



# The Open Door

## From the Director

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Fr. Eric Schimmel, C.S.C.

Thankfulness. Gratitude. Blessings.

These may seem like themes for a newsletter in November around Thanksgiving, but you will find many stories with these themes in this newsletter. Although we do not pick a theme to write about for our newsletters, I was pleased to see so much gratitude and blessings recounted in the stories our Core share this Summer. Sharing and reading stories of thanksgiving “out of season” reminded me that as a Catholic organization, the daily celebration of the Mass at André House calls us to be Eucharistic people. And, of course, the word “Eucharist” means “Thanksgiving.”

Speaking of holidays, I know that most people will get this after the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Independence Day. We are blessed to live in a country free from overt tyranny. We are grateful for the freedoms that we enjoy here, including the freedom to share stories like we have in this newsletter: stories of faith in action and the blessings that come from an openness to the Holy Spirit.

Independence Day celebrations also make me conscious of our interdependence. Here at André House we depend on the great Core Staff that we have. I know that I will be sad when Annie, Carolyn, Giancarlo, Kelly, and Rachel leave in August. They have been great. Please join us for a farewell Mass and potluck at the Polk houses on Friday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 6:30 pm. That Mass and potluck will also serve as a welcome to the new Core that will join us that week.

We depend as well on our volunteer coordinator, Teresa Hipp, and our custodian Steven, and on Ted who oversees maintenance. Of course we also depend on Br. Richard, who has only been at André House a little over 27 years. This Summer has blessed us with seven Summer Staff upon whom we have depended to help keep things running smoothly. Becca, Erin, and Chelsea have joined us from Notre Dame, Shaun and Haley have joined us from St. Anselm College, and Dan and Karl have joined us as Holy Cross seminarians. We are grateful for their energy, effort, and the way that they share their gifts and talents with all of us.

André House also depends on the guests. That may sounds strange to some, but the guests often step in before anyone else to help calm things down when tensions arise. We often see guests help mentor the newer guests to know how to get the services they need. They remind us of our blessings and become blessings to us as they become part of the André House family – even if we hope they have a temporary stay, meaning that they move on into their own housing, etc

Of course we also depend hundreds of volunteers and benefactors. We depend on you! Without the thousands of hours that you put in serving on the soupline or other areas, without the donations of clothing, toiletries, blankets, etc., without your financial contributions, André House could not keep its doors open. So many of you bless us with your incredible generosity! MANY people may apparently go unnoticed as you bless us with your prayers. Let me tell you that we feel those prayers! Your prayers in action help us to keep living in faith, serving, and giving generously to our guests knowing that God will provide us with what we need to help our guests in their needs.

As I write this in the week leading up to Independence Day, I am thankful for our freedoms in this country, but also very conscious of our interdependence. We all depend on each other. I do not know anyone who grows all their own food, makes all their own clothes, built everything involved in their housing, etc. We depend on each other.

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## Final Thoughts

*-by Giancarlo DiLonardo*

André House has been many years in the making for me. I came here three different times as an undergraduate student at King's College and then decided to spend a year here after my graduation. The job that I knew I would be undertaking was something I had become familiar with. I knew I would be kept busy, and I knew I would experience a certain amount of uncomfortable moments. I sought all of those things out, and I received all of them.

This year at André House was unlike any other I have previously experienced. All at once, I was confronted with a host of societal issues, and I was forced to confront my own trepidations with regard to the people we serve. There were times this past year where I was very uncomfortable – I was put in situations where my mettle and my faith were tested – but I knew that those who we served knew nothing of comfort. I did my best this year to persevere and to leave many of the uncertainties to divine providence.

It is with a changed perspective that I get myself ready to leave André House in August to pursue my next chapter. The experiences I have had this year will always stick with me. I know deep down that the men and women I met while



portering, working the Pascente office, or running showers will stay with me. Their stories, their smiles, their frowns, their hopes, and their dreams will remain with me even though I will no longer call Phoenix my home. I know that while I was able to know and serve them, I saw hope in their eyes seeking to find peace in their own

lives.

Bidding farewell to André House, the volunteers who have aided us along the way, and especially the guests who have provided us countless memories, I would be remiss if I did not ask for a small favor. I hope and I pray that those who continue on at André House after me and those who come to find André House later on will continue serving this worthwhile mission with all of their heart.

To those of you who will read this, I would just like to say thank you. Thank you for supporting us in whatever ways you have this year. Thank you for being a friend to André House and to the homeless community of Phoenix. Thank you for giving of yourselves to help others, and thank you for showing the world that human dignity is something that should be experienced by all. Thank you and farewell.

- G.D.



## Transforming Grace

- by Annie McAlevey

When I arrived in Phoenix, 2 years ago, I was eager to begin my work at André House. I knew that the job would involve difficult tasks and emotional situations, but I was up for the challenge. I did not know that after 730 days and coordinating over 100 soup-lines, I would be a changed woman.

Growing up I was privileged. I had food on the table, a warm bed to sleep in, and a family that loved me. During my first month at André House I quickly realized that these things I took for granted were not considered entitlements for most people. Most of our guests depend on us for a hot meal every evening, their beds consist of pavement and sometimes a small fleece blanket, but most importantly their lives lack loving, healthy relationships. After two years I no longer see my privilege as my own access to basic needs. Instead my privilege comes in the form of being able to bring these basic needs to others.

Many times I hear our guests refer to André House as “their home”. They consider our staff and volunteers to be “their family”. Every day I feel blessed to be a part of the community that brings food to their table and provides them with the healthy relationships they often lack.

My time at André House has taught me that the nature of all people is inherently good.

Amidst all the negativity and violence that our guests face on the streets, I am always overwhelmed by the love, kindness, and faith that our guests continue to demonstrate. I will go back to St. Louis, Missouri, filled with inspiration and a deep love for my André House family. I will forever hold the relationships I have formed while in Phoenix close to my heart. I will always be grateful to the ministry of André House for giving me the tools I need to live my life with great faith, simplicity, kindness and compassion.

I would like to thank the past and present Core Community for welcoming me into the wonderful legacy of staff. I feel truly honored to have my picture among the many faces on the Pascente Office wall. Furthermore, our ministry would not survive without the amazing dedication of volunteers who donate their time, love and support to André House on a daily basis. I especially want to thank the group of volunteers that committed themselves to “Weenie Wednesday” and who graciously accepted me into their close-knit group. Finally, I would like to thank the guests of André House for teaching me what it means to love unconditionally. Thanks to them, I am leaving André House as a more loving, courageous and confident human being.



- A.M.

## Hospitality

*-by Carolyn García*



André House fulfills its mission as a House of Hospitality in many different ways. My time here has helped me realize how André House offers hospitality not just to our guests, but also to our volunteers and associates. In my own life, the André House community has shown me true hospitality in a powerful way.

After college, I moved to Phoenix and taught third grade through a program in which new teachers work at underserved schools and live together in community. Although I loved my job, I resigned after six months because I felt that my experience and abilities were not great enough at that time to serve my students. Making this decision left me in Phoenix without housing until Christmas, two weeks later, when I had planned to fly home to West Virginia. I was unable to switch to an earlier flight and I knew almost no one in Phoenix. I needed somewhere to stay, but I also needed a job or a task, something to occupy my time and help me feel useful while I assessed my situation and figured out the next step. Then I remembered André House.

I had met Fr. Eric, Br. Richard, and some of the other staff members at a Thanksgiving event for Holy Cross

organizations about a month ago. I still did not understand exactly what kind of ministry they did, or what a House of Hospitality was. All I knew was that they seemed like friendly and caring people who ministered somewhere where there was plenty of work to be done. Not knowing where else to turn, I sent Fr. Eric an email explaining my situation. I asked him if he would be willing to give me a place to stay for two weeks, even a bit of floor space where I could roll out a sleeping bag, if I could spend my days helping the rest of the staff and contributed a bit of money so I would not be too much of a burden.

Fr. Eric would not hear of accepting any of my money; he only asked for a day in which to consult the rest of the Core Staff, who welcomed me with open arms. I was overwhelmed at the openheartedness with which all of them accepted me, someone they barely knew who had practically turned up on their doorstep, into their community. Far from making me feel like a burden, they constantly told me how much they appreciated my help and went out of their way to include me as much as possible. For two weeks I worked at André House and stayed in the staff house, and when I went home for Christmas, I reflected a lot on my time there. The work was fulfilling and the community of staff, volunteers, and guests nourished me emotionally and spiritually. After much thought and prayer, I returned to Phoenix to apply for a position on Core Staff.

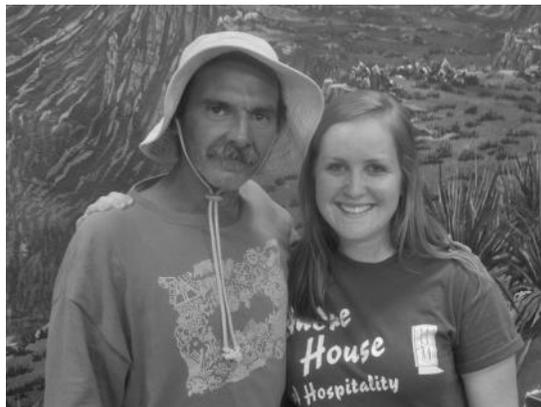
The rest is history. I joke now that André House “adopted” me like a stray cat—I just showed up one day and never left! It is true, though, that the André

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## To Be Blessed

-by Rachel Smith

A little over a month ago I accepted a job back in Massachusetts at an amazing non-profit called “My Brother’s Keeper”. Upon first hearing this news I only told a few people, including one André House guest named Jack. I was explaining to Jack that I have never been a very lucky person—I have never even won a single game of Bingo! I was in disbelief and overjoyed at the thought of my new job, and I could not understand how I was all of a sudden so lucky. Jack said this, “If you’re not a lucky person it is because you’re blessed.”



Often I will ask guests how they are doing and many times they respond by saying they are *blessed*. I could never understand how someone living on the streets and eating at a soup kitchen would consider himself or herself *blessed*. I think this is because I used to equate the words *lucky* and *blessed*. It is almost as though I assumed that God must be on someone’s side in order for him to be considered lucky. On the contrary, our guests consider themselves blessed because when they have a warm meal at the end of the day it is not because they are lucky, it is because somebody is watching over them. If they were lucky then they would not be in this situation in the first place.

Sometimes life is hard and this year at André House was certainly a challenging one. It would make sense for me to return to Massachusetts and only tell stories that focus on the difficulty of being away from home or stories about the heart wrenching lives of our guests. These are the stories everyone wants to hear so they can congratulate me on a job well done. However, despite all of the challenging moments, I have found that the stories at the forefront of my mind are the ones of tremendous generosity and inspiring compassion. When I reflect on this year I think of the countless volunteers who spend hours each week giving of themselves for the sake of our guests. I think of the donors who always manage to bring exactly what we need, right when we need it the most. I think of the variety of wonderful personalities that serve on my Monday night soup-line. I think of how when even one “regular” volunteer is not around he or she leaves a palpable void. I think of my fellow staff members and the countless ways by which they have inspired me to be a better human being. And most importantly, I think of our guests and their amazing stories of resilience and faith. Everyone I have met at André House this past year has taught me what it means to be truly blessed.

My Brother’s Keeper was where I discovered my passion for service; it was even the place that inspired me to apply to work at André House. As happy as I am to continue my life of service there, I am certainly leaving Phoenix with a heavy heart. I want to thank everyone in the André House community for welcoming me into their hearts and for showing me the true meaning of generosity. I have never felt more inspired to continue serving others in need. As Jack so eloquently stated, I may not be lucky, but I am definitely blessed!

- R.S.

**Director's Letter**  
- Fr. Eric Schimmel, CSC

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Most of all, we depend on God. God is the one who gives us the gift of thankfulness and gratitude, the gift to see blessings around us each day, even in what others may see as the most dire of situations. God invites us to see and cherish our interdependence, called to be one body in Christ. Thank you for answering that call and blessing us as part of the André House family. We pray that this July, and always, you feel blessed as well.

God Bless,  
Fr. Eric

**Hospitality**  
- Carolyn García

*(Continued from page 4)*

House community showed me love and hospitality when I was feeling adrift. Many volunteers have told me something similar; for them, André House is like a second family. One simply has to watch a sibling-like interaction between a volunteer and a long time guest, or be present during the celebratory atmosphere of soupline preparation to understand that André House is more than just a charity: it is a place of true hospitality, where people welcome their fellow human beings as brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ.

- C. G.



**DATE & TIME:**

**Friday, Aug 2, 2013**  
**Mass at 6:30pm**  
**Potluck to follow**

**Please join us in welcoming our 2013-14 Core members and wishing the past year's Core a fond farewell and thank you!**

**PLACE: 1203 W Polk St**

**The Transitional Houses**

**"HELLO & GOODBYE!"**  
**MASS & POTLUCK**





## Mailing List



Do you want to be removed from the mailing list? (STOP!)



Does your name or address need to be corrected?

If any of these are true, please use the enclosed envelope and **send the mailing label on this newsletter** with either the changes that need to be made or the word, "Remove," on it. The list will be updated before our next mailing.



Are you reading a friend's copy of *The Open Door* & wanted to be added to our mailing list?

If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please call Teresa Hipp, Volunteer Coordinator, at 602-255-0580 x302. If you leave the information on the voicemail, please leave a phone number in case there are questions. Thank you!



**\*\*André House's mailing list is not sold or given to any other organization\*\***



## Do you need Community Service Hours?



André House will be in great need of volunteers during July, August & September. As the snowbirds are away, the school groups break for the summer and people head off to

vacation, we will have many service opportunities in the Soupline. Beat the rush to get your service hours in for next Fall by coming in and helping us this Summer! To schedule your time, or if you have questions, contact...

Teresa Hipp, Volunteer Coordinator  
Phone: 602-255-0580 ext 302  
Email: [coordinator@andrehouse.org](mailto:coordinator@andrehouse.org)

*(no drop-in's, please)*





PO Box 2014  
Phoenix, AZ 85001  
Phone: 602-252-9023 or 602-255-0580  
www.andrehouse.org

## The Open Door



**Join us every First  
Friday for Mass and a  
Potluck Supper at  
1203 W Polk at 6:30 pm**



Non-Profit Org  
Us Postage  
Paid  
Phoenix, AZ  
Permit No. 2751



## André House Needs: Summer Focus Items!

- Deodorant
- Toothbrushes & razors
- Travel size: toothpaste, lotion, shampoo & conditioner
- Men's underwear: sizes 28-38
- Men's jeans & shorts: sizes 30-38
- White tube socks
- Sweatshirts— hooded & non
- Men's sneakers: sizes 9-13
- Cough drops, Ibuprofen & multi-vitamins
- Plastic grocery bags
- We do accept car donations

