

MARIA HOUSE

+ PROJECT +

A Community of Hope & Healing



Fr. Pete

Newsletter - November 2024

Maria House Project

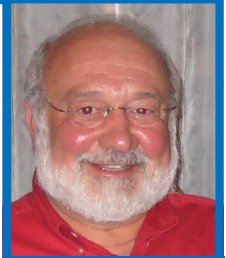
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Joe Tarquinio

I had the privilege of living at Father Pete's house during the last two months of his life. The week before he entered the Kingdom, he asked me if I would continue to run the ministry. I assured him that as long as I was physically able, I would be honored to help the ministry continue. He then reached out, grabbed my hand, and promised that he would continue to be with me in spirit. He made that promise 11 1/2 years ago and he continues to keep his promise.

Unfortunately, for the past two years, because of my age (I'll be 78 next month), I realized that I was physically declining. I was worried about who would lead the ministry if I became incapacitated or died. Consequently, we (the Board) prayed and interviewed possible candidates. As it usually happens, God and probably Father Pete, sent us the perfect candidate in Tim Joncas. You can read about Tim in the following articles. I am no longer concerned about the future of the ministry. As a matter of fact, I believe the ministry will reach a higher plateau spiritually and therapeutically.

I want you to know that I am not leaving the ministry. Actually, I will be working in conjunction with the "God Squad": Deacon Joe Cicero, Marty Radock, Dave Capan and Skip Glover to expand the spiritual program. I'll also be providing pastoral counseling to the individual residents. Tim will take over the administrative duties and also enhance the treatment program.

The past twenty-five years have been the best of my life. I love MHP like I love my own family. I've had the privilege of serving over 2,000 men and hope that I have helped many of them grow spiritually and maintain their sobriety. The mere fact that they call me "Papa Joe" tells me that they look to me as a father image and that brings great joy to my soul.

I have to say that the men have also taught me many things, but most of all, they have taught me the virtue of perseverance. Like David, we all have our Goliath. For the men of MHP, their Goliath comes every day. However, MHP teaches them how to pick up a stone that will slay their Goliath. A mantra I use is "if you focus on your Goliath, you will stumble, but if you focus on God, your Goliath will tumble".

Please welcome Tim to our ministry and continue to pray for the men, staff and volunteers. Your reward will be eternal.

Joe Tarquinio - Spiritual Director

“Autumn Wisdom”

Sandi Matts - Vice President



Autumn Wisdom was the theme this year at the annual retreat at Joe Tarquinio's camp on September 26, 2024. Hopefully as you look at the picture to the left, you can sense a bit of the peace and tranquility experienced on that brisk fall day.

After beginning with song and prayer, the day opened with a series of three talks breaking down Autumn Wisdom: Fall Leaves and their Changing Colors, by Sandi Matts; Preparing for Winter, by John Matts; and Acorns, the Symbol of New Life, by Sharon Kestler.

Fall reminds us that we are all part of nature. We are intimately connected with each other, with the flowers, trees, birds, animals and all living things that God created. God intends for all living beings to go through cycles, or seasons of life. Just like we read in Ecclesiastes 3: *“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens”*, which was the scripture verse for the day.

The retreat was attended by past and current residents, volunteers, MHP Staff and guests. After listening to the talks and relaxing with a guided meditation, everyone was encouraged to spend time in nature, in silence, listening to what it is that God may be challenging them to change or transform. Everyone was encouraged to look for a leaf that may have a symbolic message for them, or to reflect on the message of the acorn to see if they could recognize their own potential for growth.

Upon returning from their time of silence, participants shared about their experience, and how the leaves they chose spoke directly to them. It was interesting to hear about the leaf selection process. One young man had his eye on a leaf and was so determined to get that one that he slid down the embankment and into the creek. He came back soaked, but he had a fantastic story which we will all remember forever. We were each reminded that when you take time to listen God speaks directly to your soul.

Some brought back leaves that were all brown, signifying how they felt when they first got to Maria House. Then they shared their second leaf with beautiful reds and yellows, which was more reflective of how they felt after time at the Lodge. They recognized holes in the leaves, and blemishes or spots and called them reminders of the dark times, but the bright colors around the holes gave them hope for the future. Some had leaves still half green and half colored, signifying their transformation was not yet complete, but they recognized God's Grace and Love.

One resident who struggled with painful memories of his family, had a message from a family member that “now was his time”. He felt this was a message from the Holy Spirit calling him to make a spiritual commitment. He talked about feeling called to be baptized.

It was a wonderful day, ending with a communion service by Deacon Joe Cicero. Hopefully as the season continues, Autumn Wisdom will carry on, filling us with Light and Love, so our true colors shine bright and we recognize our purpose...to love one another.



Sandi Matts

WELCOME our new EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TIM JONCAS!

Dear Maria House Project Family,

I'm writing with exciting news about important changes and staff enhancements at Maria House Project.

In April, we celebrated Joe Tarquinio's 25th anniversary as Executive Director! We are so happy for Joe and so fortunate for his longtime commitment to service on behalf of our men. For the past several years we have prayerfully worked toward finding the right person to succeed Joe in the Executive Director role so as to allow Joe the opportunity to step back from day-to-day administrative duties. We are blessed and pleased to announce that Tim Joncas has been appointed as our new Executive Director. Tim emerged as a candidate for the role earlier this year at the encouragement of Marty Radock, MHP Board member and longtime volunteer focused on the spiritual development of our men. Marty knows Tim well through their participation together in the Kairos Prison Ministry, and Tim has known many of our men as well as our staff members for more than ten years through his own participation alongside them in AA and NA recovery programs.

While Joe will be stepping back from his daily administrative duties of MHP, his work will be fully committed to our men's spiritual development. We are so fortunate that he will be staying on in his new role as Spiritual Director. Deacon Joe Cicero will continue his excellent work as our Chaplin. In addition to helping Tim transition into the Executive Director role, Joe will focus his time on the ministry and healing aspects of our program. Put another way, in his new role, Joe will be free to do more of what he loves most - - spending time with our men and helping them on their spiritual journey.

You'll hear more from Tim and Joe in this newsletter, but I wanted to share this important staff enhancement news with you. I know that I speak for our Board of Directors when I say that I'm so pleased with our transition plan, knowing that we have ongoing continuity in our leadership and, most importantly, an even stronger support system for our men. God is good!

On behalf of the men we serve and our Board of Directors, I also wanted to express our sincere gratitude for your amazing generosity during Erie Gives Day on August 13th. Thanks to you, Maria House Project achieved another record level of contributions this year. We ranked #14 out of 500+ non-profit agencies. To receive such support from you through your generous gifts and continued prayers is truly humbling. Thank you for being a partner in preserving Father Peterson's dream of caring for your brothers in their time of need. Your rewards will be eternal!

As you know, MHP has only two major fundraising initiatives each year; Erie Gives in August and our traditional Phone-A-Thon in November. It is already that time again that I must ask you to prayerfully consider supporting our ministry during our 2024 Phone-A-Thon. You will soon be receiving our Phone-A-Thon mailing regarding that initiative or you can use the self addressed envelope enclosed in this newsletter to send your gift. Maria House Project continues to exist only through the caring generosity that you extend to our men. Father Pete's approach with his ministry was always simple and austere but very rich in faith and spirituality. Maria House has always followed Father's approach in serving our men in their time of need. Miraculous, life saving results follow in the lives of our men when they find Christ and begin to heal their wounds! Please join us again in caring for the men who call Maria House Project home.

May God Bless you!

Bob Boeh - Board President



Bob Boeh

Dan Brennan - Faithful Steward

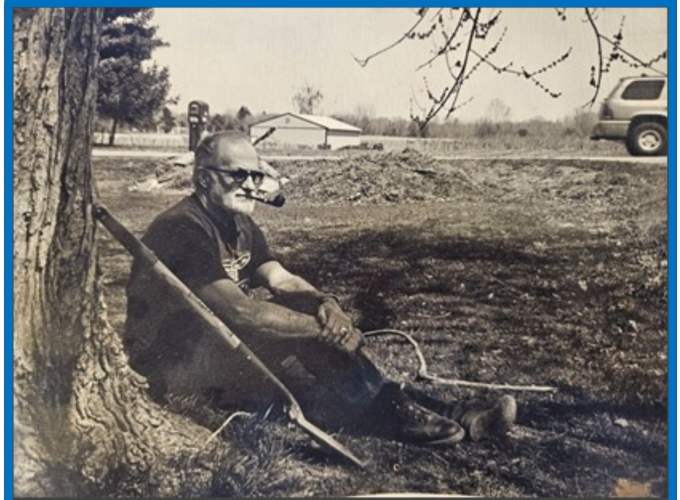
Sandi Matts - Vice President

Dan will always be an integral part of the history of Maria House. He is described as intellectual, eccentric, eclectic, compassionate, honest, tough, independent, wise, humorous and creative.

Dan was the oldest of six children and part of a large Irish Catholic family which he loved so much. He is survived by his wife of thirty-three years, his children, grandchildren, brothers and sisters. He served in the Air Force for four years and earned bachelor's and master's degrees on the GI Bill. Reading, history, motorcycles and antique cars were among his greatest interests. Dan began his career teaching History at Harborcreek, then worked as a counselor at Hamot Hospital, before making his way to the Counselor and House Manager position at the Lodge.

His brother Tim said, "Dan was a role model for me. Even though there were ten years between us and he was gone for most of my life, Dan led from a distance." Tim described how they got to know each other as adults. He was proud of his brother's accomplishments, especially within the recovery community. He said, "Dan was one of the most influential people in recovery because he spoke their language, so they listened."

Early on in his recovery, Dan met Father Pete who sponsored him for the very first Cursillo in 1963. Dan described that weekend as life-altering, which eventually led to employment at the Lodge, where he served for over thirty years. Both Joe Tarquinio and Will Bergkamp, current Lodge Manager, said Dan was their mentor. "He knew a lot about recovery and he was tough on the guys. He wasn't about being their friend, he was about honesty and told the guys what they needed to hear. He gave no one a break, sometimes he got under their skin but once the men got it... they grew to love and appreciate Dan and acknowledged him as one of the most positive influences in their recovery."



Ace Ferry, a member of the MHP community, said "Dan was unique. He had a lot of character. He never bit his tongue. He said what you needed to hear in a stern but loving and gentle way. He had a heart of compassion and I am so grateful for him".

Dan's legacy at the Lodge, among other things, will live on through the Thursday afternoon *Music Group*, which he created. Through pictures of musicians, quotes from their lyrics and listening to the music, the men learned to share and open up about the why and how of their addiction. Dan believed music touched their souls and helped them to relate to recovery in their own life.

Whether you knew Dan or not, I am sure by reading this article, you understand how instrumental he was in the MHP community. The men I interviewed described Dan as a traveler. He traveled through life at his own pace, in his own way. His motto was, never pack... stuff just gets in your way. If you need something, pick it up along the way. I hear Fr. Pete's influence in that statement, leading us to understand what's important in our life: Love of God, Love of Life and the people He places in it. If we learn to trust, all we need will be provided.

Dan passed away on September 18, 2024, surrounded by the family he loved so much. His obituary said he had an unwavering commitment to help others. In 1 Peter 4:10-11 we read: *Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.* Dan lived his life as a faithful steward, freely sharing his gifts, and God certainly showered His Grace upon him. Rest in Peace Dan and enjoy your time in the Kingdom.

Dale Anderson - Gift of Presence

Sandi Matts - Vice President

Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love. This quote by Saint Mother Teresa sums up the way Dale Anderson lived his life daily, serving the Lord he loved so much.

Sitting at the kitchen table (Dale's office) with a cup of coffee in hand, is where Dale did his finest work for the past ten years as the Manager of the Wilkum House. He shared freely his faith, love and wisdom. Many lives have been saved around that table. In a quote from John Krahne, he writes "Dale has helped many men recover from drugs, alcoholism, homelessness, incarceration, and would give you the shirt off his back. He has helped me to get right with myself and my walk with God. He has had a huge impact on helping me become the man I am today, I am forever grateful."



This is the man we have all come to know and love. His passing on Saturday, October 19th, leaves a great hole in the Maria House family. I personally considered Dale a good friend and am deeply saddened by this tragic loss. We had some great conversations at Thursday night Bible Studies and at the Leisure in the Spirit sessions which I am going to miss so much. Dale was an intellectual and had a deep spiritual approach to his faith. He was always among the first to share, encouraging others to open up to the wisdom and to share from their experience.

I asked the men from Tenth Street how they would describe Dale. They said, "Whatever was in Dale's head is what came out." That is the truth! Dale was upfront and honest with the men who found their way to Maria House, sharing what they needed to hear in their recovery. He supported and cared deeply for all sent his way. Dale was an advocate for recovery, and for those who suffered with mental health he was a spiritual counselor, and his greatest gift which he shared so freely, was "Presence."

Dale had a passion for life. He walked by Faith and was strengthened by his beliefs. He loved Maria House, his family, Cursillo, cooking, golf, history, the military, politics and the Cleveland Browns, and he loved talking about all of them. When he deeply believed in something, he gave one hundred percent of himself, confidently articulating his viewpoint.

A tragic accident claimed Dale's life and injured two of his closest friends, Dave and Rich. The Maria House family, along with Dale's two daughters, Dayle and Dana, gathered at the Lodge the day after Dale's passing to pray for healing. Father Fischer and Father Swoger concelebrated a Mass which helped us all to begin the mourning process. Dale will be greatly missed but he leaves behind a legacy to model: To treat others with respect and kindness and to do small things every day which add up to great love.

Dale is survived by his mother, his two sons and daughters, his grandchildren, his brother and sisters, and the whole Maria House Family. Rest in peace dear friend, until we meet again. We are grateful for your presence in our lives, you will never be forgotten.



Prayer is a central part of being a Christian. Months ago, a Maria House Project volunteer approached me to say that many of his peers had been praying about enhancing the mission by bringing on another staff member to work with Joe Tarquinio, much as Joe did when he joined with Father at MHP 25 years ago. He said that my name, through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, had been the center of their prayers.

I surrendered my life to the Lord in December of 2010. That's when I became sober. I had spent years struggling with an addition to alcohol and drugs. In January of 2011, I entered a 5-day a week commitment to AA and NA. Unbeknownst to me, four of the current MHP counselors were attending the same meetings.



Tim Joncas



In 2014, I became a member of the Kairos Prison Ministry Team, whose mission is to bring Christ to those incarcerated. Twice a year, I participate in a 4-day retreat, where we enter regional prisons. There, we work like the first Apostles to lift the men from their darkness.

I grew up in Corry and attended St. Thomas Grade School, where I received my Sacraments of Initiation into the Church. I'm married to my wife of 25 years, Anna, and have been blessed with two children, who are now in their 20's.

For 38 years I have worked in sales and advertising: Corry Journal, Jameson Publishing, etc. I enjoyed my work, but knew that I was being called to a spiritual ministry, one that would reach out to those who had or are suffering with the same addictions that I did.

Though I never met Father Peterson, I feel his spirit and his legacy. He must have been a God-send to all who knew him. Like Father Pete, I want to walk in the Lord's path and be His hands, feet, and voice among the men.

With the MHP Board of Directors, we've developed a vision for me to work alongside Joe to assure the continuity of care for our men in the tradition of our founder, Father Pete. Though I don't completely understand God's plan for me, I do know that His call will be challenging and rewarding. To God be all glory and praise!

Tim Joncas - Executive Director

B-I-N-G-O IS BACK

Join **MHP** at the **JPTF Events Center** for **TWO Cash Bingo Events** in 2025!

Sunday, March 9
AND
Sunday, Sept. 28



Watch the
MHP website
and JPTF
Facebook Bingo
page for more
details!



Truly Blessed

Note: This appeal note was written by Father Peterson and appeared in the October, 2011 edition of the Maria House Project newsletter. We thought you might enjoy reading Father's words since they apply to today's Phone-A-Thon just as much as they did 13 years ago in 2011!



Phone-A-Thon



Some 35 years ago, I was attending a seminar. As participants gathered in the lobby over coffee and were getting to know one another, a man looked at my name tag which included the agency with which we were affiliated. He inquired, "Maria House.....what is your funding source?" I replied, "the Holy Spirit!" With a rather puzzled look on his face, he moved on! What was confusing to him, was clear to me!

Indeed, the Holy Spirit has been the funding source of Maria House over the years. The Holy Spirit has worked through those of you who have supported us through your prayers and contributions.

On the evening of Wednesday, November 10, 2011, Maria House Project will conduct our annual Phone-A-Thon. We are grateful for your past support which allows us to continue God's work with troubled men in our community. For your convenience, we have included a pre-addressed envelope in this newsletter for your tax exempt donation. With the continued economic difficulties this year, your support is more important than ever! Allow the Holy Spirit to come into your heart! My gratitude and prayers are with you.

Father Peterson



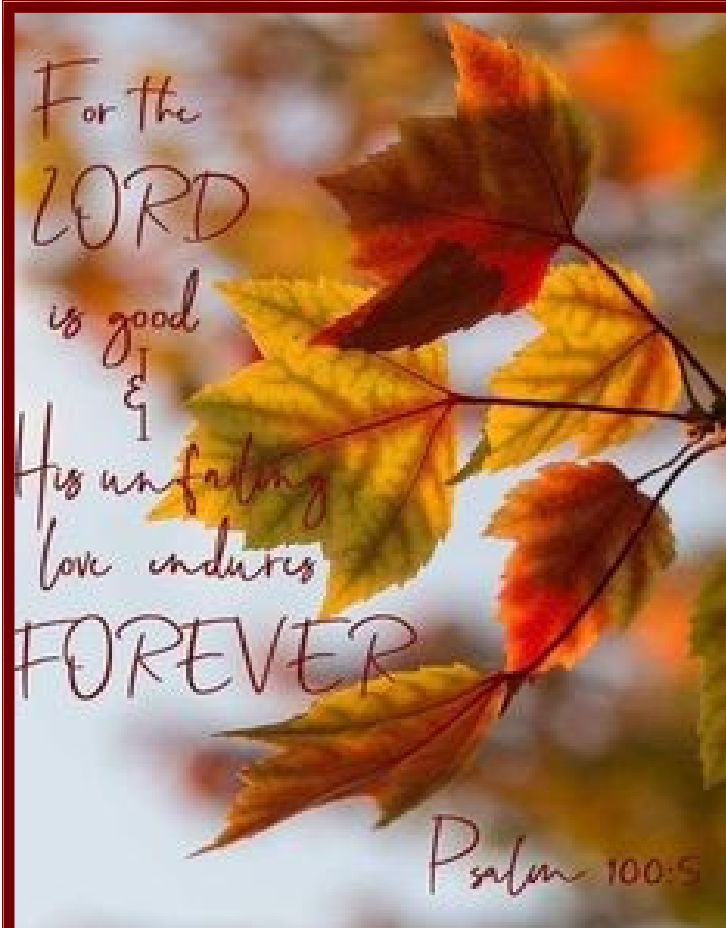
IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution

HELP MARIA HOUSE WITH A GIFT FROM YOUR IRA

A Qualified Charitable Distribution from your IRA can help both you and Maria House continue Father Pete's legacy. IRS rules allow a person age 70 1/2 to make a distribution directly from their IRA to Maria House tax free. Further, if you are age 73 or older and are required to take a minimum required distribution (RMD), the amount that you donate will count towards your RMD and be tax free. This is a great way to support Maria House and at the same time fulfill your required minimum distribution without having to pay tax. The maximum amount that you can treat as a qualified charitable distribution is currently \$105,000 annually, or \$210,000 for married couples, both with IRA's, and filing joint returns.

It is easy to set up a Qualified Charitable Distribution, but it's important to follow the rules. The Qualified Charitable Distribution must go directly from your IRA trustee to Maria House by either electronic payment or check. An electronic payment or check that is sent directly to the account owner is not a Qualified Charitable Distribution. For more details, contact your IRA trustee or a tax professional. Remember, working out the details may take some time so be sure to make arrangements with your IRA trustee well before the end of the year.

MARIA HOUSE PROJECT
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"Duc in altum!" (Put out into the deep!) These words ring out for us today, and they invite us to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future with confidence."

Pope St. John Paul II