



JOHN'S PLACE
A Homeless Shelter @ St. Agnes
523 Front Street
Greenport, N.Y. 11944

January 8, 2022

Jeff Hendel
Krista Svedberg
Hendel Wealth Management Group
95 Smithtown Blvd.
Smithtown, NY 11787

Dear Jeff and Krista,

January 6th is sometimes referred to as Little Christmas but there was nothing little about your avalanche of clothing donations to the shelter at St. Agnes. The economy has increased the need and number of new faces we are seeing and covid is changing the way we safely welcome our guests. Although things are less rigid than they were at this time last year, places where the homeless can go during the day are limited. It also looks like health concerns may continue to decrease their options. That is why anything we can provide to keep them warm as they leave our hall is so important. You have certainly given us the supplies to help us accomplish our goals.

A recent church bulletin included an anonymous quote that read, "The measure of greatness is not the number of servants you have, but the number of people you serve." We are grateful that you have chosen to serve so many. Thank you for being a part of a greater community of people who care. If there are others who helped make your donation possible, please pass our gratitude on to them. May God bless you and keep you healthy as we enter 2022.

Humbly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alex Bymard". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name of the signatory.

John's Place Committee
Father Piotr, Kim Musi, Ed Thorgersen, Alex and Bob Zimardo

REFUGE FROM THE COLD

Volunteers at St. Agnes bring relief to the homeless during winter months

BY JEAN-PAUL SALAMANCA

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On a recent night when temperatures dipped into the 30s, an ever-expanding line of people in need of shelter made their way to a parish hall at Greenport's St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church.

It's an unfortunate rite of late fall at the church, which each November begins its months-long role as a refuge for people who would otherwise spend the harsh winter months living on the street.

"It's like the battlefield," said Jim, who did not give his last name, of his daily challenge finding shelter.

The church providing him a place to sleep has restored his hope, Jim said.

"You tend to start believing in some kind of spirituality when you start going to places like this," he said. "We try to start changing our ways. The people here that help know exactly what the homeless are here for. There's good people here."

The Greenport shelter named in honor of John Bendick — a Greenport resident and coordinator of the shelter who died in 2010 — is now in its 16th year. Working with Maureen's Haven, a Riverhead-based outreach organization, the shelter houses between 30 to 40 people every Tuesday, with volunteers providing them a warm, dry place to sleep as well as hot showers, meals, medical assistance and winter clothing.

Last year during the COVID-19 pandemic, said Father Piotr Narkiewicz, the church's pastor, the shelter made the decision to open its doors for several more days during the week after similar facilities nearby were forced to close. With additional shelters reopening, the church returned to its Tuesday night schedule.



James Jones, Alice Eckardt and Joe Pianese prepare food at St. Agnes Church Roman Catholic Church.

"We thought 'What is the choice? To leave people outside, or to take a risk and serve them?'" Narkiewicz said. "And then, what are the chances? If we protect ourselves with a mask and wash everything, maybe it wouldn't be so bad, we thought. Miraculously, nobody got sick. We were very blessed and our volunteers were very courageous to serve them."

Volunteers such as Alex Zimardo, 71, and Jim DeFrancesco, 66, both of Greenport, agreed that despite challenges the pandemic posed, helping those less fortunate is still the most rewarding part of

SHELTER FACTS

- John's Place, an emergency homeless shelter set up by St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church in Greenport, is entering its 16th year of operation.
- The shelter, which opened on Nov. 16 for the coming winter months, has between 20 to 30 volunteers working to serve up to 40 people on Tuesday nights.
- With anticipated rising energy and food costs, the shelter has set up a GoFundMe page to help pay for utilities, which cost \$17,000 in 2020.

their work.

"Some of these people get by day-by-day, and it really comes

down to helping people," said DeFrancesco, who works security for the shelter. "That's what is needed in this country, for more people to start thinking about helping others."

Zimardo, who helps set up the shelter with her husband, Bob, in the morning, said while the parish is small and in a modest community, she is awed by how much work people do to help those without a home.

"To see how much is being done in this smaller community of older people that don't have a lot, and the respect they treat guests with," Zimardo said, "that, I'm constantly impressed by."

NEWSDAY / STEVE PROST

newsday.com

NEWSDAY, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2021