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*September 2020*

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## **A Message from the President**

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who makes HTN such a special organization to volunteer our time and efforts. Whether you are a board member, committee chair, donor, or one of our many movers and shakers, I am incredibly grateful for all that you do to make HTN successful in helping the neediest of the needy.

The last 6 months have looked different for every organization and I am proud to be part of an organization that has effectively moved forward, even during the most difficult times of the pandemic. We are well positioned to have a strong end to the year and prepared to restart our "Beds for Kids" program for the families at the Willard School, Shepherd School, and Visitation Community Center. And it is great to see that our we are back to full operations for our furniture team.

In this edition of our quarterly newsletter, you'll learn more about our family advocates who are a key piece of our furniture operations. Their good works allow us to work smoothly with the families throughout the furniture delivery process. They are just one of the many groups that are "in the weeds," doing the work needed for us to help others. Some of our teams are more visible than others, but all are part of a highly integrated process that make good things happen for our ministries. May God's blessings continue be with all of us!

Please take a few minutes to read this newsletter and, most importantly, keep helping any way you can. Take care.



## **Get to Know Our HTN Family Advocates & Coordinator**

Whether you're newer to our ministry or have been involved for a while now, you know that our furniture operations are at the heart of the request for furniture process. What you might not know, however, is that the process includes not only our furniture operations team but also our team of family advocates. We recently sat down (virtually of course) with Cheryl Muller, our coordinator of family advocates, to tell us more about the family advocates and their role in the process of providing for those we serve.

### ***Can you describe HTN's ministry process, and your personal role and the role of the advocates in it?***

Our family advocates are the primary contact with the family in need from the time a ministry request is received until the furniture and home goods are delivered. In the beginning, an advocate will reach out to the family via phone, text or email and/or may need to work with the point of contact at the ministry or an interpreter. Their first mission will be to confirm the items mentioned in their request and ask if the family needs any additional furniture or home goods. From there, they will verify the address, type of home and other details needed by our delivery crew captains, in order for them to have everything they need to safely deliver the items. After delivery, an advocate will follow-up with the family to ask how the delivery process went and to ensure their needs have been met. As you can see, advocates are an important and constant means of communication for the families.

As Family Advocates Coordinator, I assign families in need to an HTN Family Advocate who volunteers to help with that session and send them the ministry request forms. I

***What has been the most memorable experience to date for you as the advocate coordinator?***

I first volunteered to be a Family Advocate myself back in January 2018 and after that first session, Tom Moore asked me to consider the role I hold today. As an advocate myself, I found it so rewarding to be able to help each family in a very personal way by providing everyday items that we often take for granted. As we know from our ministry, far too many families are without beds to sleep in or a table and chairs to dine at with their families – two activities that are so basic and essential to our lives. Some have absolutely nothing whether it's because they've moved from a homeless shelter or lost everything in a fire. HTN Ministry makes it even more personal by delivering an age appropriate toy for each child and non-perishable food.

The most memorable experience for me is still connecting with families personally – learning their situations and helping provide them with some of the things they so desperately need. HTN coordinates with more than 20 ministries and works with several partners in the Greater Philadelphia area to obtain mattresses, toys and food for these families.

***Who are our family advocates?***

Lorraine Byrne, Mary Hicks, Hanna Kim, Joe Klemmer, Denise Maida, Terry Scollin, Lauren Steele, Peggy Stohler, and Maureen & Ron Theis. We could not do all that we do without them!

We thank Cheryl and all of our family advocates for their commitment to these families. This personal touch makes a difference in each of their lives. It is important that we are respectful of their circumstances and seek to understand. We work alongside the ministries in providing a special experience for their families. This is what makes HTN such a unique ministry.

If you are interested in joining the team of advocates, please contact Cheryl Muller or Kathy Morris.

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## New Ministry: Visitation Homes

HTN is excited to welcome a new ministry, Visitation Homes. Located on 2638 Kensington Avenue in Philadelphia, Visitation Homes is a housing program within the Housing and Homeless Division of [Catholic Social Services](#). In response to the need to provide affordable housing for women transitioning from homelessness due to domestic violence, Visitation Homes offers 18 subsidized apartments to homeless women with children, assisting them with their transition to independent living and self-sufficiency. Visitation Homes' mission is to help these families rebuild and recover from the trauma they experienced that has led them to their program.

Each family is referred to them by the Office of Homeless Services for the City of Philadelphia and had their own fully furnished apartment upon move in. Their building is staffed 24/7 so that the families can always come to them for support and, most importantly, feel safe. Everyone is assigned a case manager that they work with to achieve their unique individual goals as well as increase their personal income and obtain permanent housing. Participants pay rent based on their income and start contributing their own savings account. Families typically stay for up to 18 months.

Prior to pandemic, one of Visitation Homes' favorite activities was to gather together in person with their fellow residents. The above picture was from last year's Christmas brunch that the staff held for their families. Complete with a visit from Santa! In the past, Visitation Homes has held workshops for families on topics including parenting, financial literacy, family reunification, and healthy cooking.

As you can see, this ministry is such a natural fit for the mission of HTN. We are eager to assist Visitation Homes in providing items for not only the apartments of their housing programs, but also their families' future independent homes of their own.

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## The State of HTN Fundraising

*From HTN Fundraising Director, Dave White*

Last month, HTN celebrated its 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Thanks to the leadership of its Founding President, Tom Moore, our ministry at St. Alphonsus continues to expand and enable our members to collect and distribute beds and other items to hundreds of needy brothers and sisters and their families. Our ministry has led us to develop a special fondness for the children and families at the Sheppard and Willard Schools in Kensington.

**Teresa Bronte**, school counselor at the Willard School, sent this congratulatory message to Tom for the occasion: *"Congratulations to HTN on its 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. There are not enough words to express our gratitude to HTN and all their volunteers for all their work and the impact that all the HTN programs are having on our families and children's lives. Thank you HTN! You are and will continue to be in our prayers."*

**Father Efren Esmilla**, former pastor at Our Lady of Hope, had this to say: *"Happy 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! As pastor of Our Lady of Hope parish for almost 14 years, we were so blessed to have you always helping us, the needy. You have made many people so happy and hopeful, and able to experience the fullness of life by sharing your many gifts, talents, and treasures that the Lord has given you."*

While this is certainly a momentous occasion for us, there is still so much work to be done as the coronavirus pandemic continues to severely impact the needy families of our communities. And it goes without saying that HTN's finances took a hit as a result of the pandemic.

HTN Treasurer, Mike Fedyna, reminds our leaders and members that we need to address our current shortfall:

*"I'm HTN's crass materialist, AKA, it's Treasurer. In addition to prayers and good works, we also need your financial support. Like many areas of our lives, coronavirus has significantly affected HTN's financial position. At our current pace, we will collect less than 50% of the amount of donations in 2020 as we collected in 2019. At the*

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*you have already made a financial gift to HTN, we are incredibly thankful for your support.”*

As HTN's Fundraising Director, I could not have said it any better. In the next couple of weeks, you will receive a letter from HTN President, Steve Finley, asking your support. Please give what you can – every dollar counts towards helping our poor families in North Philly and Kensington who are in desperate need of our help.

As always, thank you for all that you do for HTN and may our patroness, St. Mother Teresa, continue to guide our efforts.



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