

From Sr. Peg Brennan Circa 2018

St. Joseph's Northside is a ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph, created in response to a comprehensive needs assessment that we did to find the real and unmet needs in our city and in the neighboring counties.

We wanted a place where people felt safe and where they could meet others and find help of various kinds. The Lyell Avenue neighborhood is known for problems of drug traffic, poverty, prostitution, violence and other things that result from isolation. We wanted to offer a haven from the street and a clearinghouse for people who didn't have access to the services that were already out there.

The people who come here seem to be those who can't make it in the established systems or who have the will to succeed but not the resources or support. We've become a last resort for many.

People come to us with requests big and small. In any given week we might see:

- a woman who had gastric surgery and needing a blender to purée her food.
- a young mother who cannot afford the co-pay for her sick child's prescription
- an-unemployed father of three who needs work boots to begin his new entrance-level job
- a homeless woman looking only for a place to have a hot meal, a shower and a few hours of safety and rest from the street
- a mother who can't pay the RGE bill ,has been cut off and who wants to use our stove to cook for her family
- a man who has had to put his all of his belongings in storage while he looks for work; he cannot afford to keep the storage until he gets a job.
- a man who lost his I.D. and needs to obtain a birth certificate to begin the long process of proving who he is
- a neighbor who lives alone and wants only to enjoy being with some people for awhile .

We visit people in hospitals, jails, homes. We accompany them to court and try to advocate for those who can't do this for themselves. We try to link people with the many services that are available in our area and to link them with each other as well, to lessen the isolation that so many feel and that adds to a climate of fear and violence in our city.

We believe that everyone needs both "bread and roses", both the necessities of life (food, clothing, shelter) and those things that raise the human spirit, (music, art, poetry, the beauty of nature, the joy of good conversation). So, we bring people together in various ways: we serve weekly breakfasts that are lively and fun and share community-building lunches in which everyone has a hand. Once or twice a month we try to take people on a short field trip to a local attraction or event, go to the country, to a lake, to get people away from the realities of the street for awhile and to feed their spirits.

It's all very simple and one-on-one.

2020 Note: If you want to send a donation, checks can be made out to *St. Joseph's Northside* and sent to: SSJ Motherhouse, 150 French Road, Rochester 14618.