of the people who had been in community in order to make a list and I couldn't find a way to do it in any organized fashion. In many cases I couldn't remember who had lived together. But, what an amazing thing to have lived with and been sustained by such lovely company. Among them are some who have died, Ann Manganaro, Mark Scheu and Tom Angert. Ann was friend and mentor to so many of us in how to live a holy and loving life. Mark was our first serious Anarchist and he challenged us with his great intellect and high standards. Tom was our philosopher and such a gentle soul.

And then, of course there have been dear friends of our community like Merv Puleo and Dan Horkheimer.

Merv died at 32 of a brain tumor, but did amazing things through her trips to Brazil and Haiti and in her writings and even by building a community of friends as she was dying. Dan was killed in such a senseless way, also at a young age, but also did



Lee Carter

Front cover by Katie Cushwa
Centerfold by Jenny Truax

the St. Louis Catholic Worker Community

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St. Louis, MO. 63106
314-621-4052*



*Carl Kabat House
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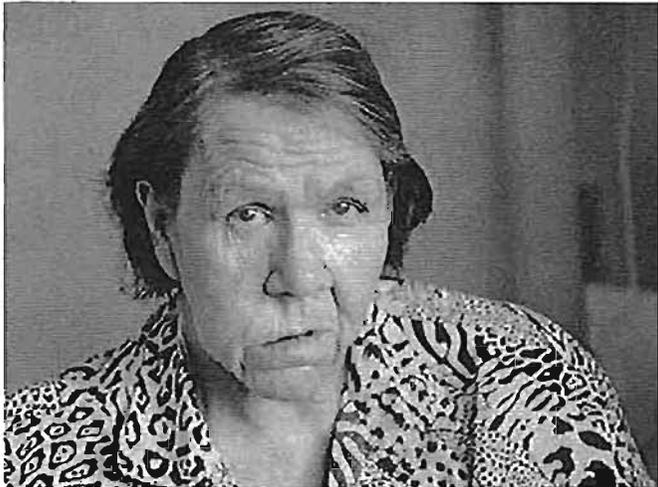
amazing things with his work at the Immigration Law Project and as a great friend to members of the Karen House Community, Co-housing Community and his many neighbors. We miss these friends and are so thankful to have shared some time with them.

Among the community memories there is the joy of some of the community children in our lives, Myrrah, the first, then Ben and Abraham Plato, Terri Cummins and now the Matti girls, Forrest's daughters, Madeline and Cecelia. And also the darling Luna, who has been gracing the third floor.

There, of course, are the guests, the reason for our being. Many who become our great friends and have stayed in touch with us over the years, whether by living at TC House, Little House or the Dorothy Day Co-housing Community or by just coming to see us regularly, having us over, or coming back to stay with us again. Among them there have been so many wonderful children that we have come to love. And, then there are our neighbors who come to Karen House, not unlike the rest of us, for food and fellowship.

There are the volunteers who make our life at Karen House possible. Chuck and Linda Rosa Chiodini came by one day, almost thirty years ago, simply to make a donation. Bill Miller, who was on house needed to respond to an emergency and asked them to take house for a while. One of the chores involved fixing lunch, which somehow got stolen by someone in the neighborhood. As the story goes, Chuck or Linda ran out and bought lunch and came back and were the hit of the day. They continued to come back to take house for over twenty years.

Then of course there was always bread, as Dorothy would say, and celebrations to add to our ordinary times, especially Christmas Eve mass. John Kavanaugh came faithfully over the



Hazel Tullock

years to help us celebrate the Incarnation and the faith that kept us going.

And, since we are a Catholic Worker Community after all, there were of course, the protests and acts of resistance to war and other evils of our times. But all of these actions were made more possible by our support of one another.

All of these things are written about in this thirtieth anni-

versary issue by Virginia, John, Becky, Mary Ann, Ellen, Tim, Megan and Annjie, with Jenny drawing a map of the neighborhood and all of the things that have grown out of or grown up around Karen House.

So, we celebrate these past thirty years and give thanks. But, we do so, knowing the story is not over. At our last meeting Forrest Marti commented how happy he was that the new Catholic Workers, Megan Heeney (who actually also lived with us last year for a while), John Carroll, Sarah Richardson, Rob Bodecker and himself had created a sense of a family among all those living at Karen House. They have and in joining the old-timers, Tony Hilkin, Tim Pekarek, Annjie Schiefelbein, Jenny Truax and me, they have made the continuation of life at Karen



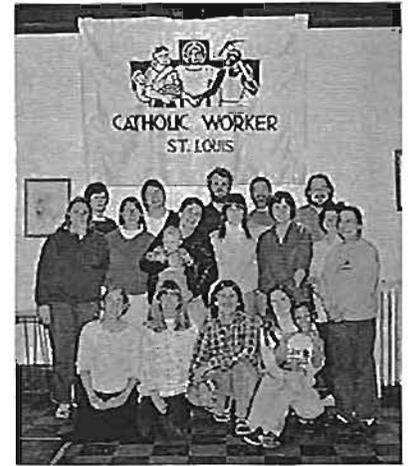
Mark Scheu

House possible. And so again, we give thanks and hope you enjoy these reflections and pictures of the last thirty years.



We are Family (and Community)

by Virginia Druhe



It seems to me that from the beginning, community at Karen House benefited greatly from the presence and experience of Catholic nuns. The anarchist roots of the Worker, with their emphasis on personal responsibility, tend to leave communal life rather unstructured. At Karen House our model of community was much more intentional, much more about creating a greater unity for the purpose of the work of hospitality and social change. That unity in action was understood to be fed from a deeper level of spiritual and emotional communion expressed in joy, diversity and the common work of sharing our home with the poor. We have been a Catholic Worker community in the sense that there were not "rules", though there was a solid expectation to participate fully in the life of the community and to have some role in the work of the house. We built our communal spirit in weekly Eucharist at the house, days of retreat, and morning prayer (at times). We also invented a Sun-

day evening "ordinary time" to just be together without agenda.

One of the central practices that sustained us in the ten or so years that I was directly involved in the community life (and that continues) was the weekly community meeting. We would share a meal prepared by one of us, share a brief prayer prepared by one of us, and have a round of personal sharing before working through an agenda of items needing discussion or decisions. A major part of the meeting always deals with how to respond to the guests — addictions, emotional illness, harshness and/or neglect toward children, guests not doing their chores, plain contrariness. Ideally, it doesn't get easy to make decisions that profoundly affect another person's life, and one doesn't become certain that our view of a person is "the" truth of who they are. All decisions are made by consensus, though in practice that

often means at least one person saying, "I'm not really in favor of this decision, but I can live with it."

One of my favorite experiences of community was that whenever one of us became completely exasperated with a guest and admitted "I cannot deal with X. Everything about her grates on me. I cannot find anything to like in her." someone else would inevitably respond, "Oh, I really like her!" Thus, between us we would more or less manage to be present to the guests and respond to them in the personal way that is at heart of the Catholic Worker ideal, while maintaining a household that balanced just this side of chaos.

My other favorite memories of community at Karen House, oddly enough, center around various going to bed scenarios in the community home on the 3rd floor. Perhaps often I was so tired that I was especially impressionable.

Virginia Druhe is recovering from surgery to remove a benign brain tumor and is doing amazingly well.

1 I remember Bill Miller and me coinciding in the hallway on the way to bathroom and him breaking into song: "We are going, heaven knows where we are going. We know the way. We will get there, heaven knows how we will get there; we know we will."

2 I remember Clare Bussjaeger walking around with her sheet in the heat of full summer and announcing to all of us which window had a breeze coming in.

3 I remember being awed at the varieties and layers of nightclothes people devised in the dead of winter.



When I am tired nothing gets between me and the bed. So I would be in bed and talking Annie into hers, like the control tower talking a pilot down. "Put that down, get your toothbrush and go brush your teeth." "Roll out your bed." "You're ready. Turn out the light and lie down."



4 I remember sharing a room with Annie Manganaro. As she got more tired, she got less focused. I am the reverse.



5 And I remember when several of us confessed that we had been avoiding the back stairs to the bathroom because of a peculiar growth on the wall. There were speculations that we had been invaded by an insect nest, a fungus – at any rate, something vaguely pernicious. One of us offered to call the health department the next day to get a diagnosis. I don't remember if they actually came out. I do remember that Kathy Derby decided to risk all and take matters into her own hands. She took a broom into that confined stairwell and knocked the "thing" off the wall. It turned out to be a dried out, puffed up tea bag! We never did find out how it came to be stuck on the wall, but we were saved – from our own foolishness, as it turned out! †

♪ Can't Live if Living is Without You

by John Carroll



Every day we are the grateful recipients of hundreds of acts of kindness, various donations, and dinner cooked by volunteers. Volunteer tutors come from SLU and Maryville to play with our children, chase them all over the house, and make them giggle. Volunteers answer phone calls from other volunteers who want to know when they can come over next or what else they can give that we need.

Every week we receive linens that are washed by volunteers. Many of our guests take part in various outside services and programs that we cannot provide, and many of these are coordinated by volunteers. Trader Joes and Whole Foods have regularly donated enough food to create dozens of little two-foot food mounds on our shelves, freezers, countertops and floorspace in the Food Storage Room.

Every month we have upwards of 30⁺ volunteer housetakers who keep our house running. Assuming that it only takes 3 people to make dinner, we have 90-ish volunteer cook shifts each month and 1,080* per year. Many of our guests, community members and friends shop in the clothing room, which, due to your generosity, regularly overflows even the new shelves that Forrest built this summer.

Ever year as holiday seasons go 'round we receive so much from our extended network and community. Christmas is not the only season for giving. Halloween and Thanksgiving provide us with so much candy and food that we can rest on our fattening laurels for days afterwards. We just relax and enjoy the sumptuous feasts that were given freely and accepted with open arms, open hearts, and open mouths.

Two-thousand-and-seven has been a banner year for volunteering. This summer we closed down for six weeks to renovate our glorious old home. Crowds of volunteers called their friends, and they came down in packs to repair and paint walls, glue walls back together, install electricity/doors/windows/plumbing, and help us clean up our mess. It was probably the best introduction I could have had to the Karen House volunteer community. Almost all of you who are currently volunteering with the House stopped by at least once within those

John Carroll is a new Karen House community member who will be living with us for one year before going to Green Corp, where he'll learn environmental organizing.

Karen House Catholic Worker 314.621.4052 www.karenhousecw.org 1840 Hogan St. Louis, MO 63106



Each of you has your own story, even if you support us in different ways. You might make a donation of time, sandwiches, money, blankets, diapers, skilled construction or janitorial work, beautifully prepared dinners, laughter, a handicap-accessible ramp, toys, a smile during a hard house shift, or simply friendship. You might read our Roundtable from far away, but your presence, though distant is very real as we struggle to be truly heard expressing ourselves. And we know that you are thinking about us as you read this, just as we sit here thinking about you as we write, and hopefully somewhere in here we find community in the breaking of bread, the answering of phones, the laughter and joy.

Know that we need you, we love you, you brighten our day and surprise us with your generosity and kindness. We hope to see you soon.

*All data reported in this article guesstimated by the author. Translation: these numbers are pretty close to accurate but some of my lowest grades in college were in Statistics and Research Methods. ✦

six weeks. Many who hadn't been around in a while came by to help as well as new friends who came amidst the construction dust and creative energy.

Amazingly, we re-did every surface and a good portion of the inner-workings of two stories of our century-old house. By my count, there wasn't a single task of thousands that did not benefit from the hands of our volunteers. And at the end, we threw a 30th anniversary party, in which it was our goal to give thanks for and remember all of the love, help, food, hard work, and friendship that you and all of our volunteers have sustained us with over these 30 years. Of course this party could not have happened with out more volunteers and donations. Even in thanking you, our extended community, we needed to ask for some help. It's a never-ending, upward-spiraling, cycle of community.

Tim Cosentino, a volunteer for several years while at SLU, initially came to Karen House to complete service hours for Micah House, a service community at SLU. He describes his first experiences with Karen House as being intimidating because of the personal responsibility and freedom afforded to our volunteers. There were chores to be done, nose to be wiped, plates to be washed, and Tim was welcome to do them all, if he felt like it. While this initially caused some frustration, when Tim came back to Karen House for a second round of volunteering, this requirement of personal initiative is what has kept him coming back since. Tim now enjoys his time here, knowing that his individual contribution is his to give in whatever form seems appropriate. This give and take between our House and our volunteers allows relationships to be built that (hopefully) serve all of us a little bit better with every new day.



I like to Eat, Eat, Eat

Top Ten Things to know about food at Karen House:



8. Karen Wintage and friends fix brunch every Sunday morning- pancakes, eggs, bacon and much more.

7. We serve sandwiches at the door everyday. Monday, Wednesday and Friday we offer hot meals for lunch.

6. We only spend \$5000 a year purchasing food, due to countless donations. This serves 30 breakfasts, 50 lunches and 35 dinners every day. (We have never spent money on a loaf of bread.)

10. Trader Joe's has been a phenomenal contributor of food over the past three years. We pick up food from them 4 times a week. They give us meat, produce, bread and more bread.

9. Ann Rapisardo with Mary, Mother of the Church Parish have been bringing sandwiches for years.





5. We tried having vegetarian meals four days a week, this was not popular! Now we try to "meat" the guests' preferences.



3. Cocoa and Housetakers cook lunch daily.



2. Karen House favorites: Ham and Cheese Sandwiches, Hot Sauce, Cereal, Taco Tuesdays (sponsored by the Huck Family), Marilyn's sandwiches including cookies and chips and the Pearson's roast beef dinners.

4. High School groups, parishes and families generously provide scrumptious meals every evening.

1. You can come anytime for a meal!

♪ Say a Little Prayer for You

by Becky Hassler

“I want to make my life something beautiful for God.” Mother Theresa’s words—my life motto. As far back as I can remember, I wanted to live my life for God—with passion and love and integrity. I wanted my faith to be real, to love without counting the cost. I wanted to live the Gospel in a real and radical way. I wanted to live the Works of Mercy (Matthew 25), to make them manifest with a spirit and compassion. My desires led me to the Sisters of Mercy. These loving women, along with my dear friend and mentor, John Kavanaugh, S.J., continued to shape my heart’s desires and eventually, in 1989, my journey took me to the doors of 1840 Hogan, Karen House, a Catholic Worker, a House of Hospitality. I found a place that I could share my vision and desire, as Dorothy Day says, “to see Christ” in every person. I found people who wanted to take the Gospel message seriously, (some may use different language, but all live the same acts of love).

Over the years, I have come to realize that living—loving in this way can only come through community. It is through relationships with so many amazing people that I have been blessed to call community, that I have come to deepen these desires and indeed make them more real. I have seen people love in ways that I could never imagine. I have been



Photo by Merv Pulco

touched and changed, because I have been loved. Loved, not just by those in community, but by those very women and children I thought I was coming to serve. Our guests have blessed me in countless ways and I will be forever grateful. Being at Karen House is about personalism. It is about being real. It is the Gospel.

A lot has gone on these past thirty years at Karen House. The day-to-day life has been amazingly consistent. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Sandwiches, Clothes Room, Donations and more Donations. More bread than we know

Becky Hassler is finishing her last year studying to become a nurse-midwife.

We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Christ in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone anymore.



what to do with. One of those standbys has been the upper room, the chapel on the third floor. The Eucharist, the Body of Christ, has been housed there for these thirty years. It is holy ground, sacred space. A space for quiet and reflection. I used to love to pray there early in the morning or late at night when I lived at the house, when all was amazingly still and quiet. It has been a space for Tuesday night liturgy and for Community prayer, as well. Almost every Tuesday, without fail, some gathering of two or three or three dozen gathers to pray together. Community, guests, volunteers, friends, and neighbors have blessed this space and made it holy. It has been a space for consolation, grief, questions and serenity. A place of quiet and laughter, singing and announcements. So many have come through those doors. A special thank you to our dear friends and presiders, Bob Gettinger, Rich Creason, Tom Nelson and John Kavanaugh, who have come faithfully all these years.

Yet most of us would certainly agree that the presence of Christ permeates all of Karen House in the ordinary. The ordinary times at Karen House are just so ordinary. All the acts that make life in the house work, that make it possible. Watching the countless volunteers over the years has been such a blessing. Many loving acts of kindness, so much generosity, so much faith in action and so much beauty. Ordinary acts made holy—done for the sake of love, in the name of the Gospel. Another way by which I have learned what it is to be holy is by recognizing the holy in the ordinary. These years have been filled with ordinary people just

doing whatever it is that needs to be done, whether or not there is some awareness of doing it as an act of love, of a manifestation of something holy. It just is, and it is so beautiful.

One of my favorite times at Karen House during the whole year, is Christmas Eve Mass at midnight (well almost midnight.) Each year, for years now, we have celebrated the incarnation of Christ in the dining room. An ordinary room filled with mix-matched chairs, set as close together as possible to fit in as many people as we can. People that want to come and experience this miracle of Christmas made real. The quote on the wall is from Dorothy Day. It says, "we come to know each other in the breaking of the bread, that love comes with community, and that we are not alone anymore." We, the motley crew of all of us, have each other. This same room, in which so many of us have shared meals with the guests and with the folks that come for sandwiches, is a witness to Christ incarnate—everyday. It is all so ordinary, yet so extraordinarily beautiful—something beautiful for God.



AROUND THE N

In the past few years, several new projects, communities, and houses have joined K degrees of overlap with one another. Some consider themselves “Catholic Worker are relatively new. Currently, there is no “central” meeting or place tying all these Kabat House, informal prayer groups and work days have pulled different combina concentrations. The map describes the actual projects, rather than the houses whe hensive list of every group operating in the neighborhood. More info



1 **Karen House Catholic Worker** est. 1977
Provides emergency hospitality to 13 women and their children, food, clothing and other assistance to neighbors. 621-4052 karenhousecw.org

2 **Kabat House Catholic Worker** est. 2006
Offers hospitality and support to six adults, including Spanish-speaking homeless. 621-7099



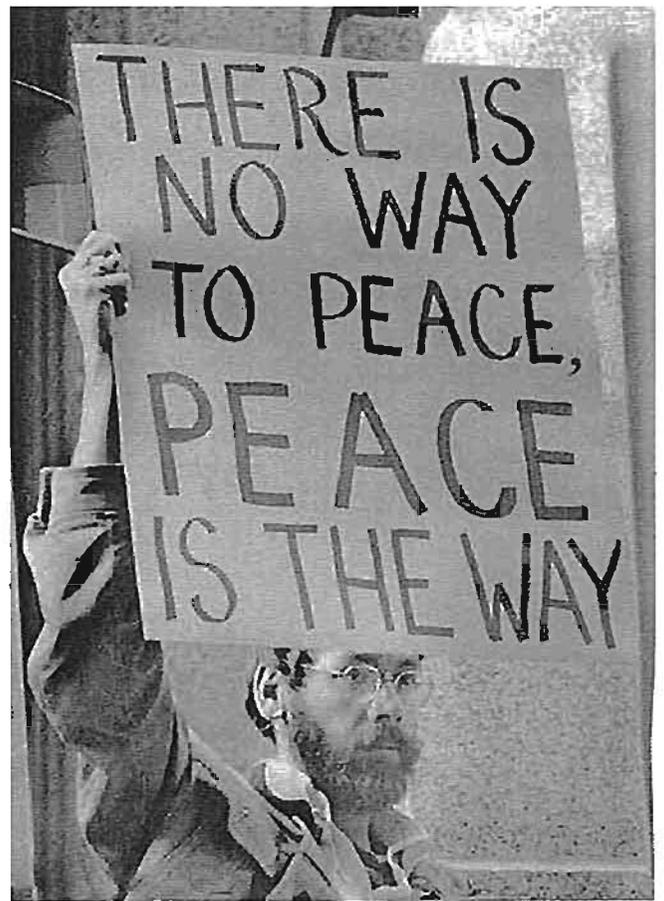
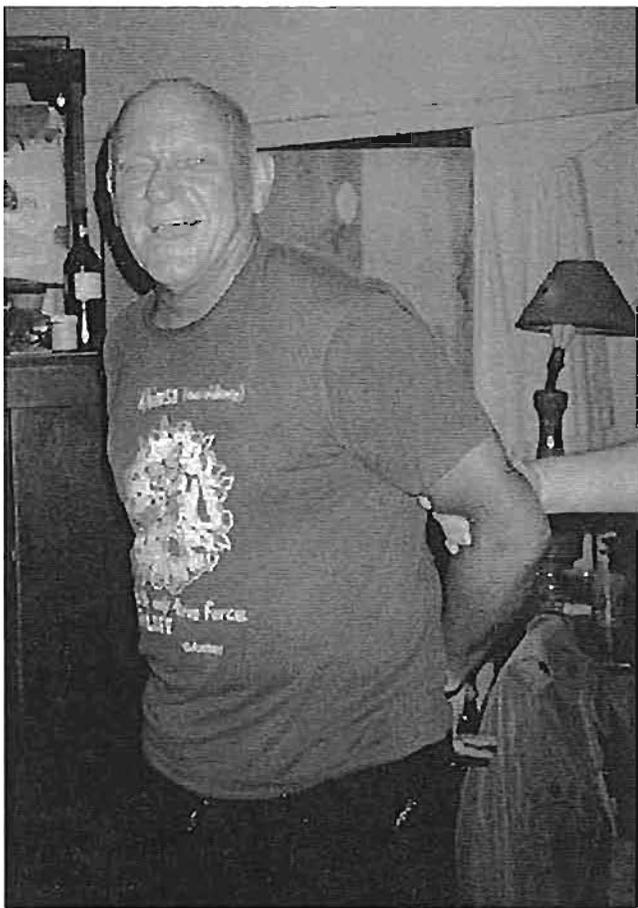
3 **Little House (Ella Dixon House)** est. 1978
Provides affordable housing in a four-flat building, often to former guests of Karen House. 974-2552

4 **Grace House** est. 2002
Hopes to continue providing hospitality to a pregnant mother. 231-6158



♪ I Fought the Law and the Law Won

by MaryAnn McGivern SL



How do you say no to the system in a way that invites others to join your work for positive change? The short answer is that there are a lot of examples here in town.

St. Louis War Tax Resisters publicly give some of what they don't pay in taxes to causes they think should be funded by taxes, immigrant legal aid, for example. There is a call to make

a one-time non-payment of taxes this April 15 as a war protest. To prepare, change your W-4 right away to claim 9 dependents. Thus you will owe some tax and will be able to withhold it if you so choose next April.

The Peace Economy Project calls for an end to military industry while promoting manufacturing that benefits people.

MaryAnn McGivern works as director of Project COPE, an effort to support ex-offenders leaving prison.



The Catholic Worker opens its chaotic, loving home to women and children, engages in clarification of thought on these pages, and tills the land.

In short, we are already resisting and acting at the same time. The problem is that, because pure resistance has all the satisfaction of being right and getting to tell people so, it risks alienating others and feeding our own pride. Community organizing, on the other hand which is activism in its purest form, can lose sight of the big visions in the task of getting everybody out in the streets one more time. If these are seen as two paths, and we choose one or the other, the end of the path may be despair.

So don't think of them as paths. They are two sides of the same coin, birds of a feather. Look for ways in your own life to pair resistance to evil with actions for good.

I just visited two prison programs that are doing just that. The first, Intensive Therapy Community (ITC), at the Jefferson City maximum security prison, is a year-long program run by prisoners with the support of some dedicated volunteers. A hundred or so men live in two house wings where facilitators lead them through Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 steps, berate them for violating a hundred petty rules, and force peer intimacy. It's a very tough program that gives respite and healing in a cruel prison system. As the prisoners gain better understanding of themselves and better control of their own behavior, they see more clearly the abusive and irrational nature of the penitentiary — talk about bittersweet. That ITC continues despite Department of Corrections withdrawal of staff and insistence that the prisoners cannot run the program alone is a powerful act of resistance that achieves social change.

The other program I visited is

from the structure of capitalism to the face of a hungry child. We want to shout NO to all of it, but paralysis is tempting because we want to change it all, all at once. So say no to war, refuse to pay for a small portion of war, and give some of that saved money to a cause that builds peace. St. Augustine said Hope has two lovely daughters, Courage and Anger. He could as well have named the girls Resistance and Activism. They express our hope and renew it.



across the road at a low level security prison, Algoa. There the Prison Fellowship begun by Chuck Colson, "the InnerChange Freedom Initiative" (IFI), has about 30 men in an 18 month program just prior to scheduled parole. They get bible study, computer classes, and life skills — in a context of unashamed God talk. I like the program director, Larry Furnish, because he speaks respectfully both of the men and the obstacles they face. He says the strongest element of the program is the amount of individual and small group participation. The Prison Fellowship is offering this program for free — saying no to bad prison conditions by offering an alternative, building a new society in the shell of the old as the Quakers say. They offer a service I want for all prisoners, not one non-Christians will self-exclude from.

When we look around us, we see the terrible things we humans are doing to one another,

Day by Day

by Ellen Rehg



Bill and I were bringing our children and some friends to a Billiken's Basketball game when we pulled up to the parking garage. The slender woman by the booth taking tickets gave a shout of recognition when she looked into our van and saw us. "Don't you remember me?" she asked "From Karen House?" We looked more closely at her joyful face, and then did

indeed recognize her. It had been over 20 years since we had seen her, and then she had been poverty-stricken and addicted to drugs.

"I've got to give you both a hug!" she exclaimed excitedly as she came to each side of the car and reached in through the window to grasp us. "Thank you! Thank you!" she told us.

"We didn't do anything!" we responded. We had lived together, broke bread together, listened to each other. If there are any heroes at Karen House, they are our guests. The most I have ever felt like I could do was to be a friend. When people are poor and struggling, that doesn't seem like much. But as we pulled away she called out to us, with words that made my heart sing with gratitude and joy, "Tell everybody that I'm working! I've been clean for ten years!"

We take no credit for her incredible accomplishment. But we are overjoyed at her return to health, to her greater inclusion in our community, to an inner peace that she richly deserves.

Running into old friends/guests who have lived at Karen House is not always that dramatic! We often don't know what happens to guests who move on. It is hard to tell whether their lives have become the standard "success story" or not. How we mea-



Ellen Rehg is a writer, philosopher and soccer mom.



sure success is another question.

A guest who has always been special to me is my friend Ruby. Ruby's life has been a bit quieter than that of our friend at the Parking Garage. Ruby lived at Karen House back in the eighties, when I also lived there. She was a middle-aged woman back then, who walked with a limp. She was unfailingly gracious and also fun-loving, ready to laugh at a joke. Like the cured leper, Ruby would always get back to you the day after you had done something for her, to say thank you. She has also always been passionately committed to living independently.

She came to Karen House from an apartment she was living in on Delmar.

"I wasn't evicted", she told me, "but I was having difficulties where I was living. The neighborhood was changing and I wanted a new environment. I didn't feel safe where I was, to get out and go to the store, go to the Beauty Shop, shopping mall. I had never been to a shelter in my life before. I thought, Wow! I didn't know what to expect."

What she found, she said, was a "sacred environment", sacred because she felt safe there. She missed her privacy, but she stayed in her room a lot. She made friends – some of the people there, she said, were characters.

"I just chatted and listened to them. You couldn't take it personal. I had no conflict. It's a good place to be to find a job and look for housing. Joe gave us ten dollars a week. They didn't take my Social Security checks there and I was able to save mine to put a deposit on rent."

Shortly after she left Karen House, Ruby lived for a time at the Little House, with Mary Ann, Eligha and Virginia. She and I were neighbors then, as Myrrah and I lived in the adjoining

apartment.

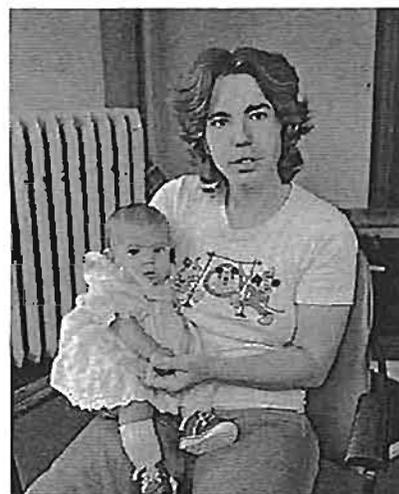
"That was ok. Mary Ann let me be myself. I appreciated that. You didn't have to worry about what people were thinking of you. She was busy doing her thing, and I was busy doing mine. I worked at the Marriac then, a care facility for retired nuns."

Finding the right place to live has been a consistent concern of Ruby's over the

years as she has sought housing in various locations. Although she has qualified for low income housing, she would regularly come back to Karen House for food toward the end of the month, when her money would run out. To try to supplement her income she has also, up until the last few years when her health has made it difficult, sought part-time employment mostly as a private duty nurse's assistant.

Ruby is presently living in a kind of assisted living facility, a real gem of a place, housed in a beautifully rehabbed convent that reminds her of a sorority. Even so, it is hard for Ruby to live there. She has only her Social Security check to live on. After paying for her room and board, she has 30 dollars left in spending money each month. This has to suffice for all her other expenses – clothes, personal items, hair expenses, cigarettes, and so on.

Hers is a quieter situation but no less representative – a hard, but wonderful life.



Kids are Gonna Love

by Tim Pekarek

I am humble and at peace in the knowledge that I have been able to serve as a bit of the grease that has kept the wheels running here at Karen House for some of her 30 years. My task for this issue of the Round Table has been to write a piece about children here at Karen House. I might have been tempted to do a fluffy feel-good piece with a lot of cute anecdotes ... because you know kids say (and do) the darndest things. But that doesn't really work for me.

I am in fact, a bit appalled that I should have been allowed to have so much potential material to work with. In the herstory of Karen House I would guess that easily the numbers must run into the low thousands for children and youth who have lived here with us, while their families were homeless.

With that many individual lives passing through our doors, one would imagine that our guests have come away from the part of their lives with all kinds of experience of life here.

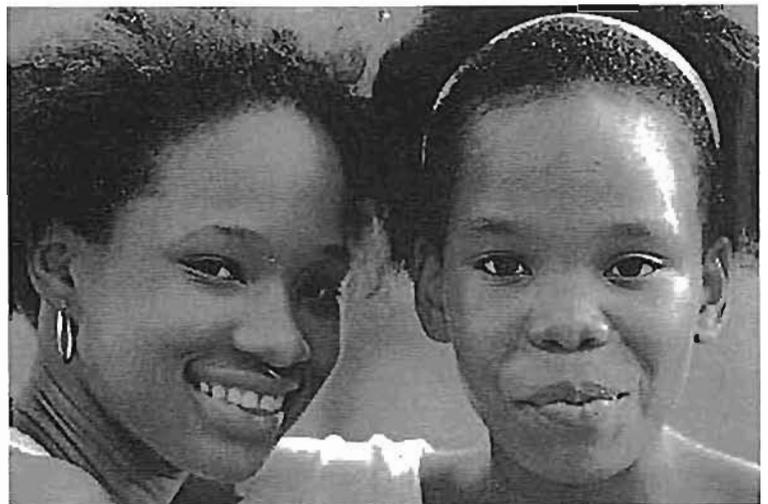
I also know that it is true for some of the children who have lived here at Karen House, that their time here was a brief and unexpected respite from lives spent elsewhere in places where mayhem passes for normal.

I am sure that in some families, that the children must have been living in isolation and loneliness. How that must have been shattered when they moved into Karen House!

To be sure, there have also been many children in many families who were happy and secure before, during and after their visits to Karen House.

I noticed something a long time ago about kids here - when I offer consistent kindness to them - that it can be a tricky thing. Often this display of kindness must seem very profound, and I might end up with a child who wants to stick to me all the time, following almost my every footstep.

Sometimes - the chance to meet children and youth at the worker allows for a kind of relationship that can last for years even. I think that all of us who have been around the place for long have known this to occur. My own life has become so



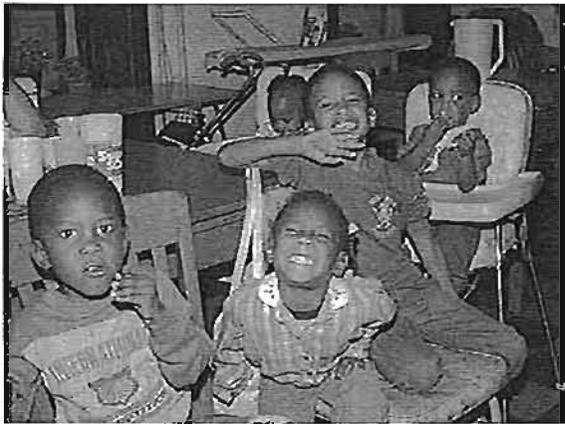
crowded with all y'all - and I thank God too!

I can't leave alone the memories of certain children and youth, whose shame and suffering never really paused while they lived here at the Worker. I can also remember some youth whose lives probably took a turn for the worse while we shared our home with them.

And I have been here long enough to have the unease of the knowledge of how some of our 'kids' lives have turned out, including a few in all of these categories; the victims of murder, the drug addicted, the homeless mentally ill, and some others behind bars.

But certainly Gods gifts do sometimes come to us in high contrast. About a month ago I answered the phone at Karen House and had a brief conversation with a woman who had lived at Karen House with her two kids about seven years ago. I could clearly recall her older son Pablo, as he had joined us on a Sierra Club Inner City Outings canoe and camping trip in the Ozarks way back then. The currents on her family include that her daughter is attending and enjoying high school, and that Pablo is a sophomore in college in St. Charles County. ✦

Tim Pekarek lives next door to Karen House and is good for a last-minute house shift or meal.



Be Our Guest

by Megan Heeney

I came for the hospitality. I came as a guest to the house, hoping that they would find me useful. I could wash dishes, serve sandwiches, work with the kids. *I'll do whatever they need, I thought, as long as they let me be there.* The house was inviting, generous, a good place to be (my other option was the SLU library). The children offered me the first hospitality—“come and play.” *Me? You don't even know me, I thought, but okay, I have some time.*

Next the women offered me hospitality, “Who are you, you go to SLU?”

“Yes,” I answered sheepishly, not sure if that was good answer. The conversation goes on.

Then the community, “You live here?” I asked them. They answered “yes” or “I live right down the street.” I thought this was so cool: you get to work with kids, talk to women, serve sandwiches, cook meals, take donations and work with volunteers all day. Little did I know.

Hospitality comes in many shapes here at the house. It comes in food on the table and at the door, it comes in freshly made beds ready for the next guest to call, it comes in the



children peeking into the office trying to see if the woman arriving has children with her, it comes in the house takers smiles and deep meditative breaths as they attempt to respond patiently to ten requests and in late night conversations on the porch. Hospitality, in so many ways the simplest thing we can do, is something Karen House has striven to do well ev-

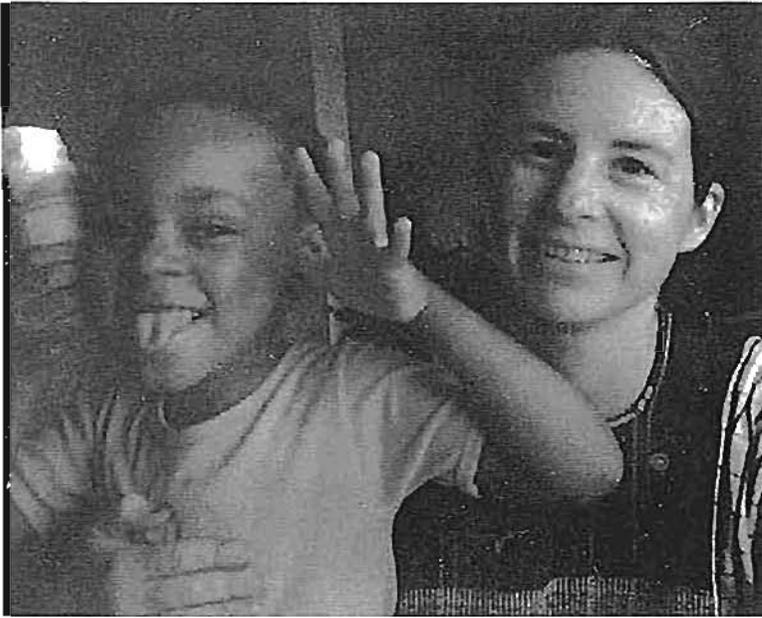


eryday for the last 30 years.

The best part of hospitality is that it draws us in. Once you have received or given hospitality, you can't quite get it out of your skin. Hospitality is an invitation for others to share in your life. As we know, sharing can be contagious, and so is hospitality. No one is immune; not children or adults, not the rich or the poor.

The contagious nature of hospitality is visible within the Karen House community. House takers experience this when children bicker amongst themselves each wanting to carry sandwiches to the door. Last week as we cleaned out rooms, to prepare for new guests on their way two kids helped move all the trash from the room down-

Megan Heeney is a new community member at Karen House and is working for Catholic Action Network.



stairs, then they got out sanitizing wipes and went to work. Women from the house will volunteer to cook warm meals and fresh desserts for the community to share and to give to neighbors. When new people arrive the house taker gives them an official welcome, and soon after other guests fill them in on the real scoop, making them feel at ease and at home.

Long term effects of hospitality are obvious in the homes of those who used to live with us. Recently a woman who lived at Karen House moved into an apartment with her children. A few days later she called the house asking for another guest so she could invite her to come spend Christmas at their place. Becky, Kristin and Rodney, who used to be Karen House community members, offer amazing hospitality in their homes.

This summer we celebrated the opening of the Teka Childress House of Hospitality. Jenny and Annjie worked for three years to rehab the house on Madison so that a family from Karen House could move in and live with them long-term. Tondelayo and her children, Laurence, Macean and Robert, moved into the Teka Childress house. A few Saturdays ago the 3 children invited me over for a pizza dinner. I came with dough in hand ready to cook them up. We rolled out the Trader Joe's dough, packed the pizza with toppings and waited patiently for our pizza to finish. As we were waiting the kids told me I needed to sit down on the couch. Then I was served kool-aid by Robert. When the pizza was ready I jumped up to help but I was told that I couldn't help, I had to stay where I was. Macean brought me a plate piled high with pizza, while Laurence brought out a fork. Then they persisted that I eat more and more. What hospitality! This is its contagious nature, influencing all who enter Karen House.

Hospitality is one way in which we give love. We try to give it unconditionally. As Dorothy quoted John of the Cross saying, "Where there is no love, put love in and you will take out love."



🎵 Celebrate Good Times, C'mon

by Annjie Schiefelbein



morning, we eat together, gather in a circle, sing carols, get a visit from the aforementioned jolly fellow (or lady, depending on the year), exchange gifts and have general merriment. Mostly everyone is in a grand mood, and even the most reclusive of us tend to share in the festivities. The rest of Christmas Eve is a flurry of activity as our neighbors come to find gifts for their families, and our guests prepare themselves and their kids for family gatherings and spending the night out. Christmas Eve is the one night in the year when we invite our guests to spend the night out, if they so desire. That night, those of us left, along with 50 or 60 others, gather in the dining room for Midnight Mass by lamplight. The feeling of waking up on Christmas morning, after all of the joyous activity, is an exhaustion we wouldn't trade for anything. Guests who have long moved from Karen House still remember their Christmas day with us. I know I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

Christmas Eve morn at Karen House has found me asking the same questions, year after year: "Would you like to play Santa?" I wander around, trying to talk someone, (anyone!) into donning the full Santa suit that we've had on the 3rd floor for longer than anyone can remember. Usually I'm able to find some unsuspecting volunteer who is spending his or her first Christmas at Karen House. Anyone who has been around longer knows to avoid me and that entire situation. The suit gets hot—very hot after just a few minutes, and the role requires a lot of energy. But eventually I find someone to do it, and the Christmas festivities roll on without a hitch. It is one of my favorite days in the Karen House year. The day itself as well as the traditions we have come to practice bring a spirit out of our community, guests, and visiting neighbors that is unmatched, I think, on any other day. For the weeks preceding the day itself, we're busy 'shopping' for one another in the rooms set up for child and adult gifts that we've received in donations. That

That's not to say the other holidays at Karen House aren't festive as well. On most other holidays, we have huge brunches, attended by our guests, extended community, neighbors, friends, family, and anyone who might be alone that day. Easter brunch follows the Easter egg hunt in the back yard, and Easter baskets for all. Most holidays get quieter in the house as the day progresses, as folks go to celebrate with their families. The dinners are a



Annjie Schiefelbein just celebrated the opening of the TC House of Hospitality.



quieter affair, but no less lovely. Our neighbors, many of whom live in abandoned buildings come over to join us in our feast.

Over the years the holidays have not been the only times to celebrate. There have been many Catholic Worker weddings throughout Karen House's 30 years. There have been the weddings of those living in the house which have had the common component of being rather home-spun and involve the planning and labor of the entire community (and are usually pot-luck). Being fans of manual labor, we have thrown ourselves into these labors of celebration. In addition to these weddings, there are many "Karen House couples" throughout the country that met and began their relationship among us. The community has welcomed the addition of children into our midst, and we have celebrated anniversaries and birthdays, sometimes on a grand scale, and sometimes on a smaller scale. And we have found that death is a part of community as well, having lost Mev, Ann, Tom, Mark, and Dan, along with numerous guests and family members, parents and friends. We grieve as we celebrate the lives of those lost.

And while all of these celebrations have the most impact over the last 30 years, and certainly cover the majority of our photo history, there are another type of celebration that sustain us on a

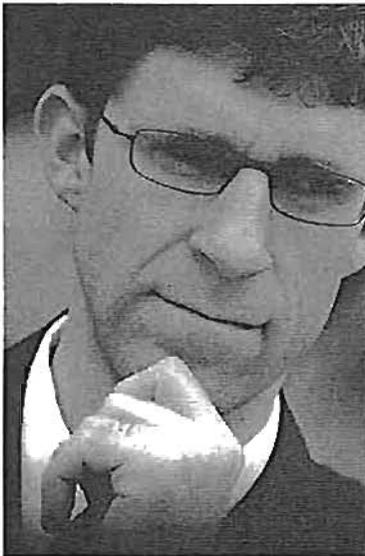
daily basis. Flowers in someone's room after they've been away, a six-pack or brownies on a birthday, the annual Oscar party, a bottle of wine when two community members finally decide to date, remembering the anniversary of the death of someone's parent, posting a sign wishing good luck on midterms, receiving an item from the clothing room that a fellow community member knew you would just love, organizing a turnip hunt in the middle of Christmas break because the kids are bored and driving you crazy... these are the celebrations too, that make Karen House home.

What we tend to do best as community is the every day work of life. Alongside this work have been innumerable reasons during the past 30 years to celebrate, many more than I could fit into this page. And we do. Joyfully. Together.



REMEMBERING DAN

As many of you know our close friend, Dan Horkheimer was senselessly shot and killed this past August while preparing to work on the front of his house. We mourn him and give thanks for his life, his commitments, especially to his work at the Immigration Law Project, and for his friendship. He will be remembered and missed. And we send our love to Dan's family and Courtney Barrett, his wife, our long-time community member and dear friend.



Karen House Needs

Cereal
Deodorant
Sanitary Pads
Diapers and Depends
Coffee
Bus Tickets

The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free. Please write to *The Round Table*, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO. 63106. Donations are gladly accepted to help us continue our work with the poor. People working on this issue include: Joe Angert, Teka Childress, Sarah Sunseri, John Carroll, Megan Heeney, Heather Hollingsworth, Ellen Rehg, and Jenny Truax. Letters to the editor are encouraged; we'll print as many as space permits.

The Round Table

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