

the F A L L 2 0 1 4 GRACE center inc.

NEWSLETTER



Ray McGinniss taught two writing workshops at Grace Center in October for guests and volunteers.

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*Act as if what you
do makes a difference.
It does.*

-William James

On December 22, 2011, the Grace Center, Inc. opened as a day resource center with professional staff and volunteers. To date we have served 550 individuals. In last winter's newsletter I spoke about the challenge of finding resources for guests who sleep outside in all weather conditions. I am happy to report that the individual in that piece is now safely living in subsidized housing and loves his new apartment. He continues to come in to our center for meals and other services, and on the anniversary of our three complete years in operation, we have many more success stories.

We can not do this alone, for without the support of all the donors, volunteers and organizations, we would not be where we are today. So at this time of year, we at Grace Center, Inc. have a lot to be thankful for.

Walt Whitman said, "I find letters from God dropped in the street, and every one is signed by God's name." Thanksgiving is one of those signed letters. Anyone can open it and see what it says.

Gifts of Thanks from our Guests

At our annual volunteer appreciation event, each person was presented with a booklet of thank you messages from our guests. Here is a sample.

We love you! If you weren't here we would all be a lot hungrier and lonlier than we are.

Thank you, all of you, for your kindness and patience and for keeping everybody safe.

You truly are a very special group of people - Heartfelt thanks!

Your help is just so invaluable to those of us adults in crisis. God bless you all!!!

I want to thank the volunteers at Grace Center. Without their kindness and compassion, I would never be in the place I'm in today. Coming here always fills my heart with warmth and happiness.

Ending Up Where We Are Supposed to Be

One thing that makes Gloucester special is that it is an island. On an island when you walk straight you eventually must end up where you started. Being surrounded by the ocean means we have to walk along the shoreline unless we want to jump into the ocean and drown. In our journey then, we must finally return to where we started.

When you live on an island there are no secrets. Everybody knows everybody. Everybody is connected.

I think this is one reason the mission of the Grace Center is so effective. We are all passengers on this round rock and it does not work when we try to remain strangers. It makes more sense to try to help one another when

needed. Maybe if the whole world realizes it is nothing more than a big Grace Center, our future as a human race may end up better than some folks are predicting.

Yours in the Growing Chill of Autumn,

Rev. Tom Bentley
Executive Director, Grace Center Inc.

Upcoming Events

Saturday, November 15 - noon
Early Thanksgiving Dinner at Methodist Church, Washington St.

Saturday, November 22 - 12 - 2 pm
Opening of photo exhibit by Grace Center guests, "Through My Lens" at the Hive - Art Haven, 11 Pleasant St. Gloucester

Followed at **2 pm** by the annual *Concert to Benefit Grace Center* at Trinity Congregational Church

November 27 - 11 am - 2 pm
Grace Center's Thanksgiving meal at Trinity Church

Dec 22 Three year anniversary of the opening of Grace Center

Writing Workshops at GCI

Ray McGinniss offered two workshops in October for participants to gather and to have a taste of building community in a nurturing setting. The workshop on Journaling for Health and Wellness offered participants an opportunity to discover how writing in a journal can be a useful companion for one's own health and well being. The conversations that followed each journal writing exercise allowed participants to discuss whatever they felt, and at the end of the writing exercises participants were able to name a number of benefits for themselves arising from the workshop.

At the 2nd workshop, guests from Grace Center gathered to write stories

about personal challenges as well as sometimes humorous and adventurous moments in their lives. Many of the examples of writing used as prompts with the group were stories and poems by people who have variously lived on the street, been in prison, dealt with addictions, struggled with sexual identity, experienced financial stress or had faced mental health issues for themselves or their loved ones. The participants shared what they had written, and expressed how "it would be great to have more workshop offerings like these."

The workshops were paid for by a grant from the Healthy Gloucester Collaborative.

Volunteer Spotlight – Two for the Price of One!

Sometimes you want to be where everybody knows your name. That's what it's like at the Grace Center. Every Tuesday at 12:30 my husband Michael and I swing through the doors of the Grace Center greeted by familiar names and faces.

It is a privilege and honor to have lunch and conversation with our neighbors who may have hit a rough patch. The dignity of each of our guests: smiles, struggles, tears, and yes, we do share plenty of laughs, brings warmth to my Irish heart. Each and every guest is so appreciative of warm



meals, listening ears and profound caring, which exudes from each member of our professional staff and volunteers.

The powerful sense of community is evident as not only do we listen with love, but watch guests support each other. My husband Michael, who has a reputation as the "best grilled cheese-maker", receives great joy from

individual responses to his personhood as he mingles with guests and staff. More than grilled cheese coming across!

Maureen O'Kelly and Michael Kasner.

Grace Center Inc. Drop in Day Program Locations and Hours of Operation in Gloucester, MA

Unitarian Universalist Church, 10 Church Street * St. John's Episcopal Church, 48 Middle Street * Trinity Congregational Church, 70 Middle Street
Tuesday 8:30-4:30 Wednesday 8:30-4:30 Thursday 8:30-4:30

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

Visit us at www.gracecenterinc.org

