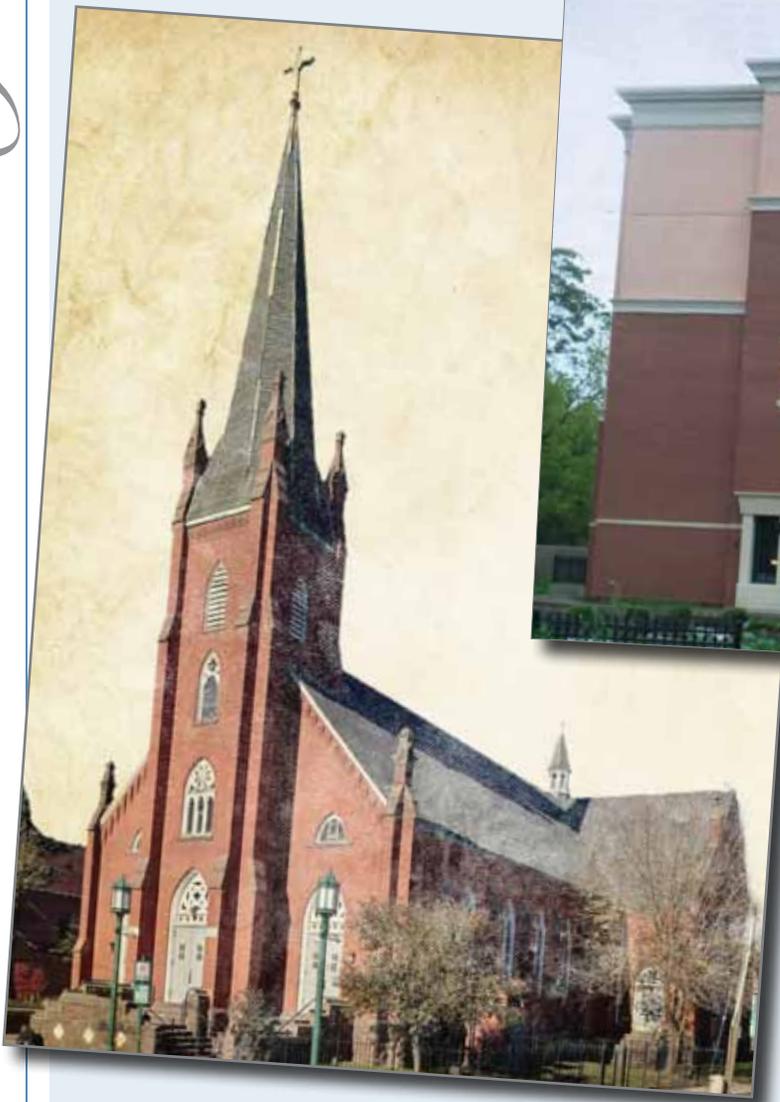




# Bearing Witness

A NEWSLETTER of the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION SHELTER & HOUSING CORPORATION



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## Looking Ahead:

Immaculate's Shelter at  
560 Park Street, Casa de  
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## *A Note from the Executive Director*

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**As Immaculate** closes out commemorating our 30 Years of Service to the homeless of the Hartford region, we've spent the year reflecting on how far we've come as an organization, and how we have improved the lives of so many with the variety of programs we offer, as well as began thinking of what the future holds for the agency.

Over the years, Immaculate has grown from an agency providing emergency shelter to one that houses men and women in over 165 units, the majority of which are scattered throughout the city. In the last year we opened our first project-based permanent supportive housing, Casa de Francisco, a fifty unit apartment building. In addition to housing, Immaculate provides evidence-based interventions that support the men in their housing. Our work is getting mentioned at national and regional conferences as a leader in the "Housing First" movement

Yes, it is true, for over three decades, Immaculate, its staff and volunteers, has borne witness to the plaguing issue that is homelessness. With the help of so many supporters and volunteers over the years, we've been able to help turn clients into neighbors.

Today, Immaculate is at a crossroads. In a perfect world, when we opened the doors of Casa de Francisco to 25 homeless individuals, that would have left 25 beds open in the Shelter. However, the sad reality is that those beds were filled within days. It is a reminder that the issue of homelessness in Greater Hartford is ever present.

In the near future, you will be hearing of our three year, \$3 Million Capital Campaign and plans to either build a new shelter to replace the former church or to drastically renovate the Church building. As part of the arrangement to build Casa de Francisco, The City of Hartford is requiring that the Shelter move from its current Park Street location. This will be done with a heavy heart, however, years of "getting by" in an old and tired building are also quickly catching up with us. Moving or drastic renovations are completely imminent.

Immaculate's mission begins with "Because housing is a human right..." and as long as homelessness remains a public issue in the Hartford region, Immaculate will provide services to those in need.

May there always be room at the Inn,



Fred Lynn, *Executive Director*



Immaculate  
Conception  
Shelter & Housing  
Corporation

# The Night I Spent in the Shelter

*Submitted by Bishop Peter Rosazza*

Most of us know about Father Jim Donagher, an outstanding priest who dedicated himself to serving immigrants and poor people in the Park Street area. After the harrowing experience of finding a man who had froze to death on the steps of the church, he resolved to open a shelter in the basement.

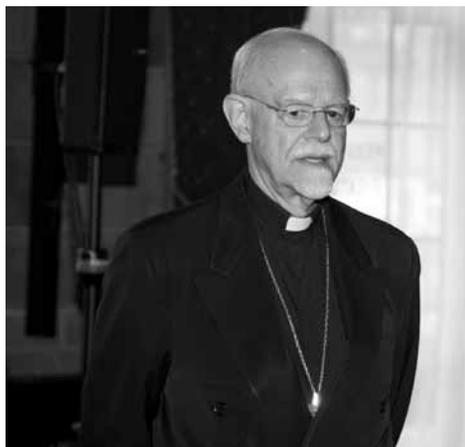
Prior to the merging of Immaculate with the Church of Saint Anne up the street, I had a room in the Immaculate Conception rectory where I could sleep, especially on Sunday nights, and get some distance from the cauldron of activity that was Sacred Heart Church where I was stationed.

For several years I had referred homeless people to the shelter. One day it dawned on me that I should ask permission of the director to stay one night with the men. After receiving the go-ahead, I spent a Sunday night there, on a cot, along with the other men.

Before going to sleep I spoke with some of the guests to learn their stories. There were drug addicts, alcoholics, and some recent immigrants who had no place to stay. Others had lost their jobs and consequently their apartments.

Needless to say, I didn't get the good night's sleep to which I was accustomed and that I needed to face the problems and demands made on us by people in lower Albany Avenue who were in the majority recent migrants from Puerto Rico. Parenthetically I say migrants rather than immigrants since Puerto Ricans have been American citizens since 1917. So I went over to the Immaculate Conception rectory, showered and then returned to Sacred Heart Church. I did so with a twinge of guilt because I had options that none of the guests did.

Finally, I am grateful to those who had the foresight to open the shelter, and the courage to face the problems in the beginning as well as those who have carried on this



important work over the years. I am sure that your work has been blest by the Lord Jesus since you are caring for him in what Mother Teresa used to say "his distressing disguise." Also, his mother, Mary, in honor of whom the shelter is named, will continue to intercede for you with her son as you bring relief and consolation to homeless people.

## **Have an Idea that can Make a Difference?**

Immaculate is fortunate to have many people in our circle of volunteers who help us in many ways, big and small.

We have the many food groups who have served over 33,420 meals in 2010; we have those in the community who helped us stock-up apartments with linens and kitchen supplies for 25 homeless men getting their own apartments in Casa de Francisco; we have individuals who take time out of their daily schedules to do hair cuts, repair jobs in the shelter, and host fundraisers that benefit Immaculate.

Do you have a skill set that you think can be useful to the clients we serve every day? Or perhaps you really know how to throw a great party?

Contact Teresa A. Wierbicki, Development Director:  
860-724-4823 /teresa@icshc.org to discuss how you can  
Make a Difference in the lives of Immaculate's clients.

## Service with a Smile and a Prayer

*Submitted by Shawnee Baldwin, Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Archdiocese of Hartford*

In July 2005, I was privileged to be part of Young Neighbors in Advocacy program in Washington, DC (a program of the Center for Ministry Development). There, I met Mr. James Burton at the Community for Creative Nonviolence – a 1300 bed comprehensive shelter built in a converted defense building that lies within two blocks of the White House. It is the WORLD's largest shelter, and at the time ran on only \$183,000 (yes-thousand, not million) a year.

While I did not get the opportunity to be mentored by Mr. Burton, it was there that I decided to make a commitment to do something about the homeless in Hartford.



In my job, I wanted a meaningful service project for the young people across the Archdiocese. This way, I could still facilitate a concrete experience of basic Catholic Christian directives: Feed the Hungry; Shelter the Homeless; and Honor the dignity of the human person.

“SAY YES Fridays” (Social Justice Advocate Years: Young Adults Engaged in Service) was created when I signed up for seven individual days at the Immaculate Conception Shelter to feed 100 men. Volunteers from four parishes and the JustFaith Group from the Church of St. Patrick in Farmington quickly volunteered to help out.

In 2006, we changed the name to the Disciple Project and signed up for another seven dates to prepare food. We began enlisting the help of Confirmation programs to assist. In 2007, the Project became so popular that sixteen dates were snapped up in one hour after I sent out an E-mail.

In 2008, I met two men, Denzel and Richard, while walking to and from my own Chiropractor appointments in Hartford all summer. After listening to their stories, I decided it was time to kick it up a notch and signed up for 27 different days. The word began to spread so rapidly that at the 2009 Catholic Youth Spectacular at Rock Cats Stadium, we received so many requested donations of toiletry items, we had to send a truck to pick them up.



By the fall of 2009, we were volunteering for 56 dates and I even cooked one by myself!! Volunteers from East Catholic High School made a huge commitment to 16 of the mid-week dates and were soon competing with each other to see who could bring the best menu. At the 2010 Catholic Youth Spectacular, we collected socks and my car was so full I could barely see out my side mirrors!

As I've stopped in the shelter over the years, I've gotten to know some of the men by name and the staff that graciously serves them like family. I get to talk with the residents and hear how they happened to be there. Some of the stories are heart breaking. Every group that has come through the Disciple Project, as well as myself, have been affected in a unique way by these men. In response, we have all responded generously by donating food, goods and clothing. Most young people become more aware of the misguided stereotypes of homelessness. It is rare that volunteers do not want to come back. The guys joke that I should be on the payroll...there is no place I would rather be trying to emulate Jesus' work than Immaculate.



If you'd like to submit a story to our “A Look Back” feature, please contact Teresa Wierbicki at [Teresa@icshc.org](mailto:Teresa@icshc.org).

## A Place to Call His Own

*Submitted by Carol Portman, LCSW*

*Carol C. Portman is Immaculate's Clinical Director. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and has worked with clients experiencing homelessness for almost thirty years with a focus on rehabilitation from medical and co-occurring disorders.*

As Clinical Director, I have the opportunity to work with a team of colleagues for the common good of our clients. Their personal goals and successes are also successes for us, as we cheer them along. This past summer, the staff received training on Critical Time Intervention (CTI), with the goal of implementing this evidenced based method of case management to improve the way we assist our clients. CTI is time limited, with three phases lasting approximately three months each and designed to improve quality of life by assisting/supporting clients as they move from homelessness to permanent housing and to prevent return to homelessness. Case managers link clients to resources and supports. Through the phases, the case managers shift the focus to the support system as the client transitions to more independent relationships with support systems and service providers.

David Ridley is in the first group of clients being served using the CTI model. David is a 57 year old African American man who relocated to Connecticut from Virginia in 1979. His southern drawl is still prominent after all this time, and he believes it

will remain part of who he is for the rest of his life. Despite a long work history, he found himself homeless in 2009 after his release from the penitentiary. He was told that he'd be "sitting pretty" when he got out, with a place to live and a job. The reality of what he was promised and what he experienced was quite different. He scrambled to get a job and found Labor Ready, where he has been employed, as needed, for eighteen months.

David was moving between Hartford area shelters before he found Immaculate. After two years in our shelter, through a cooperative effort with his case manager, on September 1, 2011, he was housed in an apartment he loves. With a big smile and enthusiasm he described it as "a studio apartment, which is enough for me; I have my television, cable and music box. I keep it clean — you should come and see it." In his recounting of his love for his apartment, he shared that he deeply appreciates the freedom that it affords him. Although grateful for what the shelter provided, he relishes the ability to come and go from his apartment, without concern for curfew, and return to a place he can call home. He is saving the little money that he earns to buy clothing and hopes that his Case Manager, Clarissa Garcia, will go shopping for curtains and items to decorate his apartment with him.

Clarissa shared, "He is one of the



David Ridley speaking with Clinical Director, Carol Portman

most motivated and cooperative clients I've ever worked with. He is a pleasure to work with, keeping his appointments, being reliable and organized and accepting of constructive feedback."

Today, He is working with Trevor Meade, Case Manager/Employment Specialist to secure more steady gainful employment. "He is really funny when you get to know him and he was surprised that I knew the 'old-school' music that I did," Trevor said.

Micki Woods, Clinical Case Manager in the shelter added, "When David greets you, you can't help but smile."

"I really appreciate what the wonderful staff of this housing corporation has done for me," said David "God Bless all of them and their families. They did a wonderful Blessing for me. Thank you all very much!"

Putting the picture all together, it seems like a win-win to me.

*\*This article was submitted with the permission of David Ridley.*



A special thank you to all those who attended and supported

## *Come Home to Immaculate* *30 Years of Serving the Homeless*

**The evening was surely a memorable one.** Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra kicked off the evening with Opening Remarks. Later on we were honored to have Governor Dannel Malloy present his Chief of Staff, Timothy Bannon, who accepted *The Partnership Award*.

We were also privileged to honor Hartford retired Auxiliary Bishop, the Most. Rev. Peter Rosazza D.D., for his years of service supporting the homeless with the *Homeless Advocacy Award*.

On May 5, 2011, The Society Room of Hartford was filled with people who all had some special connection to Immaculate Conception Shelter & Housing Corporation. Be it Father Jim Donagher, who opened the doors to the

Church for the purposes of a Shelter for the first time over 30 years ago; Rev. John Gregory-Davis who served as the agency's first Executive Director over 20 years ago; members of the Inaugural Board of Directors, such as George Slate and Mark and Lynda Fredette, who wrote Immaculate's mission statement and had the vision of serving the community in a way no one else wanted to; Patti White, former Executive Director who's vision and belief in Supportive Housing is what helped make Casa de Francisco a reality for the agency; and countless food group volunteers, long-time donors and funders who without their support, we would not be able to provide the level of services Immaculate does to its clients.



The St. Ann's of Avon, Food Group ready to have a great time, as always!



Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra speaking with Most Rev. Peter Rosazza D.D.



Members of Immaculate's first Staff and Board of Directors, Rev. John Gregory-Davis, Mary Jo and Gregory Andrews, Lynda and Mark Fredette, and architect on the Casa de Francisco project, Paul Bailey.



Fred Lynn, Immaculate's Executive Director, with Governor Dannel Malloy.



Bishop Rosazza, recipient of the Homeless Advocacy Award, speaking with Father Jim Donagher, who opened the doors to the shelter for the very first time over 30 years ago..



Musical Selections by Romance Tropical.

**We thank the following for their sponsorship:**

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# Change for the Better

Immaculate Conception Shelter and Housing Corporation (ICSHC), proudly takes the lead in providing proven strategic opportunities and support services to Hartford's homeless individuals with substance abuse and mental health issues, assisting them to better their current living situations.

ICSHC staff received a two day intensive training on Critical Time Management (CTI). This training will furnish the framework for Supportive Housing Case Managers to provide outstanding services and coordinate with community providers, establishing and maintaining linkages that will benefit the clients we serve. The management and staff strongly believe that communication with the client and community support services are the bridges to success during the client's transition to self sufficiency.

The CTI model will be piloted by selected case managers from ICSHC. It will occur at the most critical time, when a client transitions from homelessness to stable housing. This is the period when case management is vital for success. The CTI framework will assist the client

*“Working within the Critical Time Intervention framework, Case Managers engage with the clients as well as each client's support system thereby assuring a strong connection between the client and their support system. Upon completion of the Critical Time Intervention, clients are more independent and have many resources to turn to when help is needed.”*

– Steve MacHattie, Supportive Housing Director

in positive thinking, accepting change, self sufficiency, and rapport building with their case manager and more importantly extend to community providers to facilitate access to needed support services.

The pilot will begin with two teams staffed as follows: Supportive Housing Director, Steve MacHattie will lead one team consisting of Field Coordinator, Diana Garcia and CTI Case Manager, Virginia Adams. In addition, Mr. MacHattie will oversee the success of the CTI implementation, monitor all incoming/outgoing data and feedback from staff and community linkages. Clinical Director, Carol C. Portman, will lead the second team consisting of Field Coordinator, Diana Garcia and CTI Case Manager, Clarissa Garcia.

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## Feel-Good Summer

Once the traditional Emergency Shelter closes in mid-May, Immaculate operates the Summer Respite Program for 40 of our elderly and ill clients, to protect them from the extreme heat summer days can bring. Generally, Immaculate provides most of the meals as food groups supply meals from October to May.

However, there is always an exception! For the past three summers, Farmington Valley Teen Volunteers has been serving meals during their summer vacation from school. This summer they served meals every other Monday at the Shelter. The group, which was formed by Jessica Kravet and her mom and brother a few years



ago, hosts food drives at a local Farmington Valley Stop & Shop where they collect items for dinners as well as items needed for the shelter. Their menu varies, from hot dogs, to fajitas, to mac & cheese and tuna fish sandwiches!

We want to thank you, Jessica Kravet and the Farmington Valley Teen Volunteers for Making a Difference!

# My JVC Experience @ Immaculate

*Submitted by Tara Clerkin, Jesuit Volunteer, 2010-2011*

JVC places its volunteers at various social service agencies. Most positions have direct service components with the impoverished or disenfranchised population. I have been lucky enough to serve at Immaculate Conception Shelter, as both a shelter case manager and the food group coordinator. Every day, I had the privilege of working with my clients in the shelter. I shared with them their worries, their stress, their achievements, and their struggles. I admired pictures of their children, visited them in the hospital, and sang along to "Runaway Train" in the car on our way to the eye doctor. I let myself become a part of their life, and they in turn became a part of mine.



Through JVC retreats and through the local JV community, we were encouraged to look beyond the surface. We analyzed the structures set in place by policy, economics and society that have created the injustices we witness. We questioned the customary perspectives and we searched for new and better solutions. We took time to reflect, pray and process. We attended protests, wrote letters to our representatives and advocated for

the populations we served. This circular process of experience, analysis, reflection and action repeated itself continuously over my year of service, and became ingrained in the way we approach conflicts or issues moving forward.

Now that my year of service has ended, I understand how and why Jesuit Volunteers are ruined for life. The poverty, suffering, and injustice that we witnessed break us down. The pain we share with our clients breaks us. The societal structures we observe, analyze and critique break us. We allow ourselves to be broken because it is the only way to be built up again. Our new, altered perspective is what rebuilds us. This lens through which we now see the world is why we are ruined for life. As Bernie Glassman, cofounder of Zen Peacemakers, explains:

*"When we bear witness, when we become the situation—homelessness, poverty, illness, violence, death—the right action rises by itself. We don't have to worry about what to do. We don't have to figure out solutions ahead of time. Peacemaking is the functioning of bearing witness. Once we listen with our entire body and mind, loving action arises."*

## "No Freeze" Contract Signed



As many of you already know, Immaculate Conception Shelter operated The City of Hartford's "No Freeze" Shelter the past two winters. Once again, we will be serving 150 men during this winter season.

Take part in this venture and serve as a food group! Sign up for one of the open dates below or contact us to team up with another group to serve all 150 men. Simply contact Alison Baldree at (860)724.4823 x602 or [alisonb@icshc.org](mailto:alisonb@icshc.org).

December	February	March	April	May
12/28/2011	2/23/2012	3/24/2012	4/7/2012	5/12/2012
12/29/2011		3/30/2012	4/21/2012	
12/31/2011			4/30/2012	

## Stay Connected...

You can now stay up-to-date with news about Immaculate by "Liking" Immaculate Conception Shelter & Housing Corporation on Facebook and by joining our Mailing List by logging on to our web site [www.icshc.org](http://www.icshc.org).





## Q & A with Reverend John Gregory-Davis

### **What would you say is the defining moment when you realized you wanted to become an integral part of Immaculate's mission?**

Probably the moment I came to interview with Father Joe Baxer back in the summer of 1987. I had worked with those who are homeless both while in seminary at Boston University, and then in New Haven, CT while Susan, my wife, completed her seminary at Yale. When Susan was accepted into a Chaplain's residency program at Hartford Hospital, I was initially hoping to find a church to pastor in the Hartford area. It was at that time that my colleague, the Rev. Karen Barker-Dunkan, told me about the church's ministry with men who were homeless.

I applied to be the church's first "outside" (i.e., neither Priest, nor Brother) Shelter Director, with the understanding that I would only be there for one year while Susan completed her residency program. I was so deeply moved by the history and the ministry of the shelter that when Susan's program ended, I declared that I simply could not yet leave, thus laying the foundation for what turned into eight years of ministry with what transitioned from the Immaculate Conception Shelter into the Immaculate Conception Shelter and Housing Corporation.

### **What were your initial roles in helping Immaculate get off the ground?**

Once I realized how "called" I felt to this ministry, I teamed up with Immaculate's partner church, the First Church in Windsor as their "Outreach Minister," thereby more fully owning their developing commitment to Immaculate's homeless ministry while likewise allowing me to be ordained to my shared position with both churches.

Throughout this process, it became clear to me that a critical first step toward achieving our goal was to separately incorporate as a non-profit organization dedicated both to the compassionate mission that no one ever again froze to death on the streets of Hartford, and to our shared vision of ensuring adequate housing and caring support for all. It was during this exciting and challenging time that we formed a Board of Directors and adopted our Mission Statement, founded on our conviction that "housing is a human right," and named this next incarnation of our shelter ministry the Immaculate Conception Shelter and Housing Corporation.

### **What would you say were the most challenging steps in getting the community to support your vision(s) for the organization?**

One had to do with our founding conviction that shelter was not a privilege to be earned, but rather a human right to be honored and offered with as much of God's unconditional love as we were humanly able to embody. We were frequently charged with "enabling" the addictive and problematical behavior of our guests. Our vision of being a place from which no one would ever be turned away, was often perceived by both the City and our neighborhood as doing more to contribute to the problems of those we served, rather than actually solving them.

A second challenge presented itself when we create an environment of empowerment and advocacy among our guests, staff, and volunteers. To this day, I can still remember being challenged by one of our guests with the stinging question, "Why is it that every decision made about our lives is made without ever consulting us?" From that moment on, we committed ourselves to trying to move beyond distinctions between "us" (as staff and volunteers) and "them" (as guests), toward solidarity and mutual partnership in our shared goal of ending homelessness. It was out of this commitment that the "[Save Our Homeless People Association](#)" (SOHPA) was formed by way of providing a self-directed forum through which our guests could speak up and out on their own behalf, whether with regard to policies within our shelter/their home, or with regard to public and social policies.

And the third challenge we faced had to do with our conviction that as a human right, like shelter, housing too needed to be provided as unconditionally as possible. As we realized that some of our guests might well always need some form of supportive services to manage their lives, those capable of "independent" living could aspire to permanent housing. Thus we were excited to discover the fledgling "housing first" model, providing housing with supportive services to those who needed both. Our vision of eventually providing such housing ourselves grew stronger among us, even as we struggled to persuade others of its wisdom and potential.

### **How would you describe your feelings to see your dream come true of adding not only a shelter but 'supportive housing'?**

Probably needless to say, I am thrilled beyond words! As one who left when such a vision seemed more like "an impossible dream," than an achievable goal, it is so exciting, amazing, and inspiring to see how our original vision has not only been kept alive as a dream, but has actually been validated and achieved as a real and lasting reality for those whom we serve.

## Bringing Smiles to Our Clients

The clients of Immaculate are fortunate to have Dr. Gworek, who for the past three years, has been offering his dental services to Immaculate's clients.

Dr. Gworek along with his wife Gloria have previously assisted small Honduran villages with their dental services. Knowing they had the supplies to help others outside of a typical office setting, the pair decided they wanted to help others closer to home. After helping serve food at Immaculate's Shelter with the Corpus Christi Church of Wethersfield, Dr. Gworek found Immaculate to be just that place!

For the past 18 months, Dr. Gworek and his wife/dental assistant Gloria have been joined by Mary Pergiovanni, and her dental assistant Rob Gengras, helping Immaculate's clients feel better about themselves, giving them inner confidence with their oral hygiene check-ups.



"I like to help people who are down on their luck using talents that I am lucky enough to have," Dr. Gworek says.

His services include routine cleanings, fillings, fixing of broken teeth, extractions and even some denture work. Over the years, he has seen over 500 clients.

*We thank you, Dr. Gworek,  
for Making a Difference*

## Save the Date!

Friday, January 27, 2012

21<sup>st</sup> Annual Messiah Concert

Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Hartford

If you are not currently on our mailing list, please email your address to: [Teresa@icshc.org](mailto:Teresa@icshc.org).



For over three decades, **Immaculate Conception Shelter & Housing Corporation** has been a life-saving resource to thousands of the Hartford region homeless, providing decent shelter and affordable, permanent supportive housing to those with no other options.

### Yes, I'd like to support Immaculate's mission.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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\$500    \$250    \$100    \$50    \$25

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Please make my gift a monthly gift. You have my permission to charge the above credit card monthly.

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My company has a matching gift program.

I prefer my gift to be anonymous.

I would like to learn how I can include Immaculate in my will.

All gifts to Immaculate Conception Shelter & Housing Corporation are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

To discuss additional funding opportunities, contact

Teresa Wierbicki, Development Director (860) 724 – 4823 x 103.

To contribute on-line, go to [www.icshc.org](http://www.icshc.org)

**Please mail to:** ICSHC, PO Box 260669, Hartford, CT 06126

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## *About Immaculate Conception Shelter & Housing Corporation*

**Since 1981**, Immaculate has been providing emergency housing and shelter services to thousands of homeless individuals. We focus on men who are most vulnerable, including those with HIV/AIDS or other health issues, alcohol or drug abuse problems, and mental health issues.

### **Mission**

Because housing is a human right, Immaculate Conception Shelter & Housing Corporation will provide housing and decent shelter with unconditional love to those with no other options.

Immaculate's service delivery is based on a Housing First model informed by a public health, harm reduction framework. Home is seen as a right and a foundation upon which fragile, broken and vulnerable individuals can, with proper supports, focus on improving the quality of life.

### **Programs**

- Street Outreach
- Education and Employment
- Emergency Shelter
- Permanent Supportive Housing

Within these four components, Immaculate offers shelter, food, clothing, medical and mental health services, case management, alcohol and other drug counseling, entitlement assistance, education, job training, referrals and housing services.

**For more information** on Immaculate or to find out how you can help, call Fred Lynn at (860) 724-4823 ext. 102.

## *A Special Thank You...*

Immaculate would like to extend our deepest appreciation to Connecticut Light & Power, A Northeast Utilities Company, for providing printing of this issue of *Bearing Witness*.



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