

**Report to the Diocese of Northern Indiana
St. Margaret's House
September 2007**

St. Margaret's House is pleased to announce that we are thriving. We are grateful for the leadership of our board president Nancy Brennen. We are pleased that many in the diocese serve in a number of ways to keep our mission going. Several members of the diocese serve as weekly volunteers and on our board of directors. Bishop Francis Gray recently joined our board. We have had and continue to have a wonderfully collaborative relationship with the parish community of the Cathedral of St. James. In April, our director Kathryn Schneider, was invited to preach at the two Sunday services as a celebration of our close relationship. After the masses, coffee hour was held at St. Margaret's House.

St. Margaret's House continues to grow in amount and scope of services offered. Here are some statistics from 2006:

- Lunches served: 16,241
- Breakfasts served: 3,248
- Total served:
 - 1,400 different adults
 - 425 children
- Visits to the Clothes Closet: 2574
- Clothing, Household & Baby Items distributed: 42,471
- Children supplied with backpacks and basic school supplies: 425
- Adults received breast cancer education: 350
- Participants in multi-session parenting education seminars: 125
- Families served at the "Christmas Store": 306, (over 550 individuals)
- New intakes (first time visitors): 425 representing a 265% increase over number of new individuals in 2005.
- Number of volunteers: 130
- Number of volunteer hours: 9980

We provide many programs. They include:

- We have started a nutrition and exercise program for the women every Monday and Wednesday. This is led by an employee of the YMCA of Michiana and is being funded with a grant from the United Way to the YMCA.
- Pat continues to hold weekly parenting classes.
- We plan to start the next Getting Out of Poverty Seminar on Sept. 18. This will be held twice a week until mid November.
- Sheila has started her weekly empowerment sessions in preparation for Fashioning Our Lives to be held November 15 at the Marriott.
- The art programs on Mondays and Fridays continue to go well.
- The Mobile Medical Unit continues to come once a month, as does AIDS Ministry/AIDS Assist. African American Women in Touch comes twice a month.
- Staff members from LaSalle Bank come once a month to talk individually with our guests about budgeting and financial literacy.

New Initiatives:

St. Margaret's House joined the Community Access Network (CAN) sponsored by the United Way of St. Joseph County. As part of this network, we will join with other social services agencies to help our guests through a single database. By doing so, we will efficiently help each family get the services they need. We will also be working from the same case management model as most other agencies in our community.

We offer to our guests the 45-hour seminar using the workbook entitled Getting Ahead in a Just Getting by World, Building Your Resources for a Better Life. By hosting this seminar, St. Margaret's House joins with many other organizations to support the community-wide strategy to help people out of generational poverty. Our goal is to improve the quality of life of the community by helping people in generational poverty become investigators of their own realities and give them the tools and support necessary to help them transition out of poverty. We are working to form alliances with civic and business leaders to help them employ and retain people from this group.

As an extension of the Art Program at St. Margaret's House, we began The Scarf Project in 2006. It is not only an art project but a women's empowerment program. It was developed to provide our guests with an opportunity to foster and support their innate creative talents, develop their leadership and enhance their work and interpersonal skills. The women create and sell hand-painted silk scarves. A portion of the proceeds go to the women artists in the form of gift certificate incentives, while the balance goes back into the project to buy materials. The women artists work together as a team, formulate business plans, represent the project to the community and plan for the future. By participating in The Scarf Project, the women explore and develop their artistic abilities, organizational, planning and business skills. Over the last eighteen months, the women have created over 220 and sold more than 160 original works of art in the form of hand painted scarves. Recently, the women have been commissioned by individuals to create specific silk scarves and shawls.

Winter Walk 2008 will be held on February 10, 2008. We will begin in the basement of the Cathedral Church of St. James at 2:30 p.m. The 1 mile solidarity and fund-raising walk raised over \$47,000 for St. Margaret's House last year. We are hoping to raise \$50,000 this year.

We are grateful to all who have and continue to support of the ministry of St. Margaret's House. Members of the diocese are always welcome to come and visit.

Submitted: Kathryn A. Schneider, M. Div.
Executive Director, St. Margaret's House