The INN at 30! A Trip Down Memory Lane

On February 1, 1983, Michael Moran and Pat O’Connor, along with a small group of thirty concerned citizens, became aware of the need for food among Long Islanders and together, they founded the Interfaith Nutrition Network. There were no soup kitchens operating in Nassau County at that time and only one operating in Suffolk County.

In May of 1983, in a small, storefront church in the village of Hempstead, the first meal was served. The original kitchen was located in three different local churches in the first two years of existence. It was completely operated by volunteers and supported by twelve local churches, each sponsoring the $400 monthly rent. All food was donated and collected by volunteers.

In its third year, The INN was forced to leave Hempstead. There were no churches or community facilities that could offer The INN a home.

The INN was invited to Freeport to offer a free meal in a local church. We continued feeding people in Freeport, using the volunteers and donations from Hempstead. At the same time, we began developing resources and volunteers in Freeport.

John Brennan, a resident of Garden City, learned of The INN’s plight of being forced to leave Hempstead due to the lack of available space. He stepped forward and offered a generous contribution, enabling The INN to purchase a building at 146-148 Front Street. This building became the Mary Brennan INN, named after John’s mother. The INN operated out of this facility for thirteen years as both the administrative center (upstairs) and the soup kitchen (downstairs). Thanks to this donation The INN was able to finally relocate back to Hempstead.

While The INN was establishing itself in Hempstead, there were four similar efforts launched as part of The INN’s network across Long Island: Long Beach, Hicksville, Central Islip and Patchogue. Freeport followed and became number five in 1987.

In 2000, the Mary Brennan INN, the largest soup kitchen on Long Island, was relocated to 100 Madison Avenue in Hempstead. The administrative offices of The INN also moved that same year and are now located in the Alana Grace INN at 211 Fulton Avenue in Hempstead. Both of these buildings were purchased with funds from The INN’s first Capital Campaign, which raised $3.9 million. These buildings were completely paid for and renovated without any government assistance, quite an accomplishment when relying only on

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On October 29, 2012, life on Long Island changed for everyone. It didn’t matter whether you lived on the North or South Shore, from points far west in Nassau or the eastern extremes of Suffolk County. Flooding, winds, power loss, a lack of access to gas, you or those you care about were dramatically impacted. Everyone had a glimpse into the types of causes that can drive people into poverty. Many of us had never been in need of assistance before. An equal number of people had never had someone appeal so directly for your help. While The INN works with people in need regularly, the storm certainly challenged our ability to meet our mission of serving hungry and homeless Long Islanders with dignity, respect and love.

When the storm first hit, power was the initial obstacle. It was a few days before many of our soup kitchen locations regained power, and in that time they were unable to open for hot meals. The guests who did arrive were met with a limited number of dedicated volunteers and staff – those who were able to even get to the locations themselves – offering bagged lunches. Many guests reported that they had not eaten in days. There was a great fear that they presented about being forgotten in the rush to assist those who were experiencing homelessness and hunger for the first time due to the storm. Because of the widespread devastation, many of the volunteers were not able to offer their usual help as they now found themselves in need of assistance. The INN immediately offered support to both guests and volunteers alike. The challenge continued as other volunteers couldn’t get to the locations due to the limited availability of gasoline.

Amidst this chaotic environment The INN’s telephone system was destroyed due to a power surge. Tree and other wind damage was significant at many of The INN’s facilities. The INN’s Emergency Shelters thankfully had power restored quickly, except the Donald Axinn INN men’s shelter. The men had to be transported from The INN’s shelter to another location overnight before power was restored. Volunteers and staff worked quickly to help all those who were seeking assistance. Before long, almost every soup kitchen and shelter within the network was made whole.

Key exceptions still exist in Long Beach and Freeport. The Food and Friendship INN in Long Beach was flooded and all of the contents were lost and the soup kitchen is still closed. Thankfully, guests and volunteers in that community have accessed Red Cross Feeding Centers and other outreach efforts and have had their basic needs met. Additionally, The INN’s van, utilized to pick up donations in Long Beach, was flooded and destroyed. The INN’s Long Term Housing Program operates two homes in Long Beach and one in Freeport, all three of which were flooded. The residents of The INN’s homes lost all of their belongings that were on the first floor. The families required relocation while renovations are being made.

Even while a couple of key annual fundraising events were cancelled due to the storm, the generosity and spirit of giving was impressive. Many came forward with financial assistance. The Robin Hood Foundation created awareness for The INN’s damage and need for support while providing $20,000 for holiday meals and a pledge of an additional $50,000 to help offset our losses. While we are still assisting more guests than ever before and are working to overcome the physical damage, we would like to thank each person for their interest, prayers and support. It is only through working together that we can overcome the storm. We hope that as we enter our 30th anniversary year, we can continue to work to eliminate hunger and homelessness here on Long Island. What continues to be clear is that we need each other and that The INN remains one of the best bridges to bring together those who can help and those in need of assistance.
30th Anniversary INNkeepers’ Ball

In May of 1983 a group of volunteers opened the first soup kitchen in Nassau County. On Thursday, May 9, 2013 all are invited to the INNkeepers’ Ball celebrating 30 years of serving hungry and homeless Long Islanders with dignity respect and love. The love will certainly be shared at this year’s dinner as we acknowledge the years of generosity and support that have enabled this important work to continue. Sponsorships, journal ads, auction prizes and donations are once again needed as we work toward making this night extraordinary.

Special honorees have been selected as the 30th Anniversary Ball Committee is working toward a very unique night. The Ball will pay tribute to two special friends of The INN who have quietly worked in the spirit of our mission to assist in the fight against hunger. We are very pleased for the opportunity to pay tribute to Sandra Atlas Bass and Ernest Scalambandre. Additionally The INN will present the second “Seven of Us Award” to Martin Viette Nurseries. This award was created to provide recognition to people who have worked together to help advance the mission of The INN. For the past 13 years, under the leadership of Russell and Michael Ireland, the staff of Martin Viette Nurseries has raised valuable funding and awareness through its holiday reception. They have also worked to help generate food and other much needed support.

We are grateful to have John O. Brennan serving as Honorary Chair for this very special year.

Please join us for this momentous occasion to celebrate our honorees, our collective accomplishments through The INN and help generate funding to support our work in this 30th anniversary year as the largest and most effective organization serving hungry and homeless Long Islanders.

(continued from page 1, The INN at 30)

For Ball INNformation, please call Event Coordinator Nora White at (516) 486-8506 ext. 108

personal contributions.

The original Suffolk County soup kitchen, in operation at the same time as the original INN, became part of The INN’s network in November 2003. The Sisters of Mercy had to close their kitchen and asked that The INN, with a solid reputation and foundation across Long Island, take it over. It was then reopened as part of our efforts and re-named the Mercy INN in Wyandanch. The soup kitchen underwent a complete renovation last year and will have its “grand re-opening” this year. Meanwhile, guests have been fed bagged lunches.

In the winter of 1983, two male guests from The INN’s first soup kitchen were found frozen to death in an abandoned car in Hempstead. The INN responded by opening the first Emergency Shelter in Nassau County. This original shelter, the Hospitality INN, was located in a private house which The INN rented from the Diocese of Rockville Centre. This building was used as the first emergency shelter for families and individuals from 1984 until 1990, when it was destroyed by a fire. Fortunately, no one was injured and everyone escaped.

The Hospitality INN remained open, but relocated several times after the fire. In 1992, it was re-housed in a legal boarding house that was purchased and renovated for this purpose in Hempstead. The Hospitality INN was re-named the Edna Moran INN in 1993, as a gift to Michael Moran on his departure from The INN. It is the largest emergency shelter for families in Nassau County and the only one that is handicap accessible.

The INN currently operates two family shelters – the Edna Moran INN and Rosa Parks INN, which combine to house 21 families each day. The Donald Axinn Men’s Emergency Shelter houses 18 additional guests per day.

In 1990 The INN initiated its Long Term Housing Program. This was made possible with funding from the Homeless Housing and Assistance Program from New York State, enabling The INN to purchase homes. In its 21st year, this nationally recognized program continues to assist chronically homeless families and single male veterans as they strive to become self-sufficient in a three to five year period.

The INN is now the largest social service agency on Long Island dedicated to serving hungry and homeless Long Islanders. The INN continues the initial promise thirty years later of offering assistance with dignity respect and love. Today there are sixteen (16) soup kitchens in operation in twenty two (22) locations in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. More than 27,000 meals are served weekly.
Memorializing a Loved One at The INN by Marc Arkind

Alex Porten left us on June 1, 2011. He was my brother, my best friend, and most of all, one of the most caring and compassionate human beings I have ever known. Alex will be sorely missed by the family and friends he left behind, and by the countless number of people whose lives he touched with his kindness. Alex was truly one in a million.

One of Alex’s last acts of kindness was, in his will, to leave $25,000 to a homeless shelter on Long Island. Though Alex never knew of The INN, after touring it for the first time, and speaking with Joe Barry, my wife and I knew instantly that this was exactly the type of place Alex had in mind, and would have chosen himself.

For Alex, the question of setting aside a portion of his estate to benefit homeless people was not a question at all – it was a fait accompli. Alex loved life. He loved travelling; he loved building things and “reinventing the wheel”; he loved reading and watching horror films; he loved gardening, and model airplanes, and cars. Alex liked to cook and experiment with variations on a theme, while maintaining that he was “following the recipe.” Later in life, Alex developed a passion for poetry – or rather for writing “scriblets”, as he called them – a name he gave to his pet parrot. Alex had many interests, and was good at just about anything he put his mind to. His true passion, however, was helping other people – especially those less fortunate than he was. Alex puts others’ needs ahead of his own; if there was a choice between helping himself or helping someone else, Alex always chose the latter, a choice he was proud of. Countless times I would ask Alex why he would not do something for himself when he would do the same things for others. Alex’s reply was always “you know I always put others ahead of me.”

Cooking and good food were important to Alex, but more important was that those in need would always have enough to eat and a place to live, and the tools to create a better life for themselves. That this is exactly the mission of The INN, I am sure brings a big smile to Alex’s face. On behalf of Alex, I am proud to honor his wishes by making a donation to The INN, in his name, so that they may carry out their mission, and Alex’s, of helping those less fortunate than ourselves.

Winter is a difficult time for many guests who might need assistance staying warm. If you are interested in organizing a drive or would like information about efforts small and large please call Emily Wilensky at (516) 486-8506 ext. 138.

- Canned soup, vegetables, fruit, tuna fish, pasta and pasta sauce
- Hygiene products – soap, shampoo, toothpaste, etc. (travel sizes preferred)
- Bottled water and juices
- Roundtrip MetroCards for job opportunities and medical appointments
- Disposable diapers (all sizes), baby lotion, wipes and powders
- New and gently used bed linens, blankets, towels and washcloths
- New socks and gently used work and snow boots and shoes.
- Coats, jackets, scarves, gloves and hats as well as seasonal clothing items

Please bring your donations to the Mary Brennan INN, located at 100 Madison Avenue in the Village of Hempstead, Monday to Friday, 9–11 AM, 2–4 PM. Thank you for your consideration and donations.
Summary of Operating Data for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2012

The following operating data is derived from The INN’s Financial Statements for the year ended June 30, 2012 which were audited by Nawrocki Smith LLP, CPA’s.

**REVENUE AND SUPPORT:**

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<th>Revenue Source</th>
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<td>Contributions</td>
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<td>Government Fees and Grants</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td>In Kind Contributions**</td>
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**EXPENDITURES:**

**Program Services:**

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<td>Soup Kitchens</td>
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<td>Long Term Housing</td>
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**Support Services:**

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<td><strong>Total Support Services</strong></td>
<td><strong>$835,315</strong></td>
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**Total Operational Expenses**

- $6,542,851

**Reserve***

- 377,745

**Total**

- $6,920,596

**Notes:**

* 87.2% of The INN’s expenses are directed toward program services.

** Represents fair value of donated food and supplies (as per accepted accounting principles, this does NOT include over 100,000 hours of time donated by volunteers)

*** For future program activities
The INN Receives $20,000 Grant From Nassau County Bar Association ‘WE CARE Fund’

The INN (Interfaith Nutrition Network) was presented a $20,000 grant by the WE CARE Fund, the charitable arm of the Nassau County Bar Association and a long-time supporter of The INN’s programs. This donation will be used to assist The INN in executing its mission of serving hungry and homeless Long Islander through our Long Term Housing Program. This program is a life changing experience for families who are homeless, as it provides support and a framework for these families and individuals to become self-sufficient.

“In the wake of Hurricane Sandy and in addition to trying economic times, we are truly grateful to have, once again, been chosen for funding by the Nassau County Bar Association’s WE CARE Fund,” said Joe Barry, INN Director of Fundraising. “This year, the legal community has doubled its contribution from last year, allowing us to assist even more formerly homeless families to have a brighter future.”

The WE CARE Fund was founded in 1988 by NCBA past president Stephen Gassman. The organization raises funds throughout the legal community and the local community at large. The money is distributed through charitable grants to improve the quality of life for children, the elderly, and others in need throughout Nassau County. Since 1998, the WE CARE fund has contributed $104,325 to support The INN.

The INN has established a policy regarding all guests. To protect their privacy, no guest is to be photographed or interviewed while using the services at The INN.

You’re INNvited to an Open House at Long Island’s Largest Soup Kitchen

When:
Sunday, March 10, 2013
11 AM – 3 PM
(Tours will be given every half hour)

Where:
Mary Brennan INN
100 Madison Ave.
Hempstead, NY 11550

* Refreshments will be served

Questions:
Emily Wilensky
(516) 486-8506 ext. 138
www.the-inn.org

The INN addresses the issues of hunger & homelessness on Long Island by providing food, shelter, long-term housing, & supportive services in a dignified & respectful manner for those who seek our help.

Doctors and Dentists are welcome!

Get INNvolved

“Serving Hungry and Homeless Long Islanders”
211 Fulton Avenue
Hempstead, NY 11550
(516) 486-8506 • www.the-inn.org

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