

# Bishop Sullivan Center

## NEWS & REFLECTIONS

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### BILL WARIS' VISION: SEE EVERYONE AS FAMILY EXTRAORDINARY SOUP KITCHEN VOLUNTEER PASSES ON TO NEXT LIFE

By Thomas Turner, director of Bishop Sullivan Center

Bill Waris had a vision. Three years ago we decided to treat the soup kitchen's guests and volunteers to an outdoor bar-b-que steak dinner.

Two nights before the steak dinner, Bill called me at home. He said, "I just wanted you to know that I bought 300 blue t-shirts to give out to everyone who comes to the dinner."

I asked, "Why would you do that, Bill?"

Bill said, "It's going to be a mixed group of volunteers and the poor. I thought it would be a good idea if we all looked alike, kind of like we were all just one family. Maybe it will help break down any barriers, and will encourage people to mix more easily at the tables."

Though it was a simple strategy, it worked. There was a great atmosphere of camaraderie at this meal. The blue t-shirts made us all feel like we were just one group.

It was a wonderful sight, a sea of blue t-shirted people eating together and enjoying each other's company. It was a sight that made Bill happy. He enjoyed seeing people from diverse backgrounds getting to know each other as individuals.

Bill had the gift of gab. And he used that gift well at the soup kitchen. He enjoyed bantering with the guests. Though their lives were burdensome, when chatting with Bill, you'd see them smile. He knew how to lift their spirits.



Look closely and you can see Bill toward the back in sunglasses.

When Bill's passing was announced to the soup kitchen guests, many of them wept. More than a volunteer, he was their friend. This is another tribute to Bill. What better evidence of having lived a truly Christian life than to have the poor weep upon hearing of your passing.

Back to Bill's vision. I think Bill's solution to the world's problem was simple yet profound. If everyone could see each other as a family member, someone who is as much like you as the blue t-shirts each of you wear, then problems would be solved - even serious problems. There would be no more racism, no more classism, and even no more war. We'd all help each other as a family.

Christ's final prayer on earth was that we would "all be one." It was Bill's final prayer, too.





## FOR LACK OF \$300 A FAMILY'S LIFE IS THROWN INTO TURMOIL *WORKING POOR LIVE ON THE EDGE*

One night, unbeknownst to Travis and Susan, someone had stolen the license plate off the front of their car. So, they were pulled over.

The police discovered that they had an unpaid parking ticket from ten years ago. Travis and Susan vaguely remember the parking ticket but thought they had resolved that when it happened. So, they had to spend the night in jail and their car was towed off.

They paid the fine to get out of jail, but to get their car out of the tow lot would cost \$300. Inside the car were their son's school clothes and Travis' tools that he needed to work; he's an electrician.



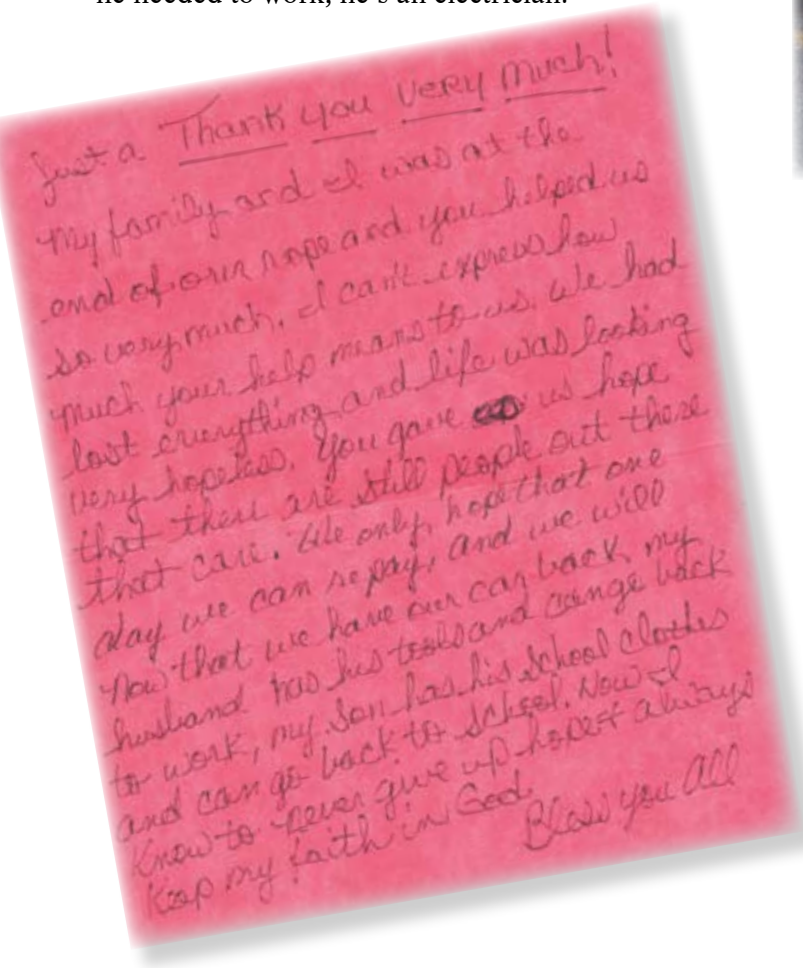
Travis with his son and their recovered car and tool belt.

They found themselves in a catch-22: they didn't have the \$300 to retrieve their car out of the lot, and he couldn't go to work to earn the money because his tools were in the car. They came to us and offered to give us their car if we would give them \$300 to get their car out, just so he could get his tools to go back to work.

We gave them the \$300, obviously we didn't take their car. They were most grateful. They offered to pay us back with money or time.

This story represents the plight of so many families we see. They work hard to make ends meet, but live precariously on the financial edge. There is no cushion. There is no money for the rainy day. A slight problem or emergency pushes you over.

When you donate money here, it helps people like Travis and Susan when they start to fall over the edge.



*the largest food pantries in Kansas City.*

## PAINTING REVEALS SEVERAL HUNGERS *MAN PRAYS FOR MORE THAN JUST BREAD*

*By Mike Matthews, St. James Soup Kitchen Manager*

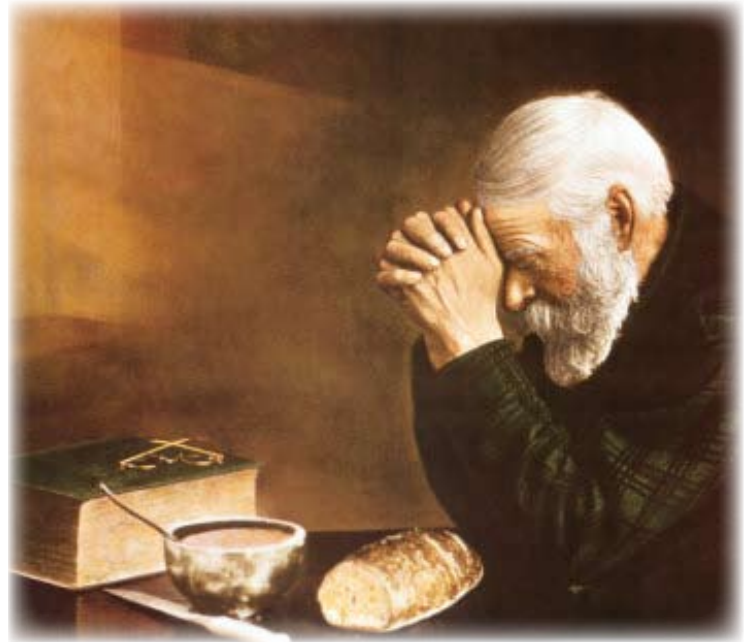
As I look at the painting called “Daily Bread”, I see a lonely man praying for something more than his meager meal of soup and bread.

At St. James Place a few days ago, we served an evening meal as a picnic on our parking lot. During the meal a man came up and thanked me. He said that he recently got out of prison and that eating outside was really a treat and that the food was great (hot dogs, mixed vegetables, beans, coleslaw and either a banana or a donut).

I asked him how he was adjusting to freedom and he said that it was tough. In prison he always knew he was going to get something to eat and when. There was always someone to talk to. He said that there were a lot of bad things in prison, but in some ways it was easier than being free. He is homeless and has no job. He is not sure when or where he will be able to eat. He said that he comes to our kitchen almost nightly and enjoys both the food and being around other people. For me this story reflects the message of the “Daily Bread” painting. The ex-prisoner was hungry for both nourishment and companionship. More important, he seemed truly thankful for whatever blessings he received.

Most of us know when we will eat next. Our only concern might be *what* we are having for our next meal, not *that* we will have a next meal. In fact, for some of us our worry around food is that we are eating too much, hence all the diet books. In contrast, for those who come to the soup kitchen their worry around food is not having enough.

When we experience physical hunger, we have a nagging pain in the stomach, a loss of energy and the inability to think clearly. When a newborn baby cries, most times the child simply needs to be fed. The hunger has created real pain, and when the baby is fed, calm can seem to cover the whole household. Even as adults this hunger pain is very real. However, there are other ways that people hunger. The old man in the painting is about to eat alone. Mother Teresa said that loneliness is the greatest hunger of all.



Most people have had the experience of eating alone at one time or another and it is a pain all its own. At the St. James Food Kitchen, many of the hungry who come nightly are there simply to share a meal with others. Loneliness is a hunger that we can sometimes relieve. Jesus shared meals with many different groups and kinds of people. His greatest sermon featured food. He asked us to remember him and to follow him in the context of a meal with friends.

The painting also clearly shows a hunger for God. It shows gratitude for even a meager meal and, to me, a plea for something better in the future. Some hungers are visible; some are not. Most people have, in one way or another, a hungry heart. Because of this we are blessed when we give and when we receive. When we donate time or money or effort we often get back far more than we give. At this time of year, we at Bishop Sullivan Center are particularly grateful for our donors, for our volunteers, and for those families we help. We thank God for our blessings.

**In September, Bishop Sullivan Center assisted 1,244 families from its two food pantries and on average served 208 people a night at its soup kitchen.**

# SPONSOR-A-NIGHT AT THE SOUP KITCHEN AS A GIFT

## THOSE WHO SPONSOR-A-NIGHT RECEIVE MENU



Fast-food restaurants try to keep the cost of their meals as low as possible. So do we. Five nights a week we serve a hot meal to an average of 200 people a night. Some of that food is donated, some we have to buy,

and we pay a cook to fix the meal. Bottom line? It costs us about a dollar a meal. That's not bad.

We have been asking people if they would be willing to sponsor a night at the soup kitchen with a donation

of \$150. Many have. They have sponsored them in their own name, the names of their children, or as a gift for someone's birthday or anniversary.

You can go to our website, [www.bishopsullivan.org](http://www.bishopsullivan.org) and see the names of the sponsors. The day after YOUR night, our soup kitchen manager, Mike Matthews, will send a note to let you know how many you fed and what was served. Additionally, the name of the sponsor is proudly displayed in the dining room on the wall that night.

If you would like to sponsor a night for yourself or as a gift, either go to our website, or call Jane at 816-231-0984.



## ADOPT A FAMILY FOR CHRISTMAS

Each year, we try to match more than 200 families requiring a little extra holiday cheer. We screen each family to determine their level of need and to ensure that they are not receiving aid from any other agency.

If you, your family, your classroom or your co-workers are interested in helping such a family for Christmas, you can obtain more information on our website ([www.bishopsullivan.org](http://www.bishopsullivan.org)) or call here at 816-231-0984 and ask for Jeanne.



For those who donate to United Way, please consider designating Bishop Sullivan Center as the recipient.

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