



Hopeful News

September 2007

HOPE of Buffalo, Inc. 335 Grider St. Buffalo, NY 14215 (716) 892-8224

NYS Division of Parole Honors Sister Karen Klimczak

The New York State Division of Parole honored the memory of Sister Karen Klimczak, SSJ, who worked tirelessly on behalf of former prison inmates in the City of Buffalo. As a lasting tribute to the fallen Sister Karen, the Division dedicated a conference room at their headquarters to Sister Karen and adorned it with a plaque emblazoned with the dove symbol that had become her well-known calling card. The plaque reads:

Dedicated to the Memory of Sister Karen Klimczak

She devoted her life to helping the less fortunate

She was committed to the cause of non-violence

She touched us all with her friendship and loyalty

She left us "Peaceprints"

"We hope that through this small gesture we can continue Sister Karen's noble work and ensure her dedication to helping ex-convicts re-enter society will not be forgotten," said New



York State Parole Chairman and CEO George B. Alexander. "Sister Karen was

a great friend to many in the Division of Parole and we want to make sure her example remains fresh in the minds of parolees as well as parole officers."

Sister Karen, who touched the lives of thousands with her dedication, patience and friendship, devoted her life to nonviolence, holding peace vigils in

Buffalo. Sr. Karen was known for her work helping former inmates become successful members of society through her ministry at Bissonette House in Buffalo. The facility, first called HOPE House, offers a home-like community living environment for men recently released from prison, where the staff and residents share in the facility's upkeep and operation in a supportive way. "Really, a true leader is a person who inspires," said Sister Jean Klimczak, who, like her sister, is also a nun. "Sister Karen inspired both Parole Officers and parolees. She was a true leader because she was a true inspiration." Despite the dangers associated with her work, Sister Karen always treated former inmates with dignity and respect. She felt that by giving these men some hope, she could help them turn their lives around. She served on an advisory board for the Buffalo area Parole Office, using humor and persistence to convince others to follow her example. Campaigns continue to this day with the slogans "Nonviolence Begins With Me" and "I Leave PeacePrints" adorning yard signs and billboards throughout the Buffalo region. The Division also honored two parole officers, Beth Hart and James McNamara, who assisted in the arrest of Sr. Karen's murderer, with commendations from Chairman Alexander and Officer Amico. Parole Officer Amico commented on his feelings of loss stating how Sr. Karen had helped him during difficult times when his wife was suffering leukemia and other serious illnesses. He stated how she believed in the power of prayer in praying for his wife. His wife recovered and is currently in remission. Amico stated lastly that Sr Karen was more than a working colleague... she was a friend.

"Home" Somewhere Between NYC and Buffalo?

Written by Amir: A September Resident of Bissonette Hope House

I was born in NYC, but when I was 2 years old, I was brought to Buffalo and put into foster care by my mother. I could never understand why she put me into foster care? My foster mother was a very religious person and I had a lot of respect for her. On the other hand, my foster father drank heavily and was at times extremely abusive. It got so bad that when I was 7, he threw me down the stairs and later when I was about 9 he hit me in the head with a stick the size of a baseball bat. I still have the scars on my face from these assaults, other scars are not so easily seen. When I was 13 years old I ran away to NYC to find my real mother. It had always plagued me that she gave me away to an abusive home. It was not long after that when I started to use weed. It helped me to not think about my problems and later, I was able to get extra money by selling the marijuana. Mine was not a fast demise. I was able to handle things until I was 24 years old. That was when "base" came into the scene. Today it is called "crack". Up until then I was able to keep things together,

"I want to do the right thing, and I know the people at Bissonette have my back and see what I am trying to achieve."

but when I started messing with base my life went down real fast. That was when I started to get into trouble and went to prison. I never thought my life would go in that direction. No one does when they are growing up. But it just happens so deceitfully. Drugs take such control. I do not want to make excuses I know what I did was wrong, but today I can say that I am "never going back to jail! Ever". I want to live a normal life and do the right thing. Since I have been at Bissonette House I have been their best pupil. I want to do the right thing, and I know the people at Bissonette have my back and see what I am trying to achieve. Before I leave Bissonette House I want to make sure I have given everything I need back to all that have helped me. What a lot of people may not understand is that I now have a higher power. My faith is in God. God keeps me strong and gives me guidance. I will always be grateful to "GOD", to Bissonette House and to all that have helped me and I will never go back prison! EVER!

Bissonette House Wish List

Toiletries- deodorant, shampoo, soap, lotion, shaving cream, toilette paper, tissues, toothpaste, and tooth brushes, etc.

Cleaning Supplies- dish soap, dishwasher soap, laundry detergent, air freshener, Lime away, etc.

First aid – band-aids, antibacterial ointment, gauze, etc.

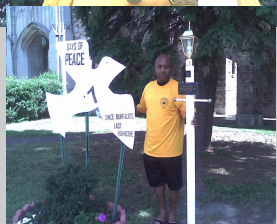
Household products- environmental light bulbs, batteries all sizes, paper towels, etc.

Technology- copy paper, pens, white out, A drive and CD discs, printer cartridges (call for type), etc. Anything you use, we can probably use too!



A Beacon of Hope

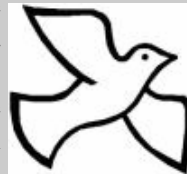
On July 7th, 2007, the F.A.T.H.E.R.S Group of WNY presented a street light called "The Beacon of Hope" to Hope House – Bissonette. The light was dedicated to Sr. Karen Klimczak, in recognition of the Day of Remembrance. The F.A.T.H.E.R.S Group is an elite group of strong, courageous fathers who are spirit-led in their mission to do street patrol in our toughest neighborhoods. During the presentation Lenny Lane, President of the F.A.T.H.E.R.S



Group, dedicated the Beacon of Hope with a poem called "Finding the Way" (a flashing light) Sr. Karen Klimczak planted seeds everywhere she walked. Seeds of love, peace, hope, joy, mercy and most of all seeds of forgiveness." Mr. Lane went on to say that "Bissonette House is the front line in an urban war that the F.A.T.H.E.R.S. group intends to defend by being its army of soldiers for God."

National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims

September 23, 2007, will mark the first National Day of Remembrance. Since the year 2000, more than 113,000 persons have been murdered in the United States. Last year alone, 16,742 individuals lost their lives through acts of human violence. And, for all these murder victims, there are untold numbers of mothers, fathers, children, brothers, sisters, friends, co-workers, and neighbors whose lives are forever altered by the tragedy and horror of suddenly losing a loved one. The National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims also reminds us that murder impacts each and every one of us, and every community nationwide. This Day calls us to work diligently to prevent the violence that destroys lives and devastates families. Established days of remembrance memorialize many dark days in our Nation's history, including the Oklahoma City bombing, the September 11th terrorist attacks, and, most recently, the massacre at Virginia Tech. As solemn and rightfully remembered as these horrific tragedies are, we must also remember that people are murdered every single day. During the National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims we remember and honor all these victims and their courageous survivors.



(<http://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbName=DocumentViewer&DocumentID=43522>.)

Please Help

Bissonette House & HOPE of Buffalo, Inc. is looking for VOLUNTEERS.

We would like to invite you to join the Bissonette House Family! If you are looking for an opportunity to serve others, give something back to the community, and engage in a very rewarding experience, we need you. Volunteer commitments can be short-term or long-term, one-time or on a regular basis. Helping out at Bissonette is easy and your participation, large or small, is always appreciated. Join us at Bissonette House in the endeavors of Peace, Tolerance and LOVE!

Some of the Volunteer Opportunities: **Receptionist,**

Cooks,

Volunteer Coordinator, Handy-persons, Organizers,

Garden Supervisor & those who love to garden....

Please call (716) 892-8224 for more information on how you can **get involved!**

And, if you are unable to share your time with us, your prayers and donations are always welcome. You may even consider helping us out



Free workshop and continental Breakfast

The Homeless and at Risk at My Door : Facilitating Dialogue and Strategic Action to end homelessness

Date, 10/16/07 at 8:30-10:30
Location American Red Cross Board Room

786 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo NY 14209

This workshop will provide a wealth of information to the **faith community** about how to link those in need to sources of income to alleviate poverty and prevent homelessness

Sponsored by The Homeless Alliance of WNY

Call Devan at 853-1101 x 18

BISSONETTE HOUSE
335 Grider Street
Buffalo, N.Y., 14215
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