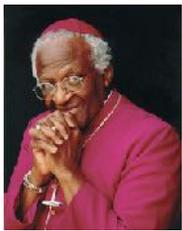

Wallyhouse News



A Franciscan Catholic Worker at St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church,
720 North King Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96817; stelizabeth720.org
(805) 535-5677; wallyhouse720@gmail.com Ninth Issue - Spring 2021

Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin founded the Catholic Worker movement on May 1, 1933 in NY City with the inaugural edition of the Catholic Worker newspaper. Their vision, based on the radical life and message of Jesus, continues today in over 200 CW communities, in cities and on farms, throughout the world. Wallyhouse, the Honolulu Catholic Worker founded in March 2018, too, is committed to nurturing the poor in body, mind and spirit, non-violent resistance of oppression and practicing radical acts of kindness.



“Ubuntu” is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, ‘Yu, u nobunto’; ‘Hey so-and-so has *ubuntu*.’ Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, ‘My humanity is inextricably bound up in yours.’ We belong in a bundle of life.

— Desmond Tutu in *No Future without Forgiveness*, 2000.

In honor of our Community of Volunteers

Aloha Friends. This edition of Wallyhouse News seeks to celebrate the many volunteers who have courageously and faithfully served our guests throughout the pandemic. We thought the best way to do that was to ask each volunteer to share a few thoughts. We share their enthusiastic responses below.

Note: each person's volunteer start date is in parentheses behind their name.

Thoughts from the Door Minders

barbara bennett, tssf (Live-in volunteer, January 2018): Before coming to Wallyhouse, David Catron, TSSF and I served the poor in Brazil for 12 years, and so were moved when Bruna, a Brazilian, came to our door for food. We chatted in Portuguese and compared where each of us had lived in her country. She married an American serviceman who brought her to Hawai'i. Periodically, she would come for food and either David or I would speak with her in her native language. Then one Saturday afternoon, a time when I, an introvert, exhale relief and gratitude for a week of service done and for the ensuing 44 hours without needing to answer the door, Bruna arrived. “Hello,” she called in the same manner as the others who come to our closed door. David poked out his head to explain that we were closed and could she come back Monday morning? “No, I want to speak to barbara,” she replied. I was exhausted and the last thing I wanted was to engage in a conversation.

“Please,” David pressed me. I was adamant: *NO! We are closed, I am not going to the door!* Bruna left a package on the outdoor table and left. It was a few days before I opened the gift of Brazilian products, a flag, jewelry, candy, and felt shame for my rigidity. She had come not to receive but to give. I watched for her so that I could apologize. The wait was long. It was near two years before Bruna returned. “Bruna! Tudu bom?” I welcomed her. She was taken aback that I remembered her name and even more so when I apologized for my former bad behavior. We chatted, I gave her food and she was on her way. Days later, she was standing in the church parking lot when I returned from my evening walk. I smiled and waved, then remembering the past, I walked

over to speak with her. “I wasn’t sure,” she stammered nervously, “it is after hours but I was hoping I could give this to you; it was my mother’s.” I took the gift, thanking her and we parted with a virtual hug. In the package was a charming Brazilian flag pendant. 🇧🇷 I will treasure it always not only as a reminder of my friend Bruna, who now comes to Wallyhouse regularly, but as a remembrance that *Aloha* supersedes rules.

Lovely Reiger (Live-in, August 2019): I like to make people happy and laugh...and to give: if I got it, they got it. I am happy when I see people walk away with a smile on their face with a bag of food and they are thankful. ...Challenging are people that have an outburst, usually on account of mental illness. It’s hard but we try to deal with it the best we know how.



Jinna Stevens (Live-in, August 2019): I get along with a lot of people. Now, I manage the food distribution program which has a lot to it: the Food Bank, keeping up with enough food packed for our guests, the paperwork, organizing the volunteers... I have been on the “other side” and know what it is to be homeless, I love being able to help the people who really need it.



Cassie Chee (March 9, 2021): I grew up outside of Seattle, Washington... and am a student at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and a Community Organizer with Faith Action for Community Equity. Gratifying is the warmth of our neighbors who come by to pick up food...Volunteering at Wallyhouse is important to me because I do not feel that I can preach or organize here in Honolulu without knowing those in my neighborhood.

Yoko Liriano (July 2, 2020): I grew up in Kapolei and am currently an organizer with the Hawai’i Workers Center. There have been some days when the line is so long, we can’t sit down for even a moment. The lines get longer and longer as workers lose jobs, hours, savings. What surprised me is the community building aspect—people are telling their neighbors, their coworkers, that they can receive help with putting food on the table at Wallyhouse. Volunteering is not for the faint of heart. It is absolutely heartbreaking to hear stories of people who experienced a hardship that turned their lives upside down. Every week, I ask if they are working, and they say no because there are no jobs. It makes me angry that so many people are hungry and that our government is so inefficient at even giving out peoples’ hard earned unemployment benefits that they have become houseless. Sometimes, some folks take out their frustration on the volunteers or other community members, but it is so important to remember that they are rightfully angry at a system that does not care for them. We must treat everyone with patience and compassion.



Adi and I started volunteering here as a way to outreach to workers affected by the pandemic. Over time, we built relationships with so many people and have become a part of the community. Some of my favorite times are when Miss Amy, an older houseless woman who is a regular at Wallyhouse, comes and tells me a funny story or compliments my hair while we prepare her food bag.

One story that stands out is Jimmy, who lost his home and had to live in his car because of the pandemic—he lost his job and his unemployment benefits were stuck in the limbo that is the state’s bureaucracy. We met him while doing outreach during food distribution and he was willing to work with the Hawai’i Workers Center as we tried our best to advocate with him and so many others for their unemployment benefits. He did news interviews, calling for solutions that would make it easier for the thousands of people in

Hawai'i who can't receive their benefits because of an inaccessible system. Jimmy, because of the media coverage, started to receive calls from the UI office to help him fix his claims, he got calls from generous donors who wanted to support him, and, what he wanted most, he went back to work.



Adi Gajigan (July 2020): I'm volunteer at Hawaii Workers Center, and also a graduate student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. The Wallyhouse setup is amazing! Homeless folks can receive mail, and meet their basic needs...dealing with difficult people is hard but the people at Wallyhouse are trained to de-escalate situations. My favorite is when I talk to Filipino aunties and uncles, it reminds me of home.



Dean Nelson (month of February): I'm a Doctor of Chiropractic and an acupuncturist and still operate Windhorse Healthcare clinic. My wife and I started the Kailua Shambhala Meditation Center 16 years ago. Wallyhouse makes me want to do more. I have felt out of touch with the suffering of my larger ohana. It gave me the opportunity to serve and give a tiny bit back to ...[those] affected by the pandemic and difficult circumstances. As I leave to travel, in a short time I got more than I gave, my priorities got realigned.

Dawn Morais Webster: *Looking and learning*

For two hours every Friday I hand out bags of food to those who come by looking for a little help. How hard could it be? I started doing this in September 2018. It's been an education. I've learned from people like the late David Catron, or Barbara Bennett, and Wally and Kay Inglis about the sturdiness of soul, and sheer stamina it takes to be the bearer of this kind of help. But I'm also being educated by the people who come seeking this help.



On Day One, one of my first guests, Lara, assured me that I was not the devil. Good to know. Another, David, sat on a bench going through the freshly washed clothes I had just returned to him. Dismayed at seeing stains, he yelled for me to come get the clothes

and run them through the wash again. I did not rush to oblige. I am reminded every week that my "performance"—sometimes even my politics—is as much the object of our guests' scrutiny as theirs is in our eyes. One gentle regular, Clifford, asked if I would tell him who I voted for in the 2020 election. He was distressed that some of his friends remain staunchly Trumpian. But poverty is no assurance of progressive politics--as I learn when confronted by the occasional spontaneous outburst that "All Lives Matter."

My mother used to say that dressing up for one's guests is an act of respect. It says they are important. So I dress with care for my Friday stints at Wallyhouse. More than once I have had a guest remark approvingly about the bright colors of my blouse, or my fun, strappy shoes, or my wood earrings, turning in the wind. Their shy compliments tell me they want more than just something to stave off hunger. Maybe they are looking for things that make them smile. They have not given up. I treasure their attentiveness, knowing that the spirit of my mother which always hovers close, exults. Maybe misery does not love company. Maybe misery wants to be relieved. I like to think that dressing up for my guests at Wallyhouse every Friday morning is part of how I offer relief, a kind of hospitality.

My Wallyhouse guests are every bit as important as those I serve in my issue advocacy work. I have been lucky to work with warriors for a living wage, for tax fairness, affordable housing, food sustainability and access to clean water, free of toxic pesticides. I have learned from those who are addressing the impact of climate change, especially on communities least equipped to offset that impact. My two hours weekly at Wallyhouse is a reminder of the real desperation of ordinary people who wish they did not need to come sign up for a bag of food.

I wish every lawmaker would come hand out food-bags for just one day. They would see up close and personal the hardship and hunger that the lack of good public policies—compounded by an unforeseen pandemic—have wrought. Wallyhouse reminds me to be grateful. And to return every Friday morning, dressed nicely, of course! Because I know Annie with the big, straw, flower-trimmed hat will notice. And Donald is always grateful. Donald, who always says “Thank you” and then adds “I know you don’t have to do this. You could be doing other things. So, thank you.” Donald, who has been on the verge of landing a job for as long as I have been volunteering at Wallyhouse. He’s still looking. And I’m still learning.



Corie Tanida (November 2018): I had just left a stressful job and was looking for something to fill my newfound free time. Thankfully fellow volunteer Dawn Webster invited me to check out Wallyhouse and I just kept coming back. I'm a local girl raised in the Kalihi area, so this is my community. I feel very fortunate to share and remember that service is key. I've learned, and continue to learn, so much from my time here and am grateful for barbara's leadership and friendship, and for letting me brush Angie and Flower every week. I'm very honored to be working with this group.

Rosemary Casey (October 2020): I'm a member of the Newman Center Holy Spirit Catholic Parish. I'm most comfortable when I'm involved in good causes and team efforts. Initially, I was surprised by the number of people who come for food bags, and was impressed by the commitment of Jinna, Lovely and barbara to the work of helping the homeless and the poor. But it's challenging to remember names!!

At Wallyhouse, I experienced my first time with someone high on meth and found myself amazed and saddened by the experience. There's so much I don't understand about living in real poverty and houselessness. It's truly a revelation, and I'm humbled by the interactions. I'm most appreciative of the examples that the Wallyhouse staff provide for how to work in the situation, keeping all safe and respected.



Thoughts from the Food Bag Packers



Janice Low (March 2020): I have been married for 21 wonderful years and have a son... in Oregon... I work for Child Welfare as a social worker and am a member of Epiphany Episcopal Church in Kaimuki. My faith in God and humanity have been renewed from the respect, love and hope given by the Wallyhouse staff and its volunteers to those who appear day in and day out. It has been gut wrenching to watch the food insecurity expand from the homeless to the middle class and/or those who worked multiple jobs who were financially stable until job loss due to Covid-19. It is hard to see the long lines waiting for a sack of food and to know that more individuals, including children, are likely going to bed hungry.

Since March 2020, almost weekly, Chris Sy, baker and small business owner of The Breadshop in Kaimuki donated his unsold bread loaves to Wallyhouse. When Covid-19 hit, his business was financially impacted and there were moments he contemplated closure. Through it all, he continued to give to those in need even if he too was challenged. It's the random and intentional acts of kindness by Chris and those involved in Wallyhouse that shined the light on the goodness of humankind.

Renee and Stephen Latimer (October 2020): We have lived in Hawaii for 30 years, are semi-retired, have 2 grown daughters and live on the Windward side. We are members of The Newman Center (Holy Spirit parish). Formerly, Stephen volunteered minding the door before COVID hit... Now, we are surprised by how much food is distributed in a week. There is so much need in our community and people are hungry! We ask ourselves how such a rich country can have so many hungry people. Actually, filling food bags is a bit boring but we try to listen to music and dance a little bit to make it more interesting! Our favorite dance is the box dance. Gratifying is knowing that we are doing a tiny thing on a regular basis to help lessen human suffering. Like Mother Teresa said, "Do small things with great love".



John Webster (April 2020): I'm a semi-retired college teacher/businessman who with my wife Dawn loves St E's and Wallyhouse - doing exactly what I imagine Jesus would have expected from a church community in these troubling times. I had the privilege of working first-hand with the homeless in earlier parts of my own journey, and now enjoy some of the back-room work that I know brings a touch of relief to those most in need. With each bag packed, I am reminded of my own childhood anticipation when my family depended upon help of this kind.

Ulrich Stams (6 weeks): I am a retired doctor and enjoy attending St. Elizabeth with my wife Carol. Volunteering, I enjoy how friendly and helpful people are, like Barbara and Jinna, but am challenged by the heavy lifting which is not so good for my old back. It is gratifying to help less fortunate people and to work with my friend John.



Barbara Service (April 2020): I'm a retired Child Welfare Supervisor. Helping people has been something I've done all my life. Through the Cathedral of St. Andrew's Outreach program I've been preparing sandwiches and packing food bags for individuals and families at Wallyhouse. Hunger is the most basic need. As Matthew 25:35 tells us "for I was hungry and you gave me food."

Susan C. Anderson (June 2020): Wallyhouse is a secret garden in Kalihi - colorful, with a beautiful garden and art room. It is challenging to see how quickly the pantry is emptied - it is filled twice weekly but often near empty on Sundays, the day I volunteer. I have enjoyed meeting Jinna, Barbara and the dogs. They are cheerful, peaceful and organized. And I met Jinna's mother who is a wise and lovely person. I like her saying, "Don't get angry, life is too short."



Thoughts from a few Other Volunteers



Teatuahere Teiti-Gierlach (August 2020): I will graduate from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in the fall with my BA in Ethnic Studies. In November I went out to Hoa 'Āina O Makaha where Uncle Gigi asked if I wanted to start my own garden. Since then, we have harvested about seven hundred pounds of produce, which was all brought back to Wallyhouse. I'm still surprised by how I started out minding the door at Wallyhouse to becoming a farmer. I really never thought that would happen. Now, I can honestly say my time at Hoa 'Āina has been the most incredible, enriching experience of my life. But none of this would be possible if it weren't for Wallyhouse, a place responsible for feeding hundreds. Fresh, healthy, accessible food is a right far too many people are deprived of. I'm just grateful Uncle Gigi gave me the space and the resources to grow.

Sabina Fajardo Swift (August 2019): I am a Filipino-American retiree who worked at the Bishop Museum and UH Manoa. Six years of volunteer work assisting marginalized farmers in Laos and Vietnam in the '60s built in me a strong desire to help people in need. I believe in the adage "once a volunteer, always a volunteer!" When the Coalition for Specialized Housing – of which I've been a board member for many years – decided to

provide funding to Wallyhouse, it was a fortuitous opportunity to help the homeless. It has been almost two years of feeling good, my feet grounded, answering to a desire to contribute to the community, however small.

I lost my husband a few years ago and my children now live on the mainland. This, along with the deadly Covid virus lockdowns, affected my mental health. Volunteering helps me manage that mental discord as I meet new people of diverse ethnicity. I feel I am able to help them and, likewise, they help me mentally and spiritually. I am pleased to see the same elderly Filipino man and the Vietnamese lady whom I spoke to in her own language, to her great surprise. I even came across a Laotian man. I miss them when they don't come. I appreciate being part of this community of compassionate people from different religious backgrounds, economic status, and education. What binds us all

together is compassion and a strong desire to make a difference! *Aloha Nui Ke Akua!*



Wally Inglis



Ann Shaver



Fr. Mafi & Sa'ane



Lynette Shim



Kerry Hashitate



An Appeal to you, our Volunteer donors and friends

We are blessed by all of you, by your love and support. So many of you have risen to the occasion of the near overwhelming increase in those needing food and basic services during the pandemic. We could not carry on without you. You are our community for whom everyday we pray, *Mahalo!* Thank you!

We ask you to help in any way you can with your **tax deductible donation** which can be made online with **Givlia** at St. E's website: stelizabeth720.org, click on "GIVE" then follow instructions for Givlia. Choose "Catholic Worker Fund" on the "where do you want to give" dropdown menu.

Or, we still like checks which may be made payable to:
St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, memo: Wallyhouse CW
 Mail to: Wallyhouse at St. Elizabeth's, 720 North King St, Honolulu, HI 96817.



Therefore our hearts were glad and our tongues rejoiced!

Acts 2:26