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with us!
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Join us for
Winter Walk
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HAPPENINGS

January 2022
Vol. 32, No. 1

News & Notes from St. Margaret's House ~ Improving the Lives of Women and Children

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me.

~ Matthew 25:35-36

Finding comfort and strength

“St. Margaret’s House helps me tremendously,” Trudy said on a recent sunny but chilly winter afternoon. “Everyone here listens to me. I can come here and cry and know that I can find comfort.”

Finding comfort was especially important to her this past year. She says, “I have never been through more in one year in my life.” For many years, Trudy cared for her brother Mark who died in July after a long and painful struggle with cancer. She tears up as she speaks about the overwhelming grief of watching him suffer, then losing him.

Also last year, Trudy learned that she had two brain aneurysms and underwent surgery. Then in October, she came down with COVID. “I have never been sicker,” she said.

Through all of last year, Trudy continued to come to St. Margaret’s House. “You are here to help us. The staff lights up our lives.” Trudy enjoys being with other women, listening to their stories, and helping others. Sometimes, just being able to get warm and have a hot meal makes a big difference in her day.

“Many of us have sad lives and nobody knows all of it. We come here to be together. St. Margaret’s House gives me strength.”

Our work with Trudy and so many women and children in our community is made possible by your support. Please join us for our annual **Winter Walk**, a one-mile walk of solidarity with our guests whose means of transportation is their feet, no matter the weather. This year’s event will include both virtual and in-person options. Learn more and register at stmargarethouse.org



Trudy enjoys time with her granddaughter.



When Trudy worked at the County-City Building, she met former South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg.

Photos provided.



Winter Walk Sunday, February 20

IN-PERSON WALK: On-site registration opens at 1:30pm at the County-City Building (227 W. Jefferson). The walk begins at 2:30pm with a one-mile route through downtown South Bend, ending at St. Margaret’s House for cookies and hot cocoa.

VIRTUAL WALK: February 13 – 20

Walk a mile anytime, anywhere during the week and post your photos with #SMHWinterWalk

REGISTER NOW
stmargarethouse.org



28,254
meals served

2021

BY THE NUMBERS



173
kids received
school supplies



2,610
Christmas gifts
distributed



Volunteer with us in 2022!

The work of St. Margaret's House is an interwoven tapestry of guests, staff, donors, and **volunteers**. In 2022, we hope that you will join us in this work. As we increase in-person services for our guests, we are in great need of volunteers.

OUR CURRENT VOLUNTEER NEEDS:

Kitchen

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays: 9:45am–12:45pm
Prepare food, serve, and clean up after mealtime.

Front Desk

Thursdays: 12:45–3pm
Greet guests, answer the phone, and distribute toiletries, diapers, and other items. Some data entry work.

Clothes Closet

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays:
9:45am–12pm
Help guests select clothing items.

In-Kind Donations

Any day or time: Mondays–Fridays 10am–4pm
Sort donated items and stock the Clothes Closet.

Winter Walk

Sunday, February 20
12:30–2:30pm *Assist with registration.*
1–4pm *Kitchen helpers: make cookie trays and hot cocoa for the post-walk celebration.*

Volunteer orientation sessions are held frequently, offering an introduction to St. Margaret's House, time to meet staff and other volunteers, and a tour of the building, including areas where you will be working.

To learn more, please visit our website: stmargarethouse.org under "What We Need" to submit a short form OR contact Mary Fran Brandenberger at maryfran@stmargarethouse.org or 574.234.7795.



5,903
hours
volunteered



FAQs: Donating items

What items do guests need most right now?

We need seasonal women's and children's clothing that is clean and in good condition. Please do not bring items with excessive wear, tears, stains, missing buttons, broken zippers, etc. We accept only new socks and underwear.

Do you accept household items?

Linens—towels, sheets, and blankets—are helpful. Small kitchen appliances (in good repair) and pots & pans are practical, too. Many of our guests walk or ride the bus, and small easy-to-carry items are most appreciated. Because we focus on meeting immediate needs, trinkets and home décor are not useful.

What about children's items?

Due to safety regulations, we are unable to accept car seats. Please call ahead if you have baby items you wish to donate. Please: no toys or stuffed animals.

Why do you accept donations only on Thursdays? And why can we only bring one bag at a time?

We have been amazed and overwhelmed by the generosity of our community! Because of the pandemic, we have a reduced number of volunteers to help us sort and distribute items (to help, please see information to the left). We have a limited amount of storage space and are not able to save items for different seasons.

How can I help most?

Please donate clean items in good condition that are on our current list of needs (on our website). Thank you for helping us to serve our guests with dignity and respect!



Thank you to South Bend Symphony Orchestra for collecting 418 pairs of new socks for our guests at their "Home for the Holidays" concerts in December.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Responding and walking together in love



A colleague recently gifted me a beautiful, framed print of a zebra, created by local artist Erica Fleischer. I hung the print in a prominent place on my office wall where, with a glance, it reminds me of the important work we do at St. Margaret's House.



Erica Fleischer

Scientists have discovered that zebras have remarkable instincts for responding to trauma. When a zebra escapes a life-threatening situation, the larger group of zebras circles around her so that she can literally shake off the trauma and move on with life.

In November, the granddaughter of one of our guests was killed by gun violence in South Bend. The morning after the shooting, this grandmother, still numb with shock, came to us. She forced herself out of bed and out of the house because she knew she needed the support of our community in her grief. In the prayer circle before lunch, she told the other women what had happened. They immediately and instinctively tightened the circle around her and literally held her up as she crumpled.

This is what we do at St. Margaret's House. We support women when the unthinkable happens, and walk with them through it. Trauma leaves binding scar tissue in its wake. We gently massage that scar tissue and help loosen its grip on a woman's life. We do this by way of a listening ear, non-judgment, education, and—most importantly—love.

Our many faithful and generous donors and volunteers make our difficult, yet beautiful, work possible. As I transition into my new role as director here, I am continually humbled by the trust and confidence that you all have in the good work we do. I pray for God's guidance so that St. Margaret's House can continue to be worthy of your support.

~Katie Elliot, M.Div., Ph.D., Executive Director

St. Margaret's House *Happenings* is published quarterly by the Board of St. Margaret's House, Michelle Bryant, President.

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The scarf used in the design of this newsletter was created by a SMH Silk Creations volunteer.



117 N. LAFAYETTE BLVD.
SOUTH BEND, IN 46601

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574.234.7795

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