

# Standing up for homeless veterans

*The "Call to Stewardship" is a periodic series profiling individuals and families throughout the Diocese of Camden who have shown an inspiring response to the call to Christian stewardship highlighted in 1 Peter 4:10 "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace."*

By Carol Magrino

Every Sunday, Jim and Kathy Maher come through the doors at the Parish of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Camden with a box of bologna and cheese sandwiches — "as many as you can make with two loaves of bread," Jim says.

It's a quiet act, and yet one that's important in Camden. According to Father John Fisher, rector of the Cathedral Parish, that weekly act of stewardship allows the parish to feed those who come to its doors on Sunday, when the Cathedral Kitchen that operates for the rest of the week is closed. In simple acts like these, "what Jim and Kathy do is to answer the call of the Gospel, and to help us as a parish to take the Gospel into the community," Father Fisher says.

Jim has spent a lifetime serving others. He went through college under the ROTC and upon graduation, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and served in Vietnam as an intelligence officer. He left military service at the age of 23 as a captain and began a career as a Special Agent with the FBI that spanned the next 31 years.

Kathy has served alongside Jim, raising their three girls and making their home a base from which they both can go out into the world and help others.

Once Jim retired, the couple began to look for other ways to be of help, especially in feeding the hungry. "I'm a product of 12 years of Catholic education," Jim says, "not to mention four years at Saint Peter's College (now Saint Peter's University, in Jersey City, N.J.). That's enough to inspire anybody."

Jim and Kathy have been members at the Cathedral Parish for 15 years now, and all three of their daughters were married there.

"It's a nice place," Jim says, in describing the Mahers' home parish. "It feels more family-like."

Jim helps in the parish in other ways: counting money after Mass on Sundays and serving on the finance committee. But perhaps his real passion lies in an effort that takes him outside of the parish and into the midst of those who



Photo by James A. McBride

Father John Fisher, rector of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Camden, stands with Jim Maher, a retired FBI Special Agent who, with his wife Kathy, helps the parish feed the needy. They also help coordinate an annual program for homeless veterans.

**Office of  
Stewardship  
Diocese of Camden**



**"Jim is doing what Christ calls us to do."**

Father John Fisher,  
Rector of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Camden

need help in the broader community of southern New Jersey. Jim acts as chairman of the local chapter of Stand Down of South Jersey, an organization that, like its independent counterparts in other parts of the country, offers a day once a year for homeless veterans to come together for medical attention, food, a haircut, and some basic supplies that can be critical for survival.

According to Jim, the notion of "standing down" is that soldiers come in off the battlefield for "some necessary R and R," and that they're then better able to face the next challenge. The 22nd Stand Down event in southern New Jersey is scheduled for Sept. 21 of this year at the National Guard Armory in Cherry Hill.

This year the organizers of Stand Down of South Jersey expect between

175 and 200 male and female veterans to attend as event participants. The day requires coordination between the National Guard, which provides the venue and numerous volunteers, the Veterans Administration, which sends some of the medical personnel, and Stand Down of South Jersey, which coordinates donations from around the region and organizes the day's events. For Stand Down members like Jim, preparations take place practically year round.

On an overcast Tuesday in late May, Jim and other event organizers unload box after box of waterproof boots into one of three 20-foot-long shipping containers that are permanently located in the armory parking lot off Grove Street in Haddonfield. The containers already hold plenty of useful items:

sleeping bags, new winter coats in a range of sizes, and screens to help set up a temporary clinic inside the armory for the doctors, nurses, dentists, and other medical personnel who will volunteer their time that day to offer care to the veterans who attend. For most attendees, it is the only medical care they will receive that year, and perhaps the most critical aspect of what the day offers them. "It's really an urgent care or triage center," Jim says. "There are always one or two vets who have to leave the event in an ambulance."

He continues, "That's how important it is that we make this kind of help available."

The help comes from across the community, with representatives from as many as 30 social service agencies on sight that day to offer help to the veterans.

During the week before the event happens, Jim and Kathy will be on site every day, setting up and making sure last-minute logistics are in order. Kathy helps screen the veterans as they enter Stand Down, and she's there with Jim through the day and afterward, helping with break down and clean up.

In an important way for area Catholics, Stand Down of South Jersey also makes it possible for members of different parishes and apostolates to serve together in the world. In addition to Jim, volunteers come from Saint Joseph's Polish Apostolate, which is part of Immaculate Conception Parish. Father Fisher is particularly gratified to see parishioners coming together to serve. "You realize when you see parishioners going beyond the parish confines to serve [that] it makes the church more global."

Father Fisher also believes that in serving homeless veterans through Stand Down of South Jersey, parishioners like Jim Maher are answering the call to stewardship exactly as Pope Francis has asked. "He speaks of taking the church out into the community as a field hospital, and that's exactly what's happening. I see Catholicity here. ... Jim is doing what Christ calls us to do."

For more information, go to [www.standdownsouthjersey.org](http://www.standdownsouthjersey.org)

*The mission of the Office of Stewardship is to help the disciples of Christ live out Christian charity in a sacrificial way that we might "understand the grace that comes from giving back from our blessings so that in all things God may be glorified." For more information, contact Deacon Russell Davis at 856-583-6102.*



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Photos by Alan M. Dumoff

Sister Alma Gallagher, SSJ, is surrounded by family following a Mass of thanksgiving on June 30 for her 65 years of religious life and her 25 years of service to Saint Andrew the Apostle Parish, Gibbsboro.

## ‘The Holy Spirit will take care of it,’ she said

The parish community of Saint Andrew the Apostle, Gibbsboro, on June 30 celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving for Sister Alma Gallagher, SSJ, for the past 25 years she has served at Saint Andrew’s. Marking 65 years of religious life, Sister Alma has now retired.

In a letter to parishioners, Msgr. Louis Marucci, pastor, praised her “quiet, simple, spiritual leadership and guidance” as the parish’s pastoral associate for spiritual life, adding that Sister Alma’s door was “always open to the steady stream of those who thirsted for comforting words and the grace of her presence.”

“The Holy Spirit will take care of it.’ Those fortunate to have served

with Sister Alma these past 25 years at Saint Andrew’s, and participated in any of the numerous ministries, special events or prayer groups she has led have heard these encouraging words countless times. And sure enough, just when we had given up hope, all problems resolved,” he said.

Sister Alma was instrumental in originating many ministries, programs, and prayer groups at the parish, including the Divorce Support Group; the monthly Women on Joy Prayer Breakfasts; and the parish movie nights.

“She has left us with strong shoulders to stand on, a vibrant legacy and fantastic memories,” Msgr. Marucci concluded.



SISTER ALMA GALLAGHER, SSJ

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## The triple centenarian celebration

**O**n July 17, Saint Mary's Center in Cherry Hill celebrated the birthdays of three residents of the long-term care facility, who will each reach the age of 100 this month: Josephine Casdia, Julia Constantine and Mary Keashen.

Born in Richland, Josephine Casdia was a child when her family moved to Camden, where her father owned and operated a drugstore/soda shop. A graduate of Camden High School, she married Anthony, her late husband, and the two remained in Camden until 1958, when the couple moved to Cherry Hill. A homemaker; traveler; and cook and baker, she has two sons; five grandchildren; and 16 great-grandchildren.

The second of five children to Polish immigrants, Julia Constantine was born on July 11, 1918, to Lucas and Mary Luczejko in North Philadelphia. An excellent student, she only completed up to her sophomore year of high school, having to work to provide for her family after her father became



Josephine Casdia, Mary Keashen and Julia Constantine, all residents of Saint Mary's Center, Cherry Hill, will each celebrate their 100th birthday this month.

Photo by James A. McBride

ill. For 37 years, she worked at Woolworth as a salesperson.

A Philadelphia native, Mary Keashen moved with her husband, Daniel, to

Delaware Township (now Cherry Hill) in 1954, where they first belonged to Christ the King in Haddonfield, and later became founding members of

Queen of Heaven Parish.

She worked for the Social Security Administration, and the Cherry Hill Public Library.

## When the summer days heat up, heart patients need to stay cool

**S**ummer means more time for going to the beach, taking early morning walks or working in the garden. But, it's important that you protect yourself against heat-related illness, especially if you have heart disease.

That's because heart disease places you at a higher risk for heat stroke, a life-threatening condition that occurs when the body is unable to regulate its temperature.

"Anyone can suffer heat stroke, but people with cardiovascular disease are at a much greater risk," said Lourdes cardiologist Ram Wadehra, DO, FACC. "Your heart may not be pumping effectively, making it difficult for the body to maintain temperature control."

When outdoor temperatures rise, the heart has to beat faster and work harder to cool the body. Sweating whisks away heat, but it can also remove sodium, potassium and other minerals.

"You need sodium and potassium for your muscles to contract and relax, transmit nerve impulses throughout the body and maintain fluid balance in your cells," said Dr. Wadehra. "If you

don't drink and become dehydrated, your blood pressure may drop and you can become dizzy and fall."

Many people with heart disease take medication. But some of these drugs can interfere with heat regulation.

"Medications used to treat heart conditions may make it harder for your body to cool itself by perspiring," said Dr. Wadehra. "Beta blockers, for example, slow the heartbeat and limit the heart's ability to circulate blood fast enough for effective cooling. Diuretics (water pills) increase urine output, increasing the risk of dehydration."

Don't stop taking your medications just because you're going to be out on a hot day, advised Dr. Wadehra. Instead, take precautions. "Heat stroke is an emergency. Those suffering symptoms need to move to a cool place and get medical help right away."

Symptoms of heat stroke include body temperature above 104 degrees; red, hot, dry skin without sweating; rapid, strong pulse; a throbbing headache; dizziness, nausea or confusion; unconsciousness.



**JUNE ROSENTHAL, 100** — June Rosenthal of Linwood celebrated her 100th birthday at Our Lady's Multi-Care Facility in Pleasantville on June 19 with her Legion of Mary sisters: Frances Hughes, Linda Tuccinardi, Ana Mae Maslenski, Ramona Smith, Grace Ulesse, Mena Roff, Nollie Cadacio and Isabella Gallagher. Rosenthal is a member of Our Lady of Sorrows Parish and has belonged to the Legion of Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows Presidium for 50 years.