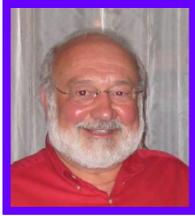


# Maria House Project

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## House Happenings

### Joe's Thoughts.....



Newsletter  
NOVEMBER 2017

Every third Sunday of the month at 12:30 p.m., Mass is celebrated at the Diocesan Lodge followed with a luncheon. Father Skip Davis, Msgr. Koos, Msgr. Swoger, Msgr. Bob Smith or Father Fischer have been the celebrants. Usually, 60 to 70 people attend. Also, every Thursday evening, at Saint Andrew's social hall in Erie, beginning at 5:15p.m. until 6:45p.m. a casserole dinner is served which is followed by a Bible Study. There is an average of 30 people who participate. The people who attend are present and past residents, volunteers, neighbors and friends of our ministry. Everyone is welcome to attend.

There is much interaction between the participants both on a personal, as well as, on a spiritual level. What I find intriguing is the large number of past residents who keep returning. As they enter the room, they greet each other with not only a hand shake but also an embrace. When I ask them why they keep returning, I hear comments such as "I want to give back", "Maria House saved my life", "It's like coming home", "I'm starting to slip and I need my brothers". Sometimes I see tears, more often I hear laughter but always I feel the warmth of the brotherhood. When they are leaving I hear "good bye" or "I love you guys, see you next week." Father Peterson's dream of establishing a brotherhood, I believe, has come to fruition. If you or your guest(s) would like to experience the Brotherhood of Maria House, give me a call.

*Joe Tarquinio* - Executive Director

Joe's granddaughter Schuyler Stupica, a junior at Kenyon College, wrote an article in the October edition of the Diocese of Erie Faith Magazine titled "Searching for Answers?" Not only is Joe proud of his granddaughter, but more importantly feels you will find the article interesting in understanding some of the questions that the younger generation has regarding their Catholic Faith.

Robert Lopez, who has been involved with MHP for many years, has volunteered to develop MHP's website. He is anticipating its completion during the Advent season. We welcome you to visit the website and give us feedback through the website "Contact Us" or call to help us better the future for countless families. The website is [mariahouseproject.org](http://mariahouseproject.org). Share the website on social media.

**FROM YOUR DEACON** ~ Greetings to all as we enter into our third week of Leisure of the Spirit seminar at the Hope House in Union City. We are focused on allowing God's spirit to speak to us in our hearts and guide us to deeper relationship with God. There is a beautiful hymn called *Gather Us In* which we often sing at the Lodge during Mass and prayer services. It speaks to the many different spiritualities we bring before God and especially at Maria House, the many who seek to know God on a more intimate level. It all begins with the unconditional love that God has for each one of us. The idea here is to surrender ourselves to God's care and love and as it says in Philippians 4:6-7 "Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Let us be patient with God and allow God's spirit to accomplish what God desires in all our lives.  
Peace,  
*Deacon Bill Sproveri*



Deacon Bill and Pat  
Sproveri

## Opioid Epidemic

By Sandi Matts

Over three-hundred-thousand Americans have lost their lives to opioid overdose since the year 2000. Erie County has had ninety-eight opioid-related deaths in the first eight months of 2017. These numbers continue to rise as drug-related fatalities take over as the leading cause of death in Americans younger than age fifty.

Joe Tarquinio, Executive Director of Maria House Project (MHP) comes face to face with this reality each and every day. The office phone, along with his personal cell phone, ring nonstop with pleas for help from prisons, family members and those active in their addiction. One might find this a daunting task, but Joe perseveres as he maintains the vision Fr. Peterson initiated in 1971, to build a caring community of servants who believe in the healing power of the Gospel. In the midst of this widespread crisis, Maria House offers a place of respite, support, acceptance and hope.

Addiction is a disease of isolation and the longer one stays detached and alone, the deeper they progress into their disease. As they lose their connections with family and friends, their feelings of self-worth become almost non-existent.

The spiritual component offered through MHP, is an essential tool in the recovery process. As men begin to re-connect and discover or grow their relationships with God and with each other, a change of heart takes place. Once they learn to depend upon their spirituality and associate with positive influential people, they find a renewed strength and their isolation diminishes and healing begins to take place.

Gratitude and giving back through Community Service are significant in maintaining long-term sobriety. MHP is grateful for the men who have made their home with us and who have worked so hard to transform their lives. Six former-residents now serve as vital members of the MHP staff. Collectively they celebrate sixty-seven years in sobriety. These men are the backbone of MHP, leading through example with respect and dignity for those they serve.

When men first come to Maria House they reside at The Lodge, in Spartanburg, PA, anywhere from three months to two years. Upon completion of the program, they have the option of transitioning into an MHP autonomous living center. Currently there are seven men (MHP graduates) who live at the Wilkum House in Erie, PA. As a group they celebrate twenty-six years in recovery.

Throughout the past 46 years, MHP has followed the philosophy of their Founder, Father Peterson who said: "Our job is to plant the seed, accept the men where they are, and let God do the rest." Success does not come to everyone, but everyone is offered the opportunity for success. Sometimes men leave the program and return to their addictive lifestyles. Some of them are sadly part of the statistics we read about in the opening paragraph. Others leave, and then return for a new beginning, after God has watered the seed.

Recently many of us attended the funeral of Ted Denny. He was one of the men Fr. Peterson was talking about with the watering of the seed. It was his second stay at Maria House where he fully committed and transformation took place. As a former Military man, Ted had great leadership skills and eventually became a trusted member of the MHP core staff. He served as house manager and had a genuine concern for the welfare of the residents. Through example he helped them understand that no matter how many times they failed, positive change was still possible.

Ted became MHP's first *poet laureate*, giving God all glory and praise for His new found freedom. His poetry, like Ted himself, was a spark of light in a darkened world. He wrote a poem entitled "Miracle" which became the theme of his celebration of life. Ted lived eight years in sobriety and was a walking "Miracle" for so many.

When fully active in his addiction, Ted and his family had become estranged and he feared that they would never be able to forgive him. He prayed often for God's forgiveness and asked for divine intervention. Through the grace of a loving God, reconciliation did take place and Ted had a couple of good years with his family before cancer took his life. Ted's hospital room was filled with family as he took his final breath, such a beautiful testimony to God's love. When Ted met Our Lord, face to face, I am sure God said, well done...welcome home my good and faithful servant.

Overcoming opioid addiction and maintaining long-term sobriety is achievable, but only through a relationship with God...or a Higher Power. Maria House residents have learned they must stay connected with a positive, Christ-loving community and channel their energy into living a life led by the Spirit. At first men struggle to forgive themselves for the choices they've made, but once they're able to forgive and accept, they become grateful for their journey and a God who loves them... just where they are.



Ted Denny

If you are like me, you rarely answer your home phone (land line) these days in an attempt to avoid another unwanted "robo call" interrupting your dinner and a person attempting to sell you some unwanted item!

Although our annual **Phone-A-Thon** has existed for many years, in recent years our volunteer callers find that they are getting more answering machine responses to their once-a-year calls since many of you are avoiding those unwanted calls too! People seem to be relying more and more on their cell phones as an alternative. If you have abandoned your land line or prefer a call on an alternate number, please advise our caller or update your information when you forward your pledge donation.

We find that our callers are leaving increasingly more messages on answering machines rather than having the pleasure of speaking to you. So when your phone rings on **Thursday, November 9, 2017 between 6 and 8 PM**, it will likely be a Maria House Project Phone-A-Thon volunteer calling to ask for a pledge. We'd love to talk to you personally! If we are unable to contact you, please consider making a donation with the enclosed envelope.

Please remember us in your prayers and in your generosity. We depend on you to keep us going! Our sincere thanks and God's blessings to you in advance!

*Tom Peterson - President*



*Tom Peterson*

Our ministry requires us to transport residents to various medical, dental, counseling, etc. appointments. Most of our vehicles have been driven over 150,000 miles and are larger vans. MHP is in need of 2 smaller vehicles to transport up to 3 residents. If you can help in any way, please contact us.

### **Phone-A-Thon**

**Nov. 9, from 6 - 8PM**

All funds go directly to spiritual and therapeutic programs for over 70 residents at our 3 locations each year. May God bless you abundantly for your generosity!



Andrew "Andy" Davis's journey into recovery started with a fractured relationship with his family with little to no support system. When he had reached 30 years of age, he literally had nothing left in a physical, moral, or spiritual sense and so asked his Dad if he could help get him into another recovery program. His dad was on the phone immediately and after that phone call he told Andy to pack his bags and he was on his way to Maria House Project (MHP). His dad opened the door to his recovery by sending him to the MHP where he found a support system for his spiritual, mental and physical recovery from addiction. MHP became a second family, who showed him how to get well and heal his troubles with his immediate family.

He is now part of a brotherhood of men who support him and allow him to feel like he belongs in a community and family of spiritually gifted people. Every Wednesday he is able to go back to the MHP's Diocesan Lodge where he teaches a 12 step class with his father Tim Davis helping the members of the Lodge deal with addiction issues. By giving back and volunteering with his father, he feels richly rewarded with an overwhelming feeling of support and unity. His dad has been a recovered alcoholic for 22 years and was the family catalyst to show him the way to the MHP and ultimately God's loving family.



Andy Davis & Will Bergkamp

He now volunteers to inspire the support and family he was given. Without the support of his father and the MHP, he says that he is just one person but with their support he has become a miracle. Andy is now a senior at Edinboro University and has taken 21 classes since he left MHP and has gotten 20 A's and one B+. His goal is to get a Masters in Social Work and help others in recovery. His family is back in his life and during the summer, he is employed as a cook at the Golden Coral in Erie. Andy believes that God's family, the MHP's family and his father saved his life and together they make miracles happen.

We are proud to announce that Andy Davis received the *2017 Susan P. Esper Man of the Year Award* from the Mental Health Association of NWPA.

# MARIA HOUSE PROJECT

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The fourth annual Father Peterson Memorial Golf Tournament was another sold out success with 144 golfers teeing off on a bright, sunny September 16, 2017 morning at the beautiful Union City Country Club! The annual tournament was initiated in 2014 by members of the St. Thomas More Club (founded by Father Peterson while teaching at Gannon College) and Maria House Project volunteers and friends. The purpose of the tournament is to memorialize and celebrate "Father Pete" and to perpetuate Father's dream, Maria House Project. In those terms, the day couldn't have been more successful! Great food, fun, prizes and fellowship and of course great golf with all proceeds benefiting Maria House Project!

Marty Radock, St. Thomas More Club member and MHP volunteer and his wife Linda headed up the tournament committee once

again sacrificing many hours over the summer months to assure for a first class outing! The tournament would not be possible without the dedication of the committee and their ability to solicit wonderful and generous sponsors and donors who believe in the mission of MHP. Our thanks and prayers go out to all of those involved that resulted in a profit in excess of \$12,000 to MHP and to keeping Father's dream alive! As Marty Radock would say, "Father Pete is smiling"!

We are confident that God too continues to smile upon everyone who has supported MHP in the many ways that you do! Keep the date open for next year's tournament on September 15, 2018!

