



Shelter Stories

Offering transitional shelter and life-reclaiming support to people experiencing homelessness

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. LUKE'S SHELTER

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On The Right Track

STEPPING UP: Resident Eric Robinson is known for his willingness to help.

tragedy was followed by the death of his mother 18 months later. "I went into a shell for two years," he says.

Still, Robinson managed to enter what now is the University of the District of Columbia, where he obtained his GED, and then moved to Richmond. He married, had two daughters, and got a job at an electric utility. But he also was selling drugs, which came to play a major role in his life. Eventually, he helped run a pest-control company in Florida.

In the late 1980s, a separated Robinson returned to D.C. to make a home for a son from a previous relationship. But the 18-year-old was killed in a drug-related incident, and Robinson began to use drugs and alcohol with greater frequency. He lost interest in life and became homeless, sometimes staying with friends.

"I always told everybody that everything was all right, but I was just self-medicating," he says. "I know the recipe for success, but I had nothing to be successful for." After nearly 10 years, he found his way to the Community Council for the Homeless at Friendship Place. He recently celebrated a year of sobriety. Robinson came to St. Luke's in July and has become a "model resident," according to Shelter counselor Saeed Woodall. "Eric is best known for how he will jump in and, without the asking, help out by doing whatever he can for who ever he can," Woodall says.

In late July, Robinson enrolled in a building maintenance training program operated by So Others Might Eat. He credits the program with building his self-esteem. Robinson, who has an easy banter with the other Shelter residents and says that eventually, he'd like to open his own business. "If I'm going to put my name on it, it's going to be good," he says.

—Story and photograph by Derek Willis

Finally, Eric Robinson has what his life has lacked since he was a small boy: stability. His 53 years have been marked by great personal loss—the deaths of his brothers, mother, and son—the notoriety and fast money that came with dealing drugs, and a decade of homelessness and addiction.

Now, in his second year of sobriety, the St. Luke's Shelter resident says he has reason to look forward to the next chapter of his life.

"St. Luke's lets me see every day how great a life I can have," he says. Just knowing that he has a place to go each night and support from his "mentors" at the Shelter "means so much to me," Robinson adds. "I haven't had that since I was a young boy."

Eric was 8 years old, living in Adams Morgan, when he and two brothers tried to cross Rock Creek near the entrance to the National Zoo. Only Eric survived; his brothers drowned in the rain-swollen creek, according to a brief article in *The Washington Post*. That

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Letter from the Pastor

What a wonderful event the Annual Bar-B-Q was! Even the rain did not impact the Labor Day event. Well over 50 people attended, and 26 joined in a Mini-Walk, raising over \$800 for the Shelter through the Walk for the Homeless.

But what was most overwhelming was the spirit that prevailed. Many community supporters attended, and the staff was present to guide people through the Shelter. Shelter Director Shalom Mulkey thanked everyone for their ongoing support. And most importantly, David Corsini, a former resident, shared with us just how much St. Luke's Shelter changed his life. As I listened, wiping away tears from my eyes, I saw many people doing the

same. It is heartwarming to know that while one man shared, there are so many other success stories from St. Luke's. Over the 15 year history over 350 people have experienced the care, the hospitality, and the warmth that is St. Luke's. It was a testimony to the commitment the Glover Park community and its businesses have transformed people, given them hope, and made the world both better for all of us!

To all of you who support St. Luke's Shelter, thank you! Thank you for helping to change lives! Thank you for providing hospitality! Thank you for giving hope! Thank you for making the St. Luke's Shelter a model for small transitional shelters. You have made a difference!

—Dave Myers

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Shelter Stories is published quarterly.

Editor: Margaret Guroff

How to Contribute

Along with participating in the Help the Homeless Walkathon on November 18, you can help St. Luke's Shelter by donating meals, time, or money. Here are some easy ways to contribute:

- Through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) for federal employees. If you are a federal employee, please consider designating us (#7940) as your charity.
- Make a contribution by check or online with a credit card at our website, www.stlukesshelter.org.
- Shop online at iGive.com and a percentage of your sale can be donated to St. Luke's Shelter
- Share your wisdom by teaching shelter residents about a life skill.
- Become an overnight volunteer.
- Drop off a hot meal for seven (six residents and one staff member) at the Shelter.

For more information on giving, please contact Shalom Mulkey, Shelter Director at (202)337-4275 or shalom@stlukesshelter.org.

A New Kind of Volunteer

We are looking for dedicated individuals who would like to participate in our new overnight volunteer program. This is an exciting opportunity for individuals to get better connected to our residents and program and help us provide a safe, supportive, and sober environment. All overnight volunteers must complete volunteer training before they complete their first shift.

Overnight volunteers will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that the policies and procedures of St. Luke's Shelter are carried out correctly—e.g., ensure lights out at the appropriate hour and that residents exit the facility at the appropriate hour.
 - Maintaining a log of evening and morning activities.
- Male or female overnight volunteers are needed for our Saturday night sleep shift, 10 pm to 7 am. This shift is generally quiet and allows for studying or sleeping in the staff/volunteer bedroom.

For more information, please contact shelter director Shalom Mulkey, shalom@stlukesshelter.org.

Let's Make a Meal!

Every dinner at St. Luke's Shelter is a gift, but when the dinner is prepared by a gifted chef, the meal becomes a feast. On September 22, Glover Park resident and celebrated chef Gerard Pangaud cooked for the Shelter's six residents and their counselor. His fiancée, Ann Casso, was on hand to assist. Pangaud, Casso, and Shelter friend Sharon Armstrong served the meal.

From the main course of braised short ribs to dessert of homemade ice cream and chocolate cake, the dinner was so delicious it defied description. But that didn't stop residents from trying to describe it. Several compared it to their mothers' cooking—and gave Pangaud the edge over Mom. One called the dessert the "pinnacle" of chocolate.

But this repast was only a part of the special night. At the table, Residential Supervisor Saeed Woodall told Pangaud about the Shelter. Then each resident spoke about his life and how happy he was to be at St. Luke's. They seemed particularly happy to be there that night.

Until recently, Chef Gerard was the executive chef and owner of DC's Gerard's Place, garnering numerous awards, including *Washingtonian* magazine's Blue Ribbon Award from 1993 through 2006. He is the only chef in the United States to have earned two Michelin stars.

Pangaud is now the head instructor for L'Academie de Cuisine in Gaithersburg and the highly regarded cooking school's Professional Culinary Arts Program. He also has a catering business called Cuisine by Gerard where he prepares formal dinners or sophisticated picnics for 8 to 100 guests.

Chef Gerard left the Shelter after posing for pictures,



exchanging e-mail addresses, and promising to return. That's one promise the residents will count on.

THIS SPUD'S FOR YOU: Chef Gerard Pangaud takes a turn as a dinner volunteer.

—Story and photo by Sharon Armstrong

First Time's the Charm

Local band The Charm Offensive treated a full house of enthusiastic fans to an evening of their trademark "smartypants rock and roll" on September 29, all for the benefit of St. Luke's Shelter. Definitely charming and far from offensive, the rock band featured Alex Daniels on drums; Dave Greenfieldboyce, Chris Lehmann, and Glover Park native Geordie Grindle on guitar; and Shelter friend Meg Guroff on bass. Shelter Director Shalom Mulkey introduced the band from the stage of My Bakery and Café on Wisconsin Avenue, which

served as a lively and colorful concert venue—complete with light show and smoke machine.

The \$650 proceeds netted from donations at this fun event—dubbed "Charm Aid" by organizers—went directly to support Shelter programs. Special thanks go to the Charm Offensive musicians for donating their time and talent, to My Bakery and Café owner David Escobar for generously providing space for the concert, and to Shelter friends Sharon Armstrong and Judie Guy for working the door.

—Judie Guy

Christmas Cards For Sale

This year, put your heart on your sleeve by sending holiday cards designed by former Shelter resident Daniel Holmes. The outside of the card features a drawing of a Christmas wreath, and the inside is blank for your message. The back features a short note about St. Luke's Shelter.

The price of \$10 for a pack of 15 includes postage. Send a check or money order made out to St. Luke's Shelter to Shalom Mulkey at 3655 Calvert St. NW, Washington, DC, 20007. Be sure to include a slip of paper letting us know where the cards should be sent!

Boost Resident Pride

Shelter residents will be rewarded for taking leadership roles, under a newly launched worker incentive program. For instance, residents will take turns as head chore monitor. When a man successfully completes a term in the position, he will receive special privileges or a gift card as a reward. To support this program, please consider donating a \$10 gift card to the Shelter. Cards for Starbucks, movie theaters, and area stores are especially appreciated.

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collaboration between
a community of faith
and a community of
neighbors, provides life-
reclaiming support to
homeless individuals.

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