

# Bishop Sullivan Center

August 2017, Vol. 23, No.5

## “I’M BACK IN BUSINESS” 98 YEAR-OLD FINDS ‘WORK’

**W**e help people find jobs. The first step to enter our employment program is to fill out a basic application form. One line on this form is “Date of Birth.”

When a staff person was reviewing some of these applications, she thought there was a mistake as an applicant had written down 1919 for the year she was born. It wasn’t a mistake. Merdis is 98 years old and was looking for work.

Merdis, who lives alone, needed some help with her bills. Never one to ask for a handout, she did what she has always done in her life when she needed extra money: she looked for work.

Due to her age and lack of transportation issues, finding a “real” job would be next to impossible. So, we came up with an idea.

Merdis told us that she had baked cakes in the past and used to sell them. We asked Merdis, “If we paid you \$400, would you bake a bunch of cakes that we would serve in our community kitchen?” She flashed a big smile, made a fist, swung it across her body and said, “I’m back in business.”

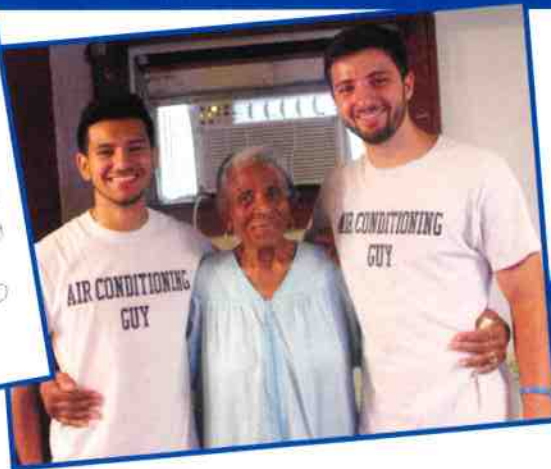
One thing Merdis wanted us to know before she agreed: “I don’t bake on Sundays. That’s the Lord’s day.”

Merdis feels good that she is working for this money, and the folks at the community kitchen were treated to a good dessert.



## WORDS OF GRATITUDE FOR PROJECT ELDERCOOL

Thank you so much for giving me air conditioning. It has been such a wonderful gift. I am so much cooler. I can cool up at night. I can also breathe so much better. You guys are awesome. Thanks again and keep up the good work.



I Just wanted to say thank you for a Air Conditioner. Now I can breathe at night and day. So say it again thank you Linda

# UNIQUE “CLASSROOM” FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

**B**ishop Sullivan Center oversaw a unique internship program for 25 college students this past summer thanks to a generous grant from the Catherin V. Merrill Foundation. These students worked at eight nonprofit organizations around the city. The purpose of the program is for the students to earn money, be exposed to people who face difficult struggles, and reflect on their faith.

Each week, the students had a written homework assignment. The students were to share an experience from their week and fill in the rest of this sentence, “God’s message to me in this experience was....” Below are samples of what they wrote. (We invite you to read more of their reflections on our website.)

**“There is no limit in helping others. There are always people who need help in this community, and getting the opportunity to help is something that will stay with me forever.”** Francisco Sánchez after completing three summers with Bishop Sullivan Center and installing over 500 air conditioners for low-income seniors.

**“There is really no ‘them’ and ‘us,’ we are all one in the grand scheme of God’s creation. If we tried to take care of our neighbors, and all of our neighbors, in just slightly the manner that God takes care of us, then the community that God wished for us could be possible.”** Sydney Hunter, who saw a mentally disabled client on the side of the road, and pulled over to give the woman a ride home.

**“My labor-free American citizenship is a gift I mustn’t just accept. I should use it to do work just like this—helping those new to America by being a representation of the helping, welcoming, and hospitable nature of America.”** Maggie Cain, who taught English as well a Forklift class to immigrants and refugees.



Jake and Pete Randall worked alongside youth from the urban core while they grew and harvested produce.

**“When society thinks of the homeless, it often thinks of their basic physical needs, but not the basic need for community. In much of their experience, the clients are simply another mouth to feed or another body on a bench, met with hurried steps and averted glances. By speaking to them in a direct, personal way, they experience individuality, respect, and love.”** Emily Barker, who served at a day center for those living in homelessness.

**“It was very powerful to learn first hand about the Muslim religion from a devoted and very open Syrian gentleman. His face lit up when I spoke about my brother, who is a novice in a Norbertine Monastery - I said that, like him, my brother prays 5 times each day. Our conversation was joy-filled and marked by openness and mutual respect.”** Marie Kopp, after speaking with her student who passed his U.S. citizenship exam that morning.

**“My clients are more than their mistakes or their circumstances. They are loving people who deserve a second chance.”** Jack Barry, who served men and women as they returned to their community after time in prison.



Anett Amaya helped elementary students improve their reading skills in a summer academic program.

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