

*“House of Mercy is an amazing place — providing so much and never asking for anything in return.”*

— Andrew Bailey, House of Mercy Volunteer

Andrew Bailey grew up in Honeoye Falls. In 2019, he graduated from Ithaca College, and soon after moved to Rochester. Andrew was eager to get involved in the community and learn more about the city. A family friend, Dr. Lambert from the University of Rochester, suggested House of Mercy.

Andrew started volunteering in our warehouse delivering furniture to individuals who had found housing and needed assistance moving into their new home. In March, after the coronavirus became a concern, Andrew started working at our front gate taking temperatures, providing masks and hand sanitizer, and only allowing staff, volunteers, and residents into the shelter. He became our greeter and security, all in one.



Andrew became a welcoming and familiar face for many of the residents, and enjoyed getting to know them. He befriended

Richard, one of our guests, who would be a helpful friend as Andrew worked at the front gate. “Sometimes people would get upset because I couldn’t let them in. Richard always had my back and I felt comfort when he was around.”

Growing up in a town of just 2,700, Andrew did not have

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*Andrew (right) with his friend Richard, a House of Mercy guest.*

## COVID-19 Update

With the onset of the Coronavirus in March of this year, House of Mercy quickly implemented several changes to our services and preventative measures to minimize the effect of the virus on our guests. We immediately convened a Coronavirus Task Force made up of staff, guests, Board members, and health care professionals, to develop a comprehensive response plan.

Realizing the need to promote social distancing, The House immediately decreased its overnight shelter capacity by 20% – based on guidance from NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. This enables our overnight guests to sleep a safe distance from each other. In addition, our uniquely designed dormitory area – with four-foot-high walls between beds – decreases the likelihood of airborne virus transmission among guests. However, this decrease in capacity required us to develop alternative shelter plans. To make sure all experiencing homelessness received safe shelter, The House joined with Open Door Mission, REACH Advocacy, MC Collaborative, and Monroe County to operate two underutilized hotels.

We also closed our drop-in day program and soup kitchen to individuals not staying at the

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# Sister Grace Miller Receives Awards

## **Human Service Lifetime Achievement Award**

The Executive Board of the Federation of Social Workers has selected Sister Grace Miller to receive their 2020 W. Burton Richardson Lifetime Achievement Award. The award will be presented at the 16th Annual Human Service Worker of the Year Awards luncheon tentatively scheduled for February or March, 2021.

In a city ranked among the poorest in the nation, House of Mercy is a vital refuge for people who have nowhere else to turn. It would not exist without the tireless efforts of Sister Grace, the woman some people call “Rochester’s Mother Teresa”. House of Mercy provides food, clothing, shelter, healthcare services and many other forms of assistance to thousands of extremely poor people in Rochester every year.

Grace Miller’s story is inspiring.

Grace grew up in poverty. She made the decision to devote her life to God. In the 60s, after a riot forced Rochester to face up to the vicious discrimination experienced every day by people of color, she joined the Civil Rights movement. Fast forward to the early 1980s, she volunteered at a homeless shelter. She learned that homelessness in a city with freezing temperatures and 100 inches of annual snowfall is not a tragic situation, it’s a life-threatening condition. At night, on her way to social justice meetings, she would see homeless people struggling through the snow. She would pull over to the curb and offer to take them to a shelter, give them a hot meal, or simply let them warm up for a few minutes in her car.

One night there was a terrible blizzard. She hopped in her car and found three men on the streets. Fearing that their lives were in jeopardy, she got them into her car and tried to find them a safe place for the night but all the shelters were full. Even a church turned the men away. Finally, she convinced one church to take the men in. The

experience left her angry but determined. Rochester needed one place that would never turn people in need away, she thought.

Sister Grace founded House of Mercy in 1985 in one of the poorest neighborhoods in town that originally consisted of a small rented house, and a single donated desk. She told people she was there to help them any way she could. By the end of the first week, hundreds of people were coming to her door. She would be mobbed in the morning when she parked her car on the street. An amazing thing happened that became a House of Mercy tradition, many of the people who came for help were inspired by what Sister Grace was doing and wanted to help others.

Some of them stayed for decades; cooking, cleaning, handing out food and clothes, helping the mission survive on a shoestring budget. One woman cooked an estimated 70,000 meals for hungry people over 30 years. Two others cooked even more.

House of Mercy moved to a new location on Hudson Avenue. Fifteen years later, another crisis got her attention. Homeless people were being evicted from the Civic Center Garage, a man-made area where they sought shelter during terrible weather. There were protests and attempts to set up temporary shelters for the winter. Then supporters of The House pulled together to help Sister Grace find a new home for her mission on Ormond Street. This time homeless people would have real beds to sleep in instead of the old couches in the living room on Hudson. It was the beginning of a new era for the mission. The greatest benefit of the new home from Sister Grace’s viewpoint was that it would give her the ability to help more people than ever before.

The shelter has almost 100 people every night and provides meals, school backpacks filled with supplies for children every September, food baskets and gifts for hundreds of families every holiday season. There is



something more that House of Mercy has always provided: love, acceptance and hope to people who have suffered from extreme poverty, mental illness, lifelong trauma, addiction and hopelessness.

Ever since the Civil Rights movement of the 60s, Sister Grace Miller has been a strong voice in our community for the poor, the homeless, people with mental illness who have been abandoned on the streets, people of color, people who face discrimination in housing and employment, and others who have few effective advocates in a world where empathy and compassion are increasingly becoming endangered values. She has been stopping to help people for more than 50 years. She has worked 12,000 long days to help the poor. The last paycheck she took from the mission she founded was in 1992. She has made the Rochester community a better and more compassionate place.

## **Women of Excellence Award**

This fall, Rochester Business Journal selected Sister Grace Miller as a Women of Excellence honoree.

Established in 2018, the Women of Excellence awards recognizes high-achieving women for their professional experience, community involvement, leadership and sustained commitment to mentoring. Winners were selected by a panel of judges comprised of previous Circle of Excellence and Women of Excellence honorees.

“Through their professional accomplishments, community involvement, leadership and sustained commitment to mentoring, the 2020 Women of Excellence honorees are high-achieving women who are committed to making Rochester the best place to live and work,” said Suzanne Fischer-Huettner, group publisher of the Rochester Business Journal. “We at the Rochester Business Journal applaud the honorees for what they have done and will continue to do for our community.”

The Women of Excellence awards was presented virtually on September 9th.

# Tapping into the fresh perspective of youth

House of Mercy has established a Junior Board comprised of young professionals under age 30 from all over the country who are passionate about making an impact! The Junior Board helps plan fundraising events, provide fresh perspectives to the Board of Directors, create innovative solutions to difficult problems, and spread the message of the mission of The House. Keep an eye out for our virtual fall events, including our Dance Campaign and Craft Beer Tasting series! If you’re interested in becoming a member of the Junior Board, please reach out to Dino Swan at [dean.m.swan@gmail.com](mailto:dean.m.swan@gmail.com).



Juliana Pellino



Dino Swan



Austin Fox



Jessica Yu Jin



Ava Brugger



Jacob Vila



Jack Walsh



Roger Smith

## COVID-19 Update *(continued from cover)*

overnight shelter, adhering to Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for congregate settings. To ensure individuals and families who rely on our hot meal and food pantry programs still get the food they need, House of Mercy partnered with Foodlink and REACH Advocacy, implementing a food distribution program to deliver hot meals and food boxes to all in need.

To minimize spread of the virus, we suspended accepting in-kind donations of all used items. Although unlikely, it is possible to spread the virus on clothing, towels, sheets, and other housewares. This also minimizes donors unnecessarily visiting the shelter and risking transmission. Furthermore, for the safety of our guests and volunteers, we have instructed most of our volunteers to stay away from The House resulting in decreased capacity to process and clean in-kind donations.

Several preventive measures have also been implemented to address the COVID outbreak. These measures include posting clear signage throughout the building to remind all visitors to maintain safe distances, wash hands regularly, and wear a mask at all times while in the building. We check temperatures of everyone who enters the building and shelter guests at least once per day. We secured funding to purchase recommended PPE including disposable masks, hand sanitizer, gloves, face shields, and gowns. House of Mercy also contracted with a professional cleaning service to thoroughly clean and disinfect the building daily and hired a full-time Safety Manager to handle all aspects of our preventive practices. Finally, The House partnered with a local construction company to redesign our main entrance to guarantee proper distancing in this high-traffic area.

## Andrew *(continued from cover)*

much exposure to diverse populations. Rochester was an adjustment. And, for Andrew, getting to know the guests opened his eyes to the different life experiences of many people in our city. "These are everyday people facing everyday struggles. When you get to know them you can see how awesome they are."

House of Mercy's donation warehouse was temporarily closed due to COVID but is opening again soon. Andrew is happy to contribute his time making our city a brighter

Though time-consuming and expensive, these measures have proven successful with **no positive cases among our guests, staff, or volunteers**. This is a credit to hard work and commitment by our wonderful dedicated staff and volunteers.

Despite our success to date, the future remains uncertain and unnerving. With the likely resurgence of the virus, our guests and the homeless population remain at high risk for contracting and spreading COVID. In addition, several factors may cause an increase need for our services over the next several months including possible increase of evictions; likely closing of shelters and decreased bed capacity; and the typical increase in those seeking shelter during the winter months. House of Mercy is actively working with other shelters and public health professionals to identify ways to mitigate the risk of infection among our highly susceptible and vulnerable population.

None of this is possible without our generous donors and the following funders: Environmental, Social & Corporate Governance, United Way Crisis Fund, Konar Foundation, and Emergency Food & Shelter National Board Program.

Despite the incredible toll the virus has taken on our community and the entire country, House of Mercy remains steadfast in serving as many people in need as we can in a safe and healthy way. We are truly blessed to have the wonderful support of our donors and supporters who have given us their time, talent, and treasure for the last 35 years. We thank each and every one of you for your continued support and prayers.

place, and in return, he enjoys getting to know many of our guests better.

As St. Francis reminds us, "It is in giving that we receive." Andrew gives his time and receives an open mind and friendship. What can YOU receive from House of Mercy? Join our team of volunteers and find out. Send an email to [volunteer@houseofmercyrochester.org](mailto:volunteer@houseofmercyrochester.org) or call 585-546-2580 ext. 112.

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Meet Tamika Rivera-Stokes, Warehouse Volunteer

### **What is your background outside of HOM?**

I worked at Walmart for 18 years, but had to stop when I injured my back. I have two kids: a daughter who is 23 and a son who is 11.

### **How long have you been volunteering?**

Three holidays and two years. I started when the warehouse was right next to House of Mercy.

### **How did you get involved?**

The one holiday when I started we really didn't have any food and I was going from pantry to pantry to get food. Money was low, and I barely had enough to pay the bills. My husband wasn't getting enough hours and I am on disability. I went to House of Mercy for food and asked if they accepted volunteers. They said yes, so I called a few times and came in to volunteer. I started cleaning in the building and then helped in the warehouse.

### **What's the highlight of your experience?**

Seeing people happy when they get help.

### **What do you think people should know about the population we serve?**

A lot of people can't afford to live how they are living. They really are poor and a lot of people need help. I'm one of them, I need help just as bad as the other people I help. They are in worse situations so I try to make them feel better. A lot of people need food and furniture.

**Thank you, Tamika, for your service to the House of Mercy Community!**



## Ways to Give

### **FREEWILL**

House of Mercy has partnered with FreeWill to help you protect your loved ones and assets for free. This resource allows many in our community who do not have an up-to-date will protect the people and causes they love. We wanted to make this task easy and accessible for everyone who shares our vision for a poverty-free future.

Thank you, as always, for supporting our most vulnerable people right here in your own backyard. We are truly grateful for your support.

Access the tool at:

[www.HouseofMercyRochester.org/planned-giving](http://www.HouseofMercyRochester.org/planned-giving)

### **CIRCLE OF MERCY**

For the cost of a pumpkin spice latte you may grab before work, you can give someone who is hungry a hot meal at House of Mercy. Feed a person in need with a monthly gift.

A \$20 donation covers breakfast and lunch for almost two weeks. A \$60 donation provides five nights of warm shelter.

House of Mercy recognizes donors who've made a monthly commitment to support our future through its new Circle of Mercy Giving Program.

To join today, visit:

[www.HouseofMercyRochester.org/want-to-help](http://www.HouseofMercyRochester.org/want-to-help)

### **AMAZON**

**Check out our updated Amazon Wishlists!** You can purchase much needed items for The House from our wishlist, and once purchased, Amazon will deliver those items right to our door. Check 'em out!  
<https://amzn.to/2EY5Yjy>  
<https://amzn.to/33oT5Za>

### **Click Shop Give with AmazonSmile**

AmazonSmile is a simple way for you to donate to House of Mercy when you shop on Amazon. Amazon will donate a portion of your purchases to us with no cost to you! Visit [AmazonSmile.com](http://AmazonSmile.com) and search for House of Mercy. Then shop as normal. Amazon will remember your charity selected on your device and every eligible purchase you make will result in a donation to The House. Thanks for SMILING!

For more information on any of these ways to give, email [stephanie@houseofmercyrochester.org](mailto:stephanie@houseofmercyrochester.org) or call (585) 546-2580, ext. 106.

## Meet John

John is a junior at McQuaid Jesuit High School. John organized a neighborhood collection drive of food and clothing for House of Mercy.

John and his family are big supporters of The House, doing their part to clothe and feed people in need. Our sincere gratitude goes to John for supporting House of Mercy and all who enter.

You can organize your own collection drive, too. Year-round needs include:

- Food collection (canned goods preferred)
- Personal hygiene products

Seasonal needs include:

- Warm coats and clothing
- Warm gloves, hats and scarves
- Christmas toys

Everyone has something to give. We value the act of giving, not the substance of what is given. For more information about setting up your own collection, contact [stephanie@houseofmercyrochester.org](mailto:stephanie@houseofmercyrochester.org).

*Only new packaged items will be accepted.*

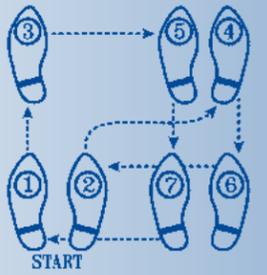


*John displays the multiple bags of items for donation to House of Mercy.*

## Upcoming Events

### VIRTUAL DANCE CAMPAIGN

Get your dancing shoes on and join House of Mercy's Junior Board in its Virtual Dance Campaign! Happening now, this fun dance challenge includes a choreographed dance from our very own Sister Grace and instructions on how you and your friends can record your own videos, post to social media, and help raise money and awareness for The House! Be on the lookout for posts on our social media pages and be sure to get involved!



### VIRTUAL CRAFT BEER TASTING

In early November, House of Mercy's Junior Board is hosting a Virtual Craft Beer Tasting Event! Join us virtually for a night of enjoyment and learning with world-class experts from the Rochester area, Sister Grace, and members of the House of Mercy family. Tickets will be sold online starting this month (on the website and social media pages) and will include access to the virtual live-streamed event, a sampler box of local brews, and the opportunity to hear first-hand from Sr. Grace and her team about all the good things going on at The House. Keep an eye out for additional information!



### DAY OF HOPE

On Saturday, November 21 from 12 noon until 4pm, Legends 102.7 is holding a virtual radiothon for House of Mercy at Marketplace Mall.

This year, because of COVID, it will be a drive-thru style. Stay in your car, pull up along the sidewalk by the Food Court Entrance, and make your monetary or **new** in-kind donation. Deejays will broadcast from their studio this year.



Items being collected on November 21 for The House:

- Mac and Cheese
- Shelf-stable milk and juice
- Pasta, canned sauce and canned soups
- Canned fruit or veggies
- Packaged coffee, sugar and creamer
- New winter gloves and hats for men and women
- New underwear for men and women
- Toiletries (travel-size soap, shaving cream, razors, lotion, toothpaste, toothbrushes)

For more information on this annual event, visit [www.LEGENDS1027.com](http://www.LEGENDS1027.com).

*We are unable to accept gently used clothing and housewares due to COVID.*

### THE ANNUAL GALA TAKES A HIATUS

For many years, House of Mercy has held a Christmas Gala in December to honor the staff, volunteers, donors, and supporters of The House. Because of COVID, we've decided to cancel this annual event.

We are committed to doing our part to help protect our staff, volunteers, and donors. Though our event will no longer take place in the way we intended, The House continues to think creatively about how to raise the necessary funds to keep our doors open and serve all in need. We hope to host our Christmas Gala again in 2021.



## HOUSE OF MERCY

# TOY DRIVE

**WE NEED TOYS AND DRIVERS!**

For kids suffering in poverty, the holiday season serves only as a sad and stressful reminder of the belongings they don't have. Each holiday season, House of Mercy organizes a neighborhood toy drive to collect gifts for girls and boys living in poverty, helping to brighten their holidays. To organize a toy drive at your workplace, or make a financial contribution to the toy drive, please email [stephanie@houseofmercyrochester.org](mailto:stephanie@houseofmercyrochester.org).

We're also looking for volunteers to help deliver the toys, contact free. If you're interested in being an 'elf driver,' contact [christmas@houseofmercyrochester.org](mailto:christmas@houseofmercyrochester.org).



285 Ormond Street  
Rochester, NY 14605

## **Look for our special anniversary newsletter in early 2021**

We'll take time to reflect on the successes and impact of The House in our community over the last 35 years. Stay tuned!

## **Now available!**

### ***Amazing Grace: The Inspiring Story of Sister Grace Miller and House of Mercy.***

She grew up in a poor Italian immigrant family. She became a Sister of Mercy, dedicating her life to her faith. Then she learned about poverty, discrimination and racism during the Civil Rights movement in Rochester, the site of a race riot that made national headlines in 1964.

After a series of struggles that made her question her faith, she began driving the city streets to help homeless people find shelter. Then one night there was a terrible blizzard. She took three homeless men to one refuge after another, but they were turned away.

That's when she decided that Rochester needed a special place that would never close its doors on people in need. So she founded House of Mercy. And since then, this unusual mission has provided food, clothing, shelter and hope to thousands of poor and homeless people in one of the poorest cities in the nation.

This is the inspiring life story of Sister Grace Miller, the founder of House of Mercy, the woman poor people in Rochester call ***Amazing Grace***.

For \$25 plus \$5 shipping and handling, you can order your copy of this unique, 156-page book full of color and black-and-white photos that capture the life of Sister Grace and House of Mercy. All proceeds from this book go to The House. To order your copy today, visit [www.houseofmercyrochester.org/amazinggrace](http://www.houseofmercyrochester.org/amazinggrace).





YOUR  
STAMP IS  
YOUR  
GIFT



House  
of Mercy

House of Mercy  
Development Office  
285 Ormond Street  
Rochester, New York 14605

NEWSFL20



JOB SPECIFICATIONS

#62879

QUANTITY ..... 6,332

INK(s) ..... *k*

SIZE ..... *6 3/4*

STOCK ..... *White Wave*