

# the S P R I N G 2 0 1 4 GRACE center inc.

## NEWSLETTER

### Glow With Grace Event Successful in Every Way

Gloucester is "America's most compassionate town". We saw this proven again when over 100 people gathered around the fisherman's monument holding blue lights of love and affirmation to honor the many men and women who have been helped at the Grace Center. All across our country folks report a greater feeling of loneliness and separation as technology, distance, and the strain of changing communities isolate us. The special circle of care and hope that makes the Grace Center possible is a wonderful gift to fill any emptiness we feel in our lives.



Thank you to our heroic volunteers – over 40 good folks who serve unpaid every week to prepare lunches, connect to our guests, and help make the Grace Center the lowest cost and most effective program of assistance in the region. If you are a friend of the Grace Center and give a gift to our program, you can be proud, as

more of each dollar finds its way to the folks in need. Living in the afterglow of love is the joy of living in the spirit. Thank you. Thank you.

*Rev. Tom Bentley, Executive Director*

### One Guest's Story

*I think many people think of the homeless as criminals. The truth is that a large faction of us became homeless because of a financial hardship. I had a good job in NYC which I lost due to cutbacks. I couldn't pay my rent and wound up on Ward's Island. When I got a job on Wall Street, I got my own room in a program called Help USA. To be there, you had to have a job already. It was beautiful in the summer. You could walk across the river, which I did instead of taking the bus. I have a BA and MA in music. I was an organist for a church in Harlem and also taught piano. I saved my money and then moved into a place in Brooklyn. I was on welfare for a while. I've had a lot of different work experiences. When I came to Massachusetts, I stayed in Lynn and worked as a travel agent. I moved to the Action Shelter while waiting for unemployment.*

*Artistically, this area is very creative. I want to get back to my music. I just moved out of the shelter and into my*

*new place. I love Grace Center because of the staff and volunteers - they're wonderful. And the food is fantastic. I have a place to relax, and can forget about my problems while enjoying the fellowship of others like myself. I'm teaching some people piano here.*

*The art program in the afternoon has been a catalyst for helping with my depression. I really enjoyed painting the bowls to benefit Open Door. It helps me to feel like I'm giving back. When things improve for me I want to be a noted contributor to Grace Center.*

**Grace  
Center**  
Gifts of acceptance,  
hospitality and opportunity.

## A Volunteer's Message



There are times in everyone's life when we need a helping hand. No matter what walk of life we come from, being acknowledged for our inherent goodness, without judgement, is a powerful gesture that reminds us we are not alone in the human family. Volunteering at the Grace Center has given me the opportunity to develop unconditional kinship and kind regard for those less fortunate than me. When I think of how all my needs are met on a daily basis, I am humbled when I spend time with our guests at The Grace Center. The contrast between my relatively comfortable life and the uncertainty and pain of the difficult lives I encounter is enormous. Helping alleviate that pain in whatever small way I can is the very least I can do. Doing so with no strings attached is a simple way to bring more peace and loving kindness into the world, which benefits all of us.

The satisfaction of seeing our guests relax in our safe, supportive environment is immeasurable. We have developed an atmosphere of camaraderie and trust where our innate humanness can grow and thrive. I can't think of a better way to build an all-inclusive sense of community that is often missing in our lives. Cooperation is built on the simple foundation of knowing we all have something to offer. A big part of that is being teachable, and the Grace Center offers rich interactions that make me realize our journeys are never-ending. We're all in this together. Let's walk hand in hand and create the kind of community we can be proud of, where everyone can find the acceptance, resources and help we need, no matter who we are. Thank you Grace Center, for making my life even more worth living.

*Brian Fisk*

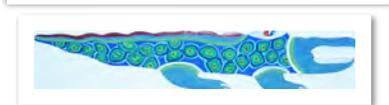
## Grace Center Hours of Operation

Tuesday 8:30-4:30  
Unitarian Universalist Church, 10 Church Street

Wednesday 8:30-4:30  
St. John's Episcopal Church, 48 Middle Street

Thursday 8:30-4:30  
Trinity Congregational Church, 70 Middle Street

## Art in the Afternoons



Each afternoon at Grace Center, Anna Lane takes out her art supplies. These could be wooden boxes, ceramic bowls, collage papers, paints, fabric crayons and T-shirts - a variety of materials and techniques to explore with Grace guests. The program is a drop-in activity - join when you can, when you want, and a way to break up the day and get lost in the creative process. Anna, a practicing artist, has found a way for the guests to give back by contributing to items sold at craft fairs and the Cape Ann Farmer's Market, as well as projects to make and take home with them on any given day.

Art is a great equalizer and a way to relieve anxiety and stress. Keith Haring's quote about art-making serves as a worthy goal for our program. "When it is working, you completely go into another place, tapping into things that are totally universal, completely beyond your ego and your own self."

We are always looking for donations of art supplies to continue this important endeavor.

**For more information about our program contact Christine Bobek at (978) 675-6240**

**To learn more about volunteering contact Jane Stephens at (413) 281-8452**

**To make a donation contact Rev. Tom Bentley at (978) 973-2362**

There are many ways to give to the Grace Center. In-kind gifts such as paper products, cleaning supplies and arts and crafts materials are always welcome. Financial contributions may be payable to Grace Center, Inc. and mailed to P.O. Box 135, Gloucester, MA 01930.

## A Special Thank You



It was a wonderful night at the close of last year when folks gathered at the Bass Rocks Country Club to honor the Grace Center and other charities in Gloucester. The event happened through the generosity of Beauport Financial Services whose Managing Partner, David McKechnie, is a well respected leader in the Cape Ann region. In the photo above we see Dave's father Bob standing with Rev. Tom Bentley holding the check for \$12,500. Part of this gift comes through ValMark Securities, the national firm which underwrites many of the investments managed by Beauport.

This generous donation is a big reason why the Grace Center is still operating despite the many challenges that face us in these early years of start up. Thank you Dave, Bob, and Beauport Financial Services!

## Postscript . . .

I recently read Cheryl Strayed's, book, *Tiny Beautiful Things* in which she recounts her time working in a program for troubled teens. She tells the story of how she broke through to the youth at risk by treating them with "unconditional, positive regard." I underlined the passage because I believe that this particular sentiment, attitude, whatever it is, is the only way to do justice to what we are trying to accomplish at Grace Center. Then I got Brian Fisk's entry for this newsletter in which he talks about "unconditional kinship and kind regard for those less fortunate". Now I realize we are on to something. The stories I am witness to are powerful and meaningful and I am grateful to be a part of the mission of Grace Center.

*Christine Bobek, Director of Social Services*