

THE HARTFORD CATHOLIC WORKER



ST. MARTIN DE PORRES HOUSE
ST. BRIGID HOUSE

What does God require but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly... Micah 6:8



Brian Kavanagh

*Holy Mary,
Mother of God,
help
the helpless,
strengthen
the fearful,
comfort
the sorrowful,
bring justice
to the poor
and peace
to all nations.
Amen*

FALL 2008

THE HARTFORD CATHOLIC WORKER

Established November 3, 1993

Volume 16 Number 3



The Hartford Catholic Worker is published bimonthly by the St. Martin De Porres Catholic Worker community. We are a lay community of Catholics, and like minded friends, living in the north end of Hartford, working and praying for an end to violence and poverty. We are not a "tax-exempt" agency. We do not accept government funding. Our ability to house the homeless, feed the hungry, and work with the children depends on contributions from our readers. We are not paid. We can be reached at: 18 Clark St.,

Hartford CT 06120; (860) 724-7066, doucot@sbcglobal.net and www.hartfordcatholicworker.org We are: Brian Kavanagh, Sarah Karas, Jacqueline, Christopher, Micah and Ammon Allen-Doucot.

WHAT THE CATHOLIC WORKER BELIEVES

We are currently seeking folks interested in joining our community as either live-in or extended members. Curious? Send us a letter or email with your questions and tell us a bit about yourself. We will promptly reply to all letters and emails. Peace!

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING US?



*The Catholic Worker believes
in the personal obligation
of looking after
the needs of our brother.
The Catholic Worker believes
in the daily practice
of the Works of Mercy.
The Catholic Worker believes
in Houses of Hospitality
for the immediate relief
of those who are in need.
The Catholic Worker believes
in creating a new society
within the shell of the old
with the philosophy of the new,
which is not a new philosophy
but a very old philosophy,
a philosophy so old
that it looks like new.Ω*

Peter Maurin

St. Martin's Calendar

- ◆ Please join us on **Tuesday, September 2, October 7, and November 4 at 7:30 PM** for the celebration of Mass at St. Brigid House, 18 Clark St., Hartford. Refreshments and conversation follow Mass.
- ☮ Monday, November 3 is the 15th anniversary of the Hartford Catholic Worker. Please help us celebrate by joining us for a fund-raising dance party on Friday November 7th from 7:30 until 11:00 PM in the hall of St. Justin Catholic Church, 230 Blue Hills Ave, Hartford. For details call us at 724-7066.
- 🌐 Our vigil for an end to war continues on **Friday's from 11:30-12:30** outside the Federal Building on Main St. in Hartford. Please bring a sign and join our call for an end to the American military occupation of Iraq.

SHAMELESS SELF-PROMOTION...

"The Catholic Worker House on the other hand was by far the best place for the kids. I really enjoyed meeting everyone that worked there, and helped out. All the kids were great and it never seemed like they had a problem.

The bike shop in the front was really interesting to me because a lot of the kids love to ride bikes and for them to have a place to go to get there bike fixed or get a

bike to ride really makes a difference in the kid's lives.

It was fun to see the kids from the other sites visit the Catholic Worker House and enjoy playing basketball, running around and doing other activities. I felt like I had the best opportunity to reach out to the children when I was at the Catholic Worker House.

I will remember this summer for the

rest of my life, and the children that I have met in the process. This experience has made me reflect a lot of my life and be thankful for what I have and for what I have been able to do. I wish that everyone would be able to have an experience like I did this summer that would change the way they view the world and be thankful for everything they've got."Ω

...AND AN APPEAL FOR YOUR SUPPORT

The testimony above was written by a student-athlete from UCONN who spent time with us, and a few other groups, this summer. The writer was participating in the HuskySport program which partners UCONN student athletes with children from north Hartford. Our ability to be **"by far the best place for the kids"** depends on your support.

The work of the Hartford Catholic Worker: our summer camp, afterschool program, Saturday program, Christmas party, food pantry, housing homeless guests, and advocating for our friends and neighbors is only possible through the sweat of our volunteers and your spiritual and financial support. Compared to other "agencies"

we work on a relatively small budget since we do not pay ourselves (beyond \$20/week, room and board), do not have health insurance or pay into a retirement plan. Nonetheless, we still need money to buy

food, heat the buildings, maintain our vehicles etc.

We are in a particularly difficult financial situation now since we are



Brian Kavanagh

experiencing a drop off in donations- the cost of this newsletter (\$750 for printing and \$550 for postage) was put on a credit card. With the downturn in the economy this drop in donations is not totally

unexpected. Unfortunately, the impact of the Recession is most severe on folks who are already poor. So while donations have fallen off the number of people coming to us looking for food, bus tokens, help with their electric (and soon heating) bill has only increased. We need your help.

If everyone who receives this newsletter sent us a \$20 donation every time the newsletter arrived in the mail (\$120 a year) we would very easily be able to pay for our ministries. In 2007, 237 of the 1,452 people on our mailing list sent a donation! Can you please join this amazing number by sending us your support?

We are aware that many of you never asked to be on this mailing list and if you do not enjoy reading our newsletter please let us know and we will remove you from our mailing list. However, if you do appreciate the perspective found on the pages of the *Hartford*

Catholic Worker and want to support our efforts to feed the hungry, house the homeless, and keep the children safe please consider remembering us in your prayers and your charitable giving. Thank-you. Ω

WE NEED COMMUNITY NOT CURFEWS

Christopher J. Doucot

It has been a brutal summer in Hartford, particularly our north end neighborhood. By now I'm sure most of you have heard of the shootings and murders, the hit and run on Park St. and the random beating of Nick Carbone. In response to this violence some in the suburbs have condemned the entire city as a "zoo" full of wild animals (see sidebar story). This small minded and racist response to the violence is to be expected when opinions are formed solely on the basis of thirty seconds of sensationalist coverage from the evening news. Without the counter-balance of real relationships, right relationships (shalom), with our neighbors in Hartford the "news" becomes an unending loop of violent images playing in our heads. Unconsciously our minds extrapolate these minutes of televised terror into a dystopia of marauding hordes roaming our streets. Imagine what our opinion of Avon would be if we never spent time there, had no real relationships with Avon residents, and the nightly news highlighted every drug arrest made in Avon. I hardly want to understate the urgency with which the violence in Hartford needs to be met but, frankly, it would have been justifiably accurate for me to begin this essay thus: "It has been a glorious summer of bike riding, basketball playing and delighted dancing in late afternoon rain showers here in Hartford..." Ahh, but joyful black and brown children swimming in the pool at Keney Park or zooming down the handicap ramp of the church across the street on a razor scooter, though far more common occurrences are not "news".

The police response to the shootings has been to increase the number of cruisers racing down our streets by adding a cadre of CT state troopers. The addition of state

troopers who lack ties to the neighborhood has only increased the number of police officers patrolling our streets with the suspicion that most everyone here is a criminal. Without "right relationships" the



police rely on coercion to find out what is going on. Consider the example of our young friend Sedrick.

Sedrick (who was born addicted to crack, has been beaten by his mother, denied appropriate services from the state, and has an I.Q. below the level at which someone is said to be mentally retarded) has been arrested nearly a dozen times this summer. He has been arrested for loitering while sitting with his friend on the stoop of his friend's apartment. (Many landlords have spray painted "No Loitering, Tenants Included" on the front of their buildings.) He has been arrested for conspiracy to rob a bodega because he was in the bodega when it was robbed. He has been arrested for riding a bicycle without a light!

Sedrick has been told by the officers who keep arresting him that they will stop

and his cases will go away if he becomes an informant. As of this writing Sedrick was again in jail and still not talking. The police and t.v news are quick to condemn

Sedrick's silence as misguided adherence to a "stop snitching" pledge. Sedrick may not have the mental resources to often make wise decisions, but he knows that becoming an informant would put his life at risk. His choices are to remain silent and constantly hide from the police or speak and constantly hide from the gangs. Are the police going to find Sedrick a place to live other than prison? Are they going to provide him with a new circle of friends? Are they going to provide him with a bodyguard?

If the police walked a regular beat, and maybe even lived here, they would become a thread in the fabric of the neighborhoods they patrol. They would know whose who, where the guns are coming from, and they would see and stop the drug buyers from outside of the city from pulling up to our corners looking to score a hit. Instead they are anonymous and menacing race car drivers with guns and badges distrusted and feared by the community.

The imposition of a curfew by the city merely placates the call to do something. Curfews are misguided because they do not address the underlying causes of violence. Rather than rounding up the young people threatening them with jail or returning them to a home they may be avoiding for good reason why can't we appropriate the resources to open up every school and church gym and kitchen in the city? Why can't we seek volunteers and hire neighborhood folks desperately in need of work to supervise cooking, basketball, floor hockey and movie nights with the young people?

The most visible response from the churches have been the post shooting vigils. After our young friend Herbie was murdered

this group showed up at the murder scene where Herbie's family and friends were grieving. When one of the young mourners tried to engage in a dialogue with the minister leading the vigil he was shouted down by the bullhorn wielding bully in a collar.

The responses of the police, the city, the state (what response?), and the churches to the crisis of violence in Hartford reinforce the skewed view of Hartford and its residents held by very many of our suburban neighbors by taking an adversarial stand rather than a partnering one, with the residents of Hartford. Doing so locates the source of the problems in Hartford squarely and solely at the feet of some of the poorest and most disenfranchised people in America without examining the root causes of violence. There is no excuse or defense of gun violence, however, the most indiscriminate and widespread form of violence victimizing the people of Hartford is poverty. The relocation of jobs to the suburbs, the prisons and developing nations; our inadequate system of public transportation; the disproportionately high prison rates of African-Americans; the plethora of guns in our society; allowing the illicit drug trade to be regulated by the gangs; and the glorification of violence when it appears to serve our nation's interests are among the public policy decisions that contribute to and exacerbate the violence in our cities. You can't put a kettle of water on the stove and then blame it when it boils.

Do we recoil from too closely examining the root causes of poverty, the true epidemic of violence in our cities, because we might discover our own complicity?

In each of these responses the young people of Hartford are treated as an alien "other" solely responsible for the dysfunction of the society they were born into and wholly left out of the discussions on what needs to be done. The people of Hartford are neither "animals" in a zoo, lesser evolved human beings, a disease in need of treatment, nor infants in need of a baby-sitter. Any effort that seeks to "treat" the problems of Hartford without the involvement of city residents is a

waste of time. The young man shouted down by the angry minister had a perspective informed by experiences which most of us lack. Without his participation in the process we will never be able to quell the gun violence.

We have no pretense that we have all the answers. Honestly, at times we feel as though our efforts are utterly insignificant and yet our sporadic spasms of hopelessness are overcome by the hope we find in each other and through community. Not coincidentally, it is our fervent belief that fostering community by seeking "right relationships" is the only response to



the problems afflicting our city and society that has any chance at success.

The word community is formed by the Latin words meaning "to bring together" and "the fact of being one". To bring people together and believe that the result will be "the fact of being one" is a tremendous act of hope. In the political climate of our world today, a climate where fear is fostered, especially fear of people who are different, people who are black or brown, people who are poor, or gay, or not Christian, hope is a radical notion.

For Catholics notions of community should evoke the Holy Communion. With the word communion we again have the Latin prefix Com for bringing together with the

union being a union with God. When we receive Holy Communion we believe ourselves to be in physical union with God. Tragically, too many of us limit ourselves by believing this to be the only time we are one with God. The glorious mystery of the Incarnation is that whenever and wherever we make a commitment to community, that is whenever we intentionally gather in an effort to be one- we are in union with the God of mercy that dwells in each of us. To build community: "to bring people together" to create "the fact of being one" is to reveal the Mystical Body of Christ in our midst.

After Herbie was murdered 3 summers ago we made a concerted effort to engage the older kids who come to the Catholic Worker affirming, among other things, their vital role in our community as mentors to the younger kids. While hardly Eden, our time at camp this summer was a heartening experience of a loving and diverse community. Each week we learned from each other, helped each other, grew closer to each other, held each other accountable and took responsibility for each other. This happened just as much between the teen counselors and the grade school aged campers as between the teens and Jackie, Sarah and me.

Extending this community beyond the summer is now our major focus. While we will continue our efforts to nurture community among the older and younger kids we also intend to be more concerted in our efforts at fostering community among the varied people who come to the Catholic Worker. Throughout the year we are blessed to be a crossroads for children, teens, college students and adults from both the city and the suburbs. With more of our neighborhood teens participating in our community we've reworked the nature of their relationships with the teens from East Catholic and Northwest Catholic High Schools who come here to tutor. Rather than having the suburban kids come here to perform "service hours" we ask them to build community with their city peers. This simple shift in perspec-

(PLEASE SEE: COMMUNITY P6)

COMMUNITY, CONT.

tive changes expectations and transforms relationships. Rather than the unequal dynamic of the giving, white, and non-poor outsider coming to help the poor, black and brown city kids we are seeking to open doors, minds and hearts unto the beloved community where everyone has something to offer and everyone needs the love of others for the community to thrive.

This is a long range response to the troubles of this summer. But it is our hope that by fostering these "right relationships" we are in fact building peace by building a community that transcends the urban/suburban divide. We are confident that as this community matures these young people will not settle for the hollowness of homogeneous and isolated faux communities nor the false community of the streets but rather they will yearn to create the new society within the shell of the old that our

co-founder Peter Maurin predicted would result from a radical commitment to communal living and loving.

In our overly individualistic society many of us are utterly unaware of how essential community is for the survival of our species. Community is as vital to our existence as is the air we breathe. None of us would have survived our first years outside our mothers' wombs if a larger community had not been present to care for us. We all yearn to be included, to be cared for and to contribute, to be caressed and to caress. Many of the children in our neighborhood have families broken by poverty, prison and hopelessness. With society, including the church, turning our back on these kids they have turned to each other to fill the void. The kids in the gangs refer to each other as family. By extending our community to include these young people on the brink of adulthood they have chosen us, rather than a gang, to be their family. They want and need to belong, to be

respected and protected. They want to succeed, live, love and be loved. Don't we all?

Dorothy Day, the other co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement ended her autobiography, the Long Loneliness with this meditation on community:

We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone any more. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship.

We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes in community.

This is our invitation to all of you: Come! join our banquet at the Hartford Catholic Worker. There is a beloved community burgeoning here revealing Christ among us; come and partake in this bounty of love. Ω

Imagine if our only knowledge of the suburbs were the school massacres: *"Littleton, a middle-class suburb of Denver with a population of 35,000, is the latest American community shocked by school violence. Since 1997, shootings have led to calls for stricter laws, tighter security and closer monitoring of troubled students. Two people were killed in an attack at a school in Pearl, Mississippi; three in West Paducah, Kentucky; five in Jonesboro, Arkansas, and two in Springfield, Oregon."* from a 1999 newspaper article about the Columbine H.S. massacre.



STRAIGHT FROM THE ASS', ERR HORSE'S, MOUTH

Blutarski wrote:

When you live in a Zoo you have to expect the animals to be wild ALL the time.

That's all Hartford is a Zoo full of dirty animals....

Don't believe me? Has anyone come forward to admit they ran over the 78 year old man on Park street? No....because they are dirty animals

posted online at

<http://www.topix.com/forum/city/hartford-ct/T31CFDLPQELHOE4GV#comments>

CHRISTIANS WITHOUT BORDERS

Jenny Steele

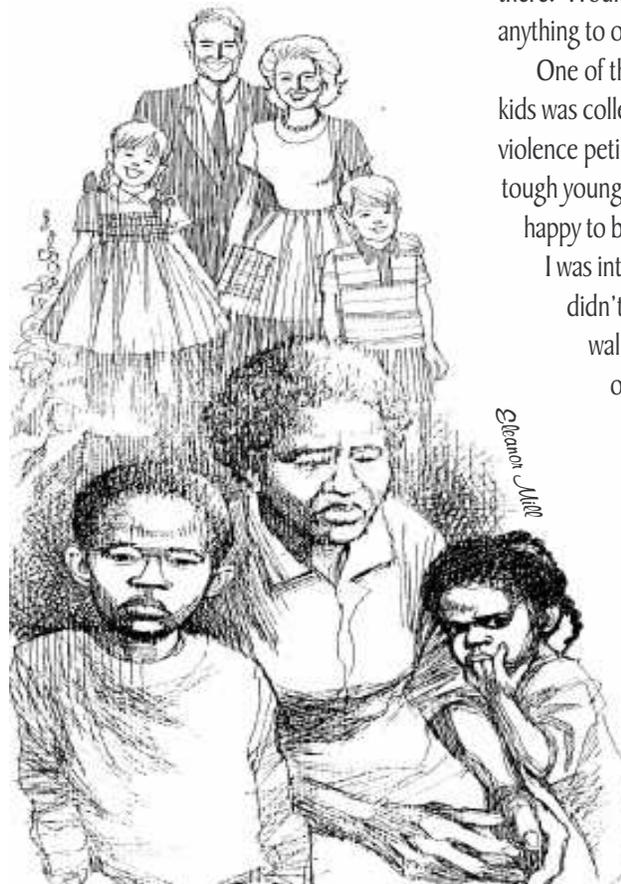
I read with a mixture of shock and disgust the words written on the *Hartford Courant's* blog following the tragic and violent events that had recently taken place in Hartford. It felt obscene: the condemnation of strangers, the wholesale rejection of a group of people linked only by their place of residence (a proxy for their race?), the labeling of human beings as animals. How could people so freely and publicly reveal their lack of compassion, their ignorance, their hate?

Reading the blog postings led me to explore what I thought about Hartford residents. The sad truth is that for most of my adult life I simply did not think about people from Hartford. This indifference was not benign. By not actively forming my own opinions or gaining the experiences necessary to do so, I left myself vulnerable to unchecked outside influences. In my mind's eye, I can see flashes of news reports showing crime scenes, gang members, drug violence, and victims, while the soundtrack, "Lock the doors, we're going through Hartford" plays in the background. This steady stream of bad news had one very clear result: Fear. Fear motivated me to stay apart; staying apart seemed to legitimize my fears. It was a vicious, and probably very common, cycle.

The good news is that sometimes all it takes is a few trips outside of your comfort zone to transform your thinking. I was fortunate to take many such trips in a short period of time.

It was photography that first led me out of the suburbs and into Hartford. For a brief period, I worked for Minister Cornell Lewis helping to capture his work in pictures. As he worked his way through the Northend warding off violence, rallying the troops and launching a youth empowerment program, I followed with my camera. While it sometimes felt in the beginning that Minister Lewis was tilting at windmills, I came to learn two things: That the

pursuit of truth is *always* worthwhile. And that the people of the Northend deserve to be defended. How could you not stand up for Hartford when the face of Hartford is Miss Hattie Harris? A Vine Street resident, mother of 9, grandmother of 18 and great-grandmother of 10, Miss Hattie lives in a building



that has seen better days. She knows how to respond to the sound of gunfire at night. Despite her grown children's pleas to move out, she won't abandon her post and works tirelessly to improve the conditions of her neighborhood and her neighbors.

It's easy to love a Miss Hattie. But what about a teenager in an over-sized, hooded sweatshirt hanging out on the corner of Albany and Vine? What happens when he or she is the face of Hartford? The 2-Way Youth Employment Program gave me the chance to find out.

On the first day of my volunteering, I made

my way to the Northend Church on Albany Avenue with trepidation. All I knew was that this program turned away no one who showed up on time and was willing to work. To the founders of the Program, employment was far too important to be reserved for those with no marks on their permanent record. I wondered if the program participants would want me there. Would my car be safe? Did I really have anything to offer?

One of the work assignments given to the kids was collecting signatures for an anti-violence petition. I was paired up with a street-tough young woman who didn't seem very happy to be working early Saturday morning.

I was intimidated and uncomfortable. We didn't say much to each other as we walked into the grocery store to find our first signer. When we finally spoke to each other, I realized that she was nervous. I shared with her some ideas for approaching people and then asked her if she wanted me to get the first signature. She was visibly relieved. Her whole demeanor softened. It was such a simple thing: I was the adult in the situation (something you can forget when you are fearful) and she was the young person who

needed guidance—not because she was from Hartford, but simply because she was young. How could I have missed that? I approached a person in the store (with a bit of a false confidence because I was nervous, too) and we got our first signature. After that, all was different. My acting like an adult stabilized this relationship that had been out of balance. The result was palpable.

I went on to participate in the program, more as an active observer than a volunteer. Each young person's personality emerged as
(PLEASE SEE: BORDERS P9)

HARTFORD: A CITY OF HOPE

Jacqueline Allen - Doucot

Hartford has taken a lot of heat these past few months. It seems like everybody loves to kick a town when it's down. First the retired deputy mayor was beaten badly, a week or so later an elderly man was hit crossing Park St. The media went crazy playing a 50 second reel of people ignoring the broken man. Later it was revealed that many on the scene called 911 and after the initial shock ran into traffic to offer help. Just a few weeks ago a score of people were shot at the West Indian Day Parade. Needless to say many horrible and racist rants on the *Hartford Courant* website had us all feeling pretty blue.

Hartford is already among the poorest cities in the nation and now many believe we are the city beyond repair. Busted. The chief of police told us we have a "toxic relationship with ourselves". With these sobering and pathetic details in our hearts and minds we prepared for Camp Ahimsa. It would seem that hope was at a minimum...but not for us. We are the Underdogs of Hartford! We believe in her and her people! We refuse to despair!! Hope is the greatest thing about hanging out at the Catholic Worker. We hear terrible stories like these, but for every one of them we can tell you 10 great ones. If you asked us what our job here is I might say we are part of a community of adults and kids that go about restoring hope. These kids restore our hope in the future. They keep at it and laugh and learn and play hard in the face of the most grinding poverty you can imagine. They defy the racism that surrounds us as they continue to love and trust and build relationships with all the folks who come here to help out, be they rich, poor, black, Latino or white.

We bring them hope too. We try to provide safe space for them to become community for each other. We believe in them, that they were each created by God with gifts that are waiting to be discovered. We hope to be part of bringing those gifts out in them, with them. We try to help them see themselves as resisters. They can and do resist the snares of the violent culture that surrounds us all. They

resist gangs. They resist the urge to drop out of school. They resist the quick and easy lure of drug money. All of these things swarm around them and yet they come to the "Green House". Some come for tutoring, others for a snack. Some just to shoot hoops in a safe place.

This year I was already pretty tired before camp started. A part of me hoped just to make it through camp. We dutifully loaded the 2 vans (thank God for Bill Minford and his Bike Babe



Pat, for letting us use and abuse the van). Once we got started these kids had us behaving like happy campers ourselves.

Summer Camp Ahimsa ended much the same way it began with lots of sweat and laughter. The girl counselors felt "ripped" that boys outnumber girls and there was only one week of girl camp and 3 weeks of boy camp. In our attempts at fairness we promised the girls that they could come down and help with cleanup. That meant that the week we spent packing up gear and cleaning up was interspersed with mural painting, swimming and scary movies. I am happy to say it was the best year of camp we have ever had!!! Finally after years of mentoring (or tormenting as I like to call it) our counselors have really stepped up! We made 4 beautiful new murals that will soon be gracing the backyard of St Brigid House. We taught fine culinary skills (how not to overcook pasta) to many of our teenagers. We sustained only one injury: one was enough. Our beloved

Josh suffered a gruesome kneecap dislocation in a race for the front seat. The drive to the ER was horrible, but a doctor and nurse came out to the van and "popped" it back into place right away.

We know the Holy Spirit watches over us. One example? One week we left Ahimsa empty for a few days so I could go to Maine with some of my sisters. There was a fierce storm, lightning struck a tree and it split onto the House taking out 3 windows. The shattered glass flew all the way into the kitchen. If we were at camp that week all the campers would have been sitting in front of those windows watching a rainy day movie!!! The Holy Spirit did not care so much about the TV, washer, water heater, phone or DVD that were destroyed!

It is always a joy to see how much the kids love to be here in the woods. Being able to see their faces light up around the campfire (from laughter not fire). Keeping them company as they practice toad catching, go fishing, and play kickball. Watching their swimming skills improve every year! Truth or dare was the new game around the campfire. Chris was a bit dismayed when the questions to him became very personal! Too bad, he had already called truth and had to answer them. Sarah, younger and wiser, called dare and ended up having to chug a raw egg with Floyd. UGGGGG!

The counselors give us hope by growing in leadership and responsibility. The little ones give us hope because we see God shining out of their eyes in the joy of catching a first fish or seeing the beauty of the ocean for the first time. This year especially camp revived the hope in me. I think Hope is the grace we are given when we put our Faith into action. Hope is when we listen to the gospel more than the news. Hope is when we invest in the children more than the banks. That is why I can live in the city of Hartford and believe it is the city of Hope. The children taught me that. They can hope...how can I not??? **Ω**



BORDERS, CONT.

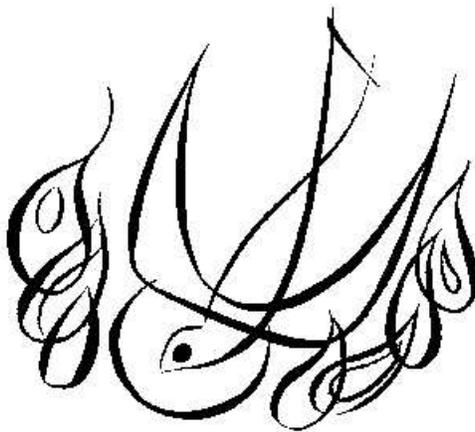
they gained confidence in each other and their group leaders. These young men and women were delightful and endearing. They were all very different, talented in a variety of ways, shy and outgoing, funny and serious. It became very clear that these hooded teenagers, in spite of their various rebellions, deserved to be defended.

All the while this was going on, I started a thirty-week program called JustFaith. A fundamental component of this "formation" program is a series of experiences called "Border Crossings." These are designed to take participants out of their comfort zones and introduce them to people who are "unknown or somehow 'different'". We were assured that crossing the border would take us to a place where "new relationships, fresh perspectives and transformation await us." By this time, I was sure this promise would be kept.

The first Border Crossing took us to the McKinney homeless shelter for men in Hartford. Knowing our reason for being there, our host encouraged me to go out and talk to the men. I was nervous and asked him what I should say. He looked at me in a slightly puzzled but knowing way, and said, "How about 'hello'? A bit embarrassed, I went out to the common room with another from our group and said hello. The conversation flowed easily

after that and we learned a lot about living in a shelter and about the life of the young man who generously invited us into his world that evening.

Throughout our visit to the shelter, I spent much of the time working in the kitchen with a young man who was very skillfully doing all of the cooking. We had a very nice time talking



and I liked him very much. I asked him how long he had been volunteering at the shelter. He replied, "Volunteering? I live here." There's nothing like being caught off-guard to spur on a little transformation!

My great discovery from all of my border crossings up to that point was that the rules did not change on the "other side." All I had learned about forming relationships, about human motivation, about being an adult, about treating people with respect still applied across

the border. I had all the tools at my disposal, I just didn't realize it until a few kind people let me into their lives and either deliberately or inadvertently helped me see the obvious.

The very best part about knowing that you are equipped to leave your comfort zone is that the fear starts to fall away: the fear of the unknown, the fear of being vulnerable, the fear of being rejected. The very best part about meeting people from Hartford is the fear of being a victim of violence starts to fall away. The old newsreel of your memory is replaced by cool new video clips with a more upbeat soundtrack. You become an advocate rather than an unwitting accomplice.

When I was a photographer for the *Catholic Transcript*, I found myself in many churches in Hartford. On more than one occasion, I photographed an important feast day mass in a predominantly Latino community. Everywhere I looked, I saw families.

Strong and loving fathers (with their arms around their sons), cherished mothers, and loved children. I felt like I had been let in on a secret. I thought, "I had found the real Hartford! Someone should alert the media!"

Then, of course, I realized that I was the media and did what I could to tell the story. I will continue to tell the story with the hope that personal advocacy is a greater force than anonymous writings in cyberspace.

Like those bloggers, I was ignorant. I didn't know that some people live in Hartford because they want to, that street-wise kids get nervous, that large hooded sweatshirts aren't scary, and that cooking skills are not correlated with homeownership. I do now. But most importantly, I now know that "hello" starts a conversation in Hartford just like it does in Farmington. I look forward to continuing the dialogue. **Ω**

WE THANK:

all those who pray and support our work

Hartford Stop and Shop for donating bags for our food program and **The Greater Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, St. Elizabeth Seton, St. Peter Claver, and Corpus Christi** parishes for supporting Camp Ahimsa.

NOTES, CONT.

was my mom's birthday, Brian's 65th is following soon with me turning 14 right on his tail.

School has started for me and it is only August 21st! And even worse- my bus comes at 6:10 in the morning.

Speaking of school, Dad is officially Professor Doucot. He is teaching a sociology class at Central CT State U and 2 religion classes at the new and free Covenant Prep. School in Hartford. Micah doesn't start school until the 28th- though he has been busy working as the

fishing counselor at camp and at CT Outfitters bait and tackle shop when in Hartford. My dad is so jealous of the humungous bass Micah caught all summer.

*Well, to wrap things up, our dog Reilly is great and mom's bird Rio is still obnoxious. That's everything. Thanks for reading. **Ω***

Notes from De Porres House

Ammon Allen - Doucot

Hey Folks,

Summer vacation is drawing to a close once again. Though it's hardly been a vacation for the hard working Catholic Workers down at the camp. After a summer of stern lectures on how to properly make Kool-Aid and setting younger campers to bed three or four times a night they are beginning to get a well deserved rest. Sarah and Jackie may be tired but all the work and late nights are worth it. One conversation with either of them would prove that in seconds. Their love for their work and the kids is obvious.

Chris also had his fair share of work at camp being Head Chef and captain of the Bojangos boat. The Bojangos was a gift from Ed and Donna Murphy. Thanks guys, that boat made a lot of kids very happy this summer. Dad is also worn out, not that things like physical exhaustion make a difference to Chris. He has been doing his lumberjack thing getting wood for the stove. He even bought a pair of suspenders that mom has taken away from him after Micah and I told her we wouldn't be seen in public with him wearing suspenders.

This July we attended a gathering of 500 Catholic Workers from around the

country up in Worcester to mark the 75th anniversary of the Catholic Worker. (This November 3rd is the 15th anniversary of the Hartford Catholic Worker.) There were numerous presentations including one on raising kids in the Catholic Worker

starring me as Ryan Seacrest, our friend and neighbor Khari as Randy Jackson, Sarah as Paula Abdul, and Scott Shaeffer-Duffy of the Worcester Catholic Worker as Simon Cowell. Mom played Dorothy Day and Brian fulfilled his lifelong dream to be a Pip in the last act of our show within the show: Dorothy Day and the Pips sang a hysterical song. They were fabulous—ask them about the song mom wrote and sang.

When he wasn't being a Pip Brian was holding down the forts in Hartford 24/7 and still looking good for his age. Each week he has been handing out our share of organic vegetable from Holcomb Farm, signing people up for our food co-op, and helping Amanda Tremblay and a crew of year round volunteers with the kids program. Amanda is a student at Clark University who spent a lot of time with us while she was a student at Northwest Catholic. Over the summer she played Scrabble, made smoothies, jumped rope, served lots of watermelon, organized a field trip to the Mystic Aquarium and settled a conflict or two among the kids. Good luck at school Amanda. Getting back to age: last night



Dorothy Day by Dana Konopka

which was fun for me to sit in on. While Dad gave a presentation on white privilege Mom, Sarah and Brian gave a presentation on art and the Catholic Worker with the renowned Catholic Worker artist Rita Corbin. There was a talent show on the last night which our community ended with a little show call *American Idolotry*

(PLEASE SEE NOTES P.9)

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