

# Deo Gratias Annual REVIEW

DEO GRATIAS MINISTRIES DETROIT    DECEMBER 2022    ISSUE 1

## Felician Sisters Establish Outreach Presence in Northeast Detroit

Deo Gratias Ministries Detroit (DGMD) is a ministry of love, commitment, and service.

DGMD was established by three Felician sisters who saw a need and committed their resources and energy to serve a Detroit community with dignity and love.

Their dream was to open a café and build a community garden where people from the surrounding neighborhoods could come together to share a meal, have some refreshments, and relax in a safe space.

However, no sooner had they opened their ministry than COVID hit. The sisters and volunteers sprang into action, developing and executing a contingency plan to distribute necessary meals to people in the neighborhoods who found themselves isolated and without work.

While practicing social distancing, the sisters and some volunteers took the opportunity to update their facility and prepare for the future. They continued to provide necessary packages to people that included food and household goods.

The value of helping and supporting the community is at the core of our mission. Every small gesture has a big impact on the people we serve. Today, the center is open five days a week and serves 180 guests per week. We serve a comprehensive spectrum of people who have a variety of needs and no other access to fulfill these needs.



Our aim is to elevate the people we serve. Today we focus on the needs of our guests and try to help them improve their quality of life. We have generous benefactors, but the need is vast, and we count on our donors for support.

Deo Gratias Ministries Detroit is a 501c3 nonprofit organization. We are headquartered in the former St. Jude Catholic Church Parish Center on East Seven Mile just west of Kelly Road.

Our mission is to provide unconditional hospitality to those in need.

We believe in the fundamental dignity of each person and all creation. We provide a ministry of presence in a welcoming, non-intrusive way. We attend to physical, social, and spiritual needs by providing a safe place in a disadvantaged neighborhood where guests can gather for refreshments, social interaction, support and help. With those we serve, we strive to find solutions to problems, making communities safer and happier places to live in.

**OUR CORE VALUES ARE:**  
Respect for Human Dignity  
Hospitality  
Compassion  
Solidarity  
Transformation

# A Message from Our Leadership Team



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The community we serve faces many challenges, including poverty, social discrimination, inadequate housing, broken social structure, economic depression, and an ineffective transportation system. Responding to these social issues, Deo Gratias Ministries (DGMD) opened its doors at St. Jude Church, located at Seven Mile and Kelly in Detroit, to bring change and lift up the surrounding area. We are committed to building a place full of possibilities, potential, and promise.

As a grassroots non-profit ministry in inner-city Detroit, DGMD's mission is to provide unconditional hospitality to those in need. We want to be an instrument of hope for the people we serve. Our staff and volunteers work daily to provide clients with love, compassion, and joy, but our success cannot be accomplished without your support and generosity. We count on you to partner with us on the journey to transform a community that has the potential to prosper and thrive.

During these difficult economic times, your support of our mission is critical for us. Through your commitment and generosity, Deo Gratias Ministries will become a beacon of hope for our clients.

Sincerely yours,

*Sr. Felicity Marie Madigan*

*S. Shelley M. Jeffrey*

## A Rich History and Legacy of Service

In 2014, several of our Felician sisters who were living and ministering in Livonia began to discuss the possibility of moving to Detroit to provide services for disadvantaged people.

The sisters were interested in establishing a small café where people could come for refreshments and companionship. The café would provide a way to build relationships with their guests and to understand their social, economic, and spiritual needs.

Sister Shelley, who was living in Toronto, Canada, heard of the proposal for a Detroit ministry and was very interested in the urban farming movement as a way of addressing the challenges of food insecurity,

especially in disadvantaged parts of the city. She also believed in the physical, mental and spiritual health benefits of gardening. The sisters in Livonia readily agreed to establish a community garden as part of the outreach ministry.

The Felician leadership supported this ministry proposal and established a convent in southwest Detroit. After initial exploration of the needs in different parts of the city, Sister Shelley and Sister Felicity were missioned to work full-time in developing the social outreach ministry. In 2018, Deo Gratias Ministries Detroit (DGMD) was established in as a nonprofit corporation in the State of Michigan. It was granted federal tax-exempt

charity status by the Internal Revenue Service in 2019.

In the late fall of 2018, the pastor and the parish council of St. Jude Parish in the Regent Park neighborhood of northeastern Detroit invited DGMD to base its outreach ministry at the parish center.

DGMD and St. Jude Parish, with support from the Archdiocese of Detroit, entered into a memorandum of understanding in the spring of 2019. The parish agreed to provide the use of the building at no cost while DGMD agreed to establish and operate the café in the building and the community garden on a nearby lot. Currently, funds are being raised for this project.

# Annual Report / Financial Summary

Since the inception of our mission, we have relied on the generosity of our donors and the efficiency of our services.

Deo Gratias delivers services to a significant number of the community in need with limited staff and dedicated volunteers who make the mission a success.

The vision and mission are vast, and the needs are surmountable, but the dedication of the leaders, staff, and volunteers will no doubt ensure the mission's expansion and future success.

## PANTRY STATISTICS SINCE JUNE 2022

Households Served TOTAL: 278

Individuals Served TOTAL: 703

Lbs. Donated TOTAL: 12,431

<b>2022 REVENUE</b>	<b>\$120,210.73</b>
Individual Donations	\$80,946.57
Corporate Donations	\$3,249.16
Foundation Donations	\$6,550.00
Religious Donations	\$6,965.00
Grants	\$15,000.00
Fundraising Income	\$7,500.00
<b>2022 EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$62,070.81</b>
Programs & Services	\$44,963.13
Administration	\$5,468.90
Fundraising	\$9,063.40
Building & Facility	\$206.27
Repairs/Maintenance	\$1,279.11
Capital Expenditures	\$1,090.00
<b>2022 NET REVENUE</b>	<b>\$58,139.92</b>

## Our Vision for Northeast Detroit

Deo Gratias Ministries is located in the former convent at St. Jude parish. The facility is in need of major renovations to better operate our ministry and serve our neighbors.

Our priority is to complete the renovation of the first floor. With the help of many volunteers, we've already begun the process, but we still need to renovate the kitchen, bathrooms, flooring, front entrance, tutoring rooms, windows and heating and cooling.

The updates are essential. We want to ensure our guests have an inviting environment where they can come for help and forget about their troubles.

In addition to the renovation, we need to create and expand programs to fit the needs of our guests. As we served our guests we realized that the needs are vast and require professional support.

We believe that our clients can be served best with professional staff along with kind volunteers. Currently, we have tutoring and art programs; to

sustain these programs, we must train and recruit more teachers and volunteers.

One of the most pivotal observations we witnessed while serving our customers was the lack of knowledge regarding the impact of nutrition on health. We therefore want to create healthy cooking classes for families and their children.

This coming summer, we will expand our vegetable garden. We already purchased the land across the street from our mission for this purpose. Volunteers from Habitat for Humanity built several raised beds. However, we still need to purchase equipment, including a protective fence, to ensure the success of our garden. The food planted in the garden will go directly to the people in the neighborhood.

Every donation helps. We want you to be our partners in this mission. Our vision cannot be achieved without your kindness. Please help us save our neighborhood. We are confident that with your help, we will make a difference in people's lives. Together we will!

# VolunteerPROFILE

## Retired police officer devoted to mission



*The three founders of Deo Gratias Ministries: Sister Shelley Marie, Sister Felicity Marie and Sister Mary Francis.*



*The Deo Gratias Cafe' was renovated with the help of several volunteers.*



*Curbside pickup was initiated during the height of the COVID pandemic.*



*Art classes are offered for both children and adults.*

John Kanitra, a former Dearborn police officer, first encountered the leaders of Deo Gratias (DGMD) at a fundraiser.

John and his wife have dedicated their lives to volunteerism since they retired.

He loved the concept of the ministry of presence and began to volunteer his time at the current site at St Jude on Seven Mile west of Kelly.

Although DGMD's mission did not include a food pantry as part of its services, Sister Felicity and Sister Shelley responded to the need of the community and began to provide food for the people in the area during the COVID-19 lockdown.

John and his wife organized a food drive in their subdivision. He began to deliver food to the center and started to spend more time on the mission. Soon, John was coming and helping out four times a week.

He saw the difference the sisters were making with their clients and was inspired by the ministry of presence.

"In a rough area of Detroit, I witnessed the ministry of presence and watched how it makes a difference. I've seen customers talking to the sisters privately. They shed tears, hold hands, and pray."

John is from Livonia, so he is not an eastsider, but he has become a familiar face in the neighborhood. People know his name. He developed a great friendship with the people he serves. People wave and smile at him, and they've developed trust. John is grateful that God has put all these people in his life.



He is grateful for the guests he serves, the volunteers who work with him, and the sisters who run the mission.

"I'm grateful that God has put all of these people in my life: our customers, our volunteers, and of course the sisters! I find myself thinking about them all the time. I feel happy when they are happy, frustrated when they are frustrated, and I worry about some of them."

DGMD is an evolving ministry. It is focused on the ministry of presence and constantly adapts in response to the needs of the people.

When the sisters asked John to serve as manager of the food pantry, he agreed to take on the responsibility.

"The food pantry is the latest venture built by the ministry. DGMD gives me a purpose in my retirement."

Like other volunteers, John looks forward to seeing some of the guests. He's developed friendships with a number of them.

John is excited for the future, the possibilities, and the growth of the mission.

# PatronPROFILE

## Spirituality drives Carmella to help



In the last few years, the world has seen the rebirth of Detroit. The renaissance of Detroit is indeed something to be celebrated.

Yet away from the chic neighborhoods, great restaurants, and bustling downtown are the neighborhoods that have been left behind, struggling to survive with limited resources, an inadequate transportation system, poverty, and urban decay.

Those who are interested to look closer at the people who live in these neighborhoods will find many jewels. Once such jewel is Carmella. Although left behind, she is a survivor. She is a spiritual woman, full of hope and determination.

Carmella came to Deo Gratias Ministries during COVID to pick up food for her and her family. Between greetings and small talks, she began to build relationships with the sisters.

When it was safe to open the center, Carmella began to hang around and talk to the other clients. She became hooked on the mission, asking if she could volunteer her time at the center.

Today, Carmella can be seen serving and talking to her neighbors on Tuesday or Friday.

She greets everyone by name and knows exactly what treats or drinks each client prefers.

She sometimes brings her granddaughter and a young couple who live with her and encourages them to participate in the art classes.

To encourage her neighbors to learn art, Carmella brings them to the class herself. During downtime, she tries to learn how to paint rocks and burn wood.

Through the center, she began to build relationships with her neighbors. This relationship created friendships outside the center.

“I now go to lunch with people in my neighborhood whom I got to know through Deo Gratias Ministries.” Carmella represents the possibility of perseverance and change.

She represents the soul of a community that refuses to give up and is only looking for an opportunity to be seen, respected, and overall received by love.

Deo Gratias Ministries is a place where people like Carmella can come and show their capability, love, spirit, and talent. They give love and are received by love.

Carmella’s energy, smiles, and small talk provide a welcoming atmosphere to the people who come to visit the center. She is not alone; there are many volunteers that come to the center from all walks of life, helping out in the café or the pantry.

Together, the leaders, staff, volunteers, and clients mold an atmosphere of love and respect.



*Family & friends help Deo Gratias with the online auction product distribution.*



*Volunteers help clean the kitchen at Deo Gratias Café.*



*Sr. Felicity Marie with volunteers packaging groceries for the drive-up food distribution.*



*Sr. Mary Francis driving the truck during the Habit of Kindness Fundraiser*

# We are grateful for your continued support.

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## How We Serve Our Neighbors

### Café

The café is open to guests Monday through Friday from 10 am - 2 pm. Snacks, baked goods, and drinks are available to the guests free of charge.

### Art Programs

The art program is held on Tuesdays from 12 pm - 2 pm. Students are currently enrolled in canvas painting and wood burning.

### Community Garden

The community garden consists of three raised beds next to the Deo Gratias Café. Different vegetables and herbs are planted in the spring through early fall.

### Choice Based Food Pantry

The food pantry is available by appointment only on Tuesdays and Fridays from 10 am - 2 pm. To schedule an appointment, guests can call 313-743-0477.

### Social Services

Guests in need of community resources can talk with Mrs. Lucy Avery-Walk, Case Manager at Deo Gratias Ministries Detroit, anytime Monday through Friday between 8:30 am - 4:00 pm.

... and more to come!



*Deo Gratias* Ministries Detroit

is located at 15879 E. Seven Mile, a few blocks west of Kelly Road, in Detroit.

Need more information?

Call us at 313-743-0477 or visit us at [www.dgmDetroit.org](http://www.dgmDetroit.org)

