

via pacis

The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker community

via pacis | SEPTEMBER 2026

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VOLUME 50, NO. 3

What's Happening?

by Frank Cordaro



Cecilia takes a selfie with Frank and the Honduran famil

50th Anniversary Cook Out big success!

The 50th Anniversary '3-hour, come eat, all you want cook out' put on by Ray Blase and the Friends of the Catholic Worker saw by far our largest number guests, most on their best behavior! Plus, a good measure of friends, family, supporters and beloved volunteers. Check out photos of the event on page 10.

Ray Blase and Friends of the Catholic Worker are doing a great job keeping our kitchen filled with good food to cook and all the necessities surrounding the kitchen. They also help us in special projects like the November 24th Winter Coat Giveaway. Read all about it and more on page 4 "Friends of the Catholic Worker Update" by Ray Blase.

Miracles still happening in El Salvador

The Oct. 11th-17th delegation to El Salvador is HAPPENING! Oct. 18th – 22nd: Meet Nic & Alexander and kids in El Salvador. Return to Iowa Oct. 22nd!!

I'm more than excited to report I'm joining Cecilia Garcia and One Hundred Angels Oct 12 - 17 delegation to El Salvador, continuing Rev. Bob Cook's good works and legacy. I've raised enough money to bring Kate Kleinle and Alex Tone on the delegation also.

We're scheduled to spend a day in San Salvador visiting the martyred sites where 6 US SJ's and their two housekeepers were killed, along with the tomb of Saint Archbishop Oscar Romero.

We will spend the next four days visiting the communities surrounding Berlin, El Salvador, that Bob served. Cecilia and her One Hundred Angels non-profit picked up where Bob left off. They work with the same people Bob did. We will visit communities where they have successes in helping get health care and basics like water and electricity.

And we will visit communities One Hundred Angels are organizing for the same basic needs.

For more info on One Hundred Angels and the delegation contact Cecilia at www.onehundredangels.org

Introducing 3 new live-in volunteers and a call for help

The work, feeding folks, and providing a safe and hospitable space for the homeless for a few hours a week is what attracted Triston Marie Jimenez, Jason Potter and Dan Davis to the Catholic Worker. Their help, energy and good backs are a welcome addition to us older folks in the community.

We still need more folks to come join the community. I need help with stuff I now do but need to pass on. You need not be a live in community member. Much of it is now done on the computer. We need someone to do our books, electronic banking, and bill paying. We also need someone to help us update our four houses' internet and phone services, help edit the Via Pacis, and someone to help maintain and update the Via Pacis mailing list.

And we still need money to pay the utilities, internet/phone, bug service, maintenance, upkeep and insurance on two community vans. It cost us \$4,500 to publish and mail an issue of the Via Pacis these days. We pay close to \$5,000 for property taxes on three of our four houses, well over \$100,000 a year. Make checks out to the Des Moines Catholic Worker and send to PO Box 4551, Des Moines IA 50305.

Head bouncer, no fun, violent streets

For at least an hour of our 3-hour 50th Anniversary Cook Out, I spent a lot of my time and energy trying to keep a female guest who was acting out her violent mental state of mind by word and fist. When asked to leave, she refused, screaming, spitting, and swinging.

The best way to deal with a person in this state of mind is to ignore them, with no eye contact. For the most part, four homeless guests knew this and ignored her. This only lasted so long until she went after the big biker guy in the crowd.

We physically stepped in at this point: A guest yelling profanities, spitting and swinging needs to leave the property, and we Des Moines Catholic Workers need to get her off the property, non-violently and, hopefully, without calling the police.

Dan Davis, one of our new live-in volunteers, stepped in with me. Using our bodies, we maneuvered her with the 'one two: in your face' non-violent tactic. And once she got off site, in the alley, Dan and I had to keep her from returning on the Dingman House property.

This is when she spit on me, hit me full fisted, scratched me, drew blood, screamed in my face and looked in my eyes with absolute rage and pain. No doubt she was a victim of violence. No

Continued on page 3

via pacis

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Des Moines, IA 50305
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EDITING AND LAYOUT

Mack Swenson

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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THE DES MOINES CATHOLIC WORKER COMMUNITY

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, is a response to the Gospel call to compassionate action as summarized by the Catholic Worker tradition. We are committed to a simple, nonviolent lifestyle as we live and work among the poor. We directly serve others by opening the Dingman House as a drop-in center for those in need of food, clothing, toiletries, use of a phone, toilet, shower, or just a cup of coffee and conversation. We also engage in activities that advocate social justice.

BECOMING A DES MOINES CATHOLIC WORKER

We are open to new community members. For information about joining our mission, contact any community member or send an email to dmccatholicworker@gmail.com.

MAILING ADDRESS

Des Moines Catholic Worker
PO Box 4551
Des Moines IA 50305

BISHOP DINGMAN HOUSE

(Drop-in Center and Business Phone)
1310 7th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-214-1030

Hospitality Hours:

Monday and Wednesday: CLOSED
Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 3-6:30pm
(meals at 3pm and 6pm)
Saturday: 12-2pm (meal at 12pm)
Sunday: 4:30-7pm (meal at 6pm)

PHIL BERRIGAN HOUSE

713 Indiana Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50314

RACHEL CORRIE HOUSE

1301 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314

CHELSEA MANNING HOUSE

1317 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314

RESIDENTS

Manning - Ed, Annie and Triston; Dingman - Frank, Dan, Jason; Berrgan - Araceli Benitezmoya ; Corrie - Julie Brown, Mohammed Salah

PHIL BERRIGAN PEACE AND JUSTICE LIBRARY

Contact Person: Frank Cordaro, (515) 490-2490, frank.cordaro@gmail.com

CHIAPAS PROJECT



As for ourselves, we must be meek, bear injustice, malice, and rash judgment. We must turn the other cheek, give up our cloak, go a second mile.
-Dorothy Day

Announcements

Songs For Catholic Workers, Pacifists, Peaceniks

Steve Jacobs, Catholic Worker from Columbia, MO has gathered a compilation of 30 songs he wrote over the last 40 years on a two disc album called “Songs For Catholic Workers, Pacifists, Peaceniks, Christian Anarchists, Ploughshares Activists & Conscientious Objectors.”

As a member of the SOA Watch Music Collective he’s performed for activists at Ft. Benning, and numerous trials of prisoners of conscience and ploughshares activists. His song “SOA Stockade Blues” was used in the documentary “The School Of Assassins”. The “Ballad of Roy Bourgeois” tells the true story of the founder of SOA Watch. “Another Nun Done Gone” is about his co-defendants at numerous line crossings for which he was sentenced for protesting atrocities committed by soldiers trained at the US Army’s School Of Americas. While serving his one year sentence he wrote: “The Truth Will Set You Free” and “Neither Soldier Nor Sailor”. His work as a psych nurse at Columbia’s VA hospital inspired, “Daddy What Did You Do In The War” and “Dead Toy Soldiers”. You’ll hear songs about homeless folks, “Jimmie The Bum” and “Close To A Flame”; songs about immigration, working in a bomb plant, global climate change, Palestinian Genocide and a humorous take on Artificial Intelligence.

These peace and social justice tunes are his tribute to all the Catholic Workers who comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable and who are willing to explore the difference between what’s legal and what’s right. CD’s are free for CW’s. Others may get one for \$15 by contacting sfhcw913@aol.com or Steve Jacobs - 901 Rangeline St. Columbia, MO 65201 (573-875-4913).

In August 1977, Steve (left) and Frank (right) were arrested and did 30 days for blood selling at the Pentagon.



To donate funds to the Des Moines Catholic Worker, mail checks to PO Box 4551, Des Moines, IA 50305 OR donate through PayPal at FriendsOfCatholicWorker.com.



(top) From left to right, new DMCW live-in volunteers Dan Davis, Triston Jimenez and Jason Murray

(bottom) Try to find Frank at Sugar Creek!

doubt she lives these past violent experiences in her mind daily.

I finally broke down and called the police, the Mental Health Unit. Told them what was happening and asked for help. They sent a police car to check it out. Luckily and thank God, Dan was able to convince the

woman it would be better for her to leave the area than spend a night in jail. She left before the police came.

It's no fun being a bouncer at a Catholic Worker. Every time you must kick someone off your property is a failure. We need to do better.

The Real Story Behind the DMCW 50th Anniversary Poster

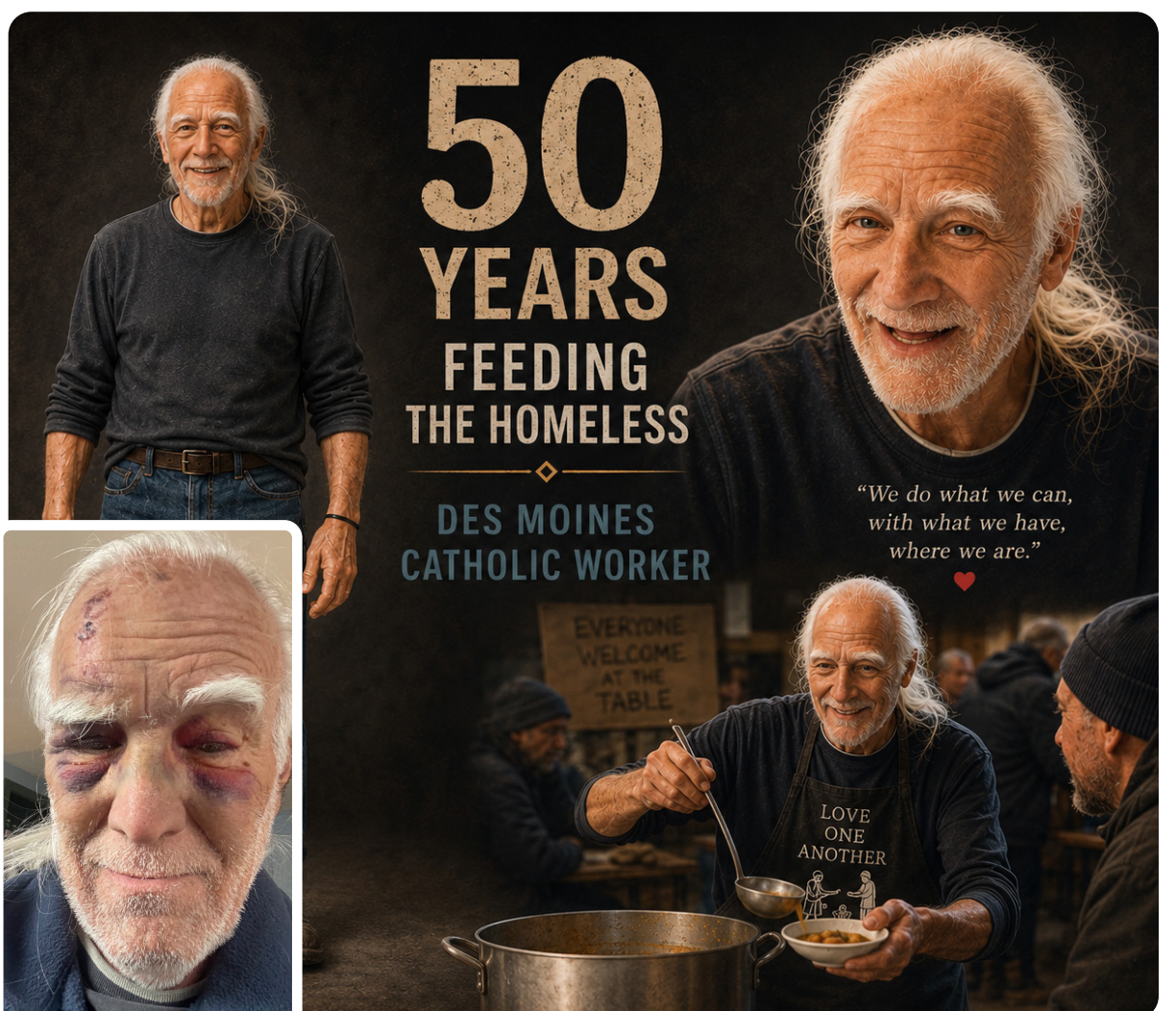
by Frank Cordaro

At the end of the 50th Anniversary Cook Out, my friend and the Chairperson of the Friends of the CW Ray Blase presented me and the DMCW community with a poster to commemorate the occasion. It read "50 Years Feeding the Homeless, Des Moines Catholic Worker," with a quote, "We do what we can, with what we have, where we are." It also included three action 'photos' of me, one where I am feeding someone a bowl of soup.

Very attractive. All of it AI-generated.

Ray said at the time he had one photo of me. It was the face shot that I sent out two days after I got 'blindsided' walking by an old guy on a bike on the bike trail along the river from 6th Ave that I walk every day. We both hit the ground. He hurt his knee and I hit my head. We got up, brushed each other off, and continued.

It wasn't until I got home that my head started to bleed. Two days later, I had two black eyes. That's the photo Ray had to use. If he had used the photo with my two black eyes, I would have looked like Rocky after his fourth movie. Ray decided that the black eyes were a bit much and got the poster maker to take them out. Even the quote is something Ray made up. Sounded like me, Ray said, although I don't remember saying it.



Friends of the Catholic Worker Update

The work continues—one meal, one coat and one person at a time.

by Ray Blase

Each week, volunteers prepare and serve approximately 700 meals to people who are homeless, hungry or struggling to make ends meet. That amounts to nearly 3,000 free meals every month. Behind each of those numbers is a person who is welcomed, fed and treated with dignity.

This work is possible because of an extraordinary community of volunteers and supporters. Some provide food, clothing and household supplies. Others help cook, serve meals and clean. Still others make financial contributions that keep the refrigerators running, the kitchens stocked and the houses operating.

Preparing for Winter

We are preparing for our third annual winter clothing and gear giveaway on November 24. We anticipate distributing approximately 160 coats, hats, sweatshirts, blankets and other cold-weather necessities. Iowa winters can be especially dangerous for people without reliable shelter, and these items offer both warmth and reassurance that someone cares.

Warming Center Update

Our application to the City of Des Moines for the former fire station property at 917 University Avenue remains pending. We continue to believe this property could provide an important resource for people in need of a safe, warm place during the winter months.

In the meantime, we have begun discussions with a local church about the possibility of using its facilities as a warming center during the upcoming winter. Those conversations are still in their early stages, but we are encouraged by the possibilities. We hope to have more information to

share later this year.

Carrying the Mission Forward

Friends of Catholic Worker was formed as a nonprofit organization to help sustain this mission and prepare for its future. Many of the people who have supported the Catholic Worker for decades are growing older, and some have passed away. Their generosity established a remarkable legacy. Our responsibility now is to carry that legacy forward and introduce this work to a new generation of friends, donors and volunteers.

The Catholic Worker has never been merely a place where meals are served. It is a community built upon hospitality, peace, justice and respect for every person who comes through the door. It remains a place where people who are often overlooked are greeted by name and welcomed as neighbors.

There is still much to do. Food costs continue to rise, the historic Catholic Worker houses require ongoing repairs, and the need within our community remains great. Nevertheless, every donated dollar, bag of groceries, winter coat and volunteer hour helps sustain this important work.

Thank you for standing with the Des Moines Catholic Worker.

Your friendship makes it possible to continue feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger and preserving a ministry that has served our community for fifty years.

Together, we are helping ensure that the door remains open, the table remains full and everyone who arrives is welcomed with dignity.





Des Moines CATHOLIC WORKER BEG LIST

📍 1310 7th St, Des Moines, IA



Pantry Items

- ☐ CANNED SOUP
- ☐ INSTANT RAMEN
- ☐ CEREAL
- ☐ DRY SNACKS
- ☐ CANNED GOODS (TUNA, CHICKEN)
- ☐ HOT CHOCOLATE / TEA BAGS
- ☐ DRY FOOD
- ☐ HEAT & SERVE



Home Supplies

- ☐ LAUNDRY DETERGENT
- ☐ BLEACH
- ☐ PINE SOL & MURPHY OIL (WOOD FLOOR)
- ☐ BROOM
- ☐ TOILET PAPER
- ☐ PAPER TOWELS
- ☐ TO-GO CONTAINERS
- ☐ TRASH BAGS/SMALL PLASTIC BAGS



Hygiene Products

- ☐ SHAMPOO (BIG & SMALL)
- ☐ BODY LOTION
- ☐ DEODORANT
- ☐ SOAP/BODY WASH (BIG & SMALL)
- ☐ RAZORS/SHAVING CREAM
- ☐ COMBS/HAIRBRUSH
- ☐ FEMININE HYGIENE
- ☐ VITAMINS
- ☐ ASPIRIN/TYLENOL/IBUPROFEN
- ☐ ALLERGY MEDICATION
- ☐ FIRST AID KIT
- ☐ Q-TIPS
- ☐ TOOTHPASTE/TOOTHBRUSH
- ☐ TISSUES/WET WIPES



Clothes

- ☐ WOMEN ' S CLOTHING
- ☐ MEN ' S CLOTHING
- ☐ WOMEN ' S UNDERWEAR
- ☐ MEN ' S UNDERWEAR
- ☐ JACKETS/HOODIES
- ☐ SOCKS
- ☐ GLOVES/BEANIES/SCARVES
- ☐ SHOES
- ☐ SWEATSHIRTS/SWEATPANTS
- ☐ BLANKETS
- ☐ HAND/FOOT WARMERS
- ☐ TOWELS/SHEETS/PILLOWS
- ☐ TOTE BAGS/GYM BAGS/BACKPACK
- ☐ SLEEPING BAG

It's So Good to be Part of Something That's Lasted So Long

From a song by the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band (Partners, Brothers and Friends)

by Richard Flamer

The Catholic Worker has been a vital part of my life. Since my baptism into Catholicism by Frank Cordaro – back when he was a Priest in good standing- I've had an unconventional life through the Church.

I had met Frank at Offutt Air Force Base, where we had both protested. Darrell Rupiper, another activist Priest, had led a small Mass weekly at a homeless shelter where I had volunteered.

Between the two priests, I got involved at the protests and the beginning of a spiritual life that included many conversations, some in a jail cell. It was the action I admired.

Getting arrested was an uncommon way, but it cleared my mind of more mundane thoughts. At the time I was going through a divorce, during a year of recovering from a fire as well. Sometimes bad decisions lead to good stories.

On one of my jail stays I had the great pleasure of sharing a cell with Sam Day. What a joy. We had long conversations about publishing, printing and history. For those unfamiliar with the name, Sam was the publisher of The Progressive, which a few years earlier had been in the Supreme Court for an issue in which the lead story was "How to build an Atom Bomb." The case became famous for prior restraint.

Further romantic interests led me to a chaotic year of reading, much on liberation theology. I set out for Central America to see the theology in action. It was a wonderful/horrible time in my life roaming through El Salvador, taking photos for a forensic team in Guatemala and living very cheaply.

The death of my father led me to a chaotic year, ending with a move to Iowa where Frank welcomed me to the Des Moines Worker – but only if I brought my construction tools.

I had been involved with various construction jobs for many years. The Worker in Des Moines brought some great challenges. In one

house (Manning) I got to tear out an old gas fired furnace and radiators, removing all the asbestos as well.

In another house I got to make the attic habitable while providing overhead lighting in the second story rooms below. Dingman House allowed me to sand and restore the first floor – lots of work which freed my mind from my misspent youth.

When the construction paled I went back to Central America, taking photos and buying handicrafts to sell back in the U.S.

In those years I spent 6 months in Guatemala or El Salvador or Chiapas, Mexico, returning to Des Moines for the rest of the year where I could serve and make some money doing minor construction in the community.

I was never good at the hospitality part of the Worker mission, but I was good at menial tasks, especially washing dishes and taking out the trash.

Raising money for my work in Mexico I helped start, via the Bishop Samuel Ruiz, a center for the various Indigenous groups where they could meet without conflict. The Day Care Center also sprouted from those times. Working with different NGO's, we got a Habitat for Humanity started, along with a small school for the arts.

And that's where I met my future spouse, Araceli Benitez Moya.

Getting Araceli to the U.S. was a cumbersome 3-year process. But once she was in the States, she served at the Houston Catholic Worker, then the San Antonio Worker, and finally at the Des Moines Worker where she resides today.

I think my greatest contribution to the Catholic Worker Mission has been my wife and her continuing work and struggles in the U. S.

I have been blessed.

Jessica Reznicek and Frank visit Richard Flamer and Araceli Benitezmoya in Chiapas, Mexico.



The Works of Mercy as a Dangerous Practice

“To perform the works of mercy becomes a dangerous practice.” — Dorothy Day

by Joe Da Via

Some people plan on staying a lifetime at a Catholic Worker house and leave after a day. Others come for a day and stay for a lifetime.

In the spring of 1976, I was a discouraged radio operator at KCCK-FM in Cedar Rapids, juggling a brutal shift schedule. My saving grace was the station’s news director, Jacquee Dickey. We were both fresh out of college and grew in faith through campus ministry. When Jacquee announced she was leaving KCCK to join the Kansas City Catholic Worker, it sparked something in me. I was single, debt-free, and captivated by Dorothy Day’s radical vision. If I was ever going to dive into full-time works of mercy, now was the time.

By the end of spring, Jacquee introduced me to Frank Cordaro.

Frank was a life-long Des Moines resident, seminarian and a powerhouse neighborhood organizer. When we met, I was still struggling to grasp the logistics of voluntary poverty. How do we pay a mortgage? Buy food? Survive? Frank had his pitch down pat. The church community would provide the donations, he explained. Then he looked at me and said, “Joe, your pay is \$5 a week, and all the beans you can eat. Join me! Let’s do this.”

In July, I quit my radio job, and became DMCW Worker #2.

That summer, Frank and I moved into 713 Indiana Avenue to ready the house for guests. Donors dropped off furniture, clothes, and canned goods. Then, tapping into their proud Calabrian roots, Frank and his brother Joe tore down walls and hung new drywall in a matter of days.

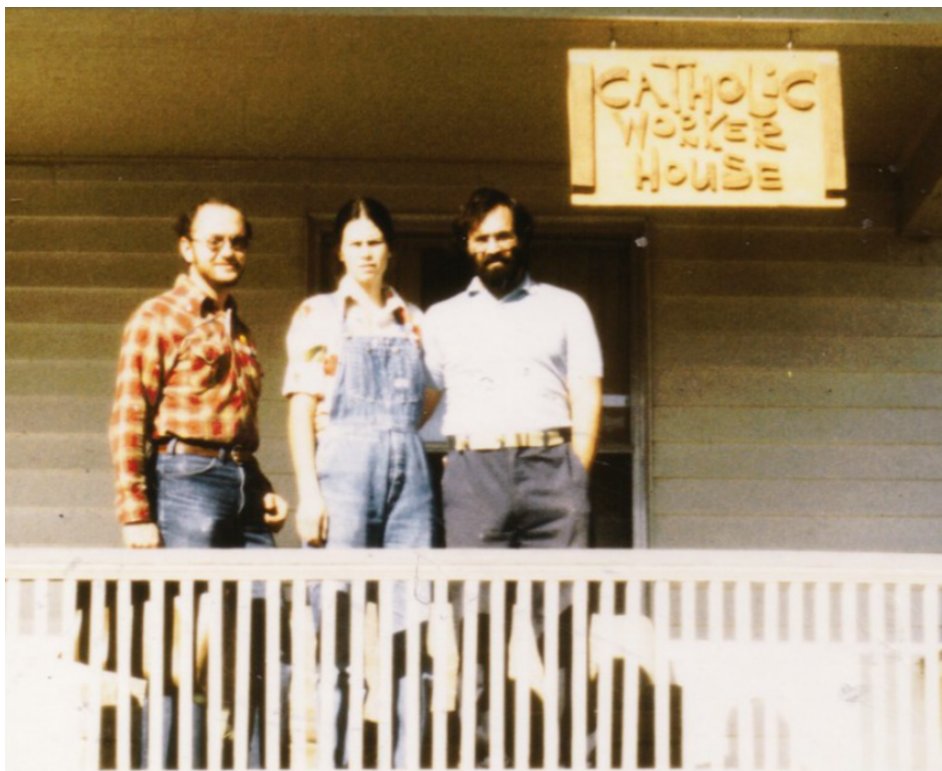
At first, our decorating style was strictly minimalist. Frank and I actually thought curtains and wall art violated the “poverty aesthetic.” It took a visit from Jacquee to set us straight: Dorothy Day loved art. Soon, curtains went up, pictures followed, and a library of timeless literature took shape.

Living there required a major emotional shift for me. I grew up in Detroit, but in a stable, working-class neighborhood. The community around the DMCW had seen much better days. Living side-by-side with our new neighbors quickly taught me a profound truth: we are all children of God, regardless of our bank accounts.

The stakes were also incredibly high. Just months earlier, in December 1975, the local American Friends Service Committee house had been bombed. It was a stark reminder that trying to uproot injustice—rather than just complaining about it—stirs up violent fear. Facing the reality that our house could be next, I had to find a deeper sense of internal peace. I learned to live each day as if it were my last, focusing entirely on healing relationships in the present.

By August 23, the house was ready. We didn’t celebrate with banners, confetti, or a grand ceremony. We just talked it over, realized it was time, and opened the doors. Our first guests arrived a few days later.

Joe, Jackie and Frank stand outside the original DMCW house.



Before long, our tiny crew started expanding. Malcolm MacKenzie, a local teacher, and Eddie Polich, a maintenance worker, joined us while living elsewhere. Mike and Ann Smith moved in shortly afterwards.

Jacquee even relocated

from Kansas City to join the team. It felt like everything was happening in Kairos—the perfect, divine timing.

As the community grew, we naturally fell into our own rhythms. Frank and Jacquee stepped up to lead our social justice and resistance ministries, while Mike, Ann, and I took charge of day-to-day hospitality. Our weekly worship services and “clarification of thought” discussions became vibrant gatherings, regularly drawing in local leaders like Bishop Maurice Dingman and friends like John Zeitler. We quickly realized we couldn’t do this alone; an army of outside volunteers kept us afloat, from the generous neighbors who cooked meals and house-sat, to the unsung heroes who spent hours washing our endless piles of sheets.

Life has a way of shifting seasons, though. In 1978, my father suffered a severe heart attack, prompting me to move back to Michigan to be near my family. I took a job as a campus ministry administrator at Lansing Community College. My father passed away just three months later, but that season also brought new joy when I met and married my wife, Jacki Schwab and we welcomed our children, Nick and Pete.

By 1981, my campus ministry path led us to Marquette University in Milwaukee. While there I decided to pivot my career, earned an MBA, and transitioned into Human Resources positions for local businesses. Decades later, in 2010, a federal government position brought us to the Augusta, Georgia area.

Though my career path changed, the lessons from the Catholic Worker house never truly left me. Nearly 40 years after leaving Des Moines, I found my way back to those radical roots of mercy. Since 2013, I’ve been volunteering with the Kairos Prison Ministry, leading semi-annual Cursillo short courses at the McCormick Correctional Institution in South Carolina. The setting is completely different from the house on Indiana Avenue, but the mission remains exactly the same: practicing radical hospitality and seeing the face of God in everyone.

Joe DaVia co-founded the DMCW with Frank. He also edited the first 21 issues of the *Via Pacis*, from 1976-1978.



Sarah Fuller

RIP Rusty Martin, Former Des Moines Catholic Worker and Dear Friend

by Frank Cordaro

Our dear friend and former DMCW community member of 45 years, Rusty Martin, passed away on August 18th. For many of us here in Iowa, the news came with a sense of gentle preparation. On August 9th, Rusty and his wonderful wife, Kay Meyer, shared a deeply moving interview with the Des Moines Register titled, “I’m deciding to die before Alzheimer’s takes my mind.” They openly shared his journey with early-onset Alzheimer’s disease since 2023 and their plans to travel to Switzerland together so Rusty could end his life on his own terms on August 18th.

Rusty and Kay are both cherished former DMCWers—truly another beautiful Catholic Worker love story, as they met right here at the CW!

I first met Rusty during his time at UNI, where we were both fortunate to share the same mentor, Fr. Jack Kissling, the UNI Catholic Campus Priest. I always looked forward to connecting with Rusty during my return trips to UNI for spiritual direction with Fr. Jack in the early years of the DMCW. Fr. Jack was a wonderful gift to my life, and he was the very same for Rusty.

When we first met, I was fully immersed in the Catholic Worker and Charismatic movements, discovering the Berrigan brothers and the witness side of following Jesus. I wasn’t much of an academic back then—reading little and writing less—and was mostly known at UNI for winning the “Mr. Legs” contest two out of three years! My faith was simple, deep, and grounded in direct action and a willingness to go to jail for justice.

Rusty, on the other hand, was incredibly brilliant—a gifted reader, writer, and student leader who was elected President of the Student Government. While he didn’t subscribe to the traditional Catholic upbringing of our youth, he possessed a beautiful, burning desire for justice and a deep, humanist concern for the underdog.

Though we viewed faith differently, we actually shared a similar disbelief in the rigid, creedal teachings promoted by the Church during

our lifetimes. From the very beginning, Rusty and I shared a strong bond over our community organizing skills and a shared belief in personal responsibility to make the world a better place.

This came together beautifully in our first joint effort to confront the reinstatement of the military draft in 1980. Rusty’s name first appeared in the August 1980 issue of Via Pacis, which reported on a powerful July 21 witness where four courageous young men—Rusty Martin, Jeff Patch, Gary Eklund, and Jerry Moholivch—publicly burned their draft registration cards at the US Post Office in Des Moines. Standing in loving solidarity with them were four incredible faith leaders: Rev. Chet Guinn, Sr. Bernadine Pieper, Rev. Bob Cook, and Fr. Dave Polich, who all risked arrest to support them.

Looking back at that August 1980 article, I am deeply struck by how much Rusty’s public statement from 45 years ago matches the cadence, courage, and voice of his final words from Switzerland. (You can read “Rusty’s Last Words” on page ?).

Here is a reflection of Rusty’s brave words from July 1980:

“This is not an easy thing for me to do. Jail scares me. I would rather go to college with my girlfriend than go to jail. Being separated from her, my family, and my friends will hurt deeply. I really wonder if I could survive a stay in prison. I would not choose to bring these things upon myself if I could avoid it. I do not like it. I would rather not face it. But the issue is not what feels good, or what will be best for me in the long run. The question is, ‘Can the convictions, beliefs, and ideals which are me be compromised in such a way as to allow me to participate in this draft registration? No, these can not be compromised if I am to remain true to myself.’ In spite of a sense of dread, I refuse to register.”

(To read the full historical account, please see the August 1980 Via Pacis in the digital archives.

Sending much love to Kay and to everyone who carries Rusty in their hearts.

Rusty Martin, Jerry Mehalovich, Jeff Fatch, and Gary Eklund burn their draft registration cards at the Main Post Office in Des Moines on July 21, 1980. Photo originally published in the Des Moines Register.



Rusty Martin's Final Words for Iowans

This letter was originally published in the opinion section of the Des Moines Register.

I am writing this in Zurich, Switzerland, one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

I do not want to be in a hotel room thousands of miles away. I want to be at my home in Des Moines.

I wish I was walking the streets I know so well.

I wish I was biking the trails I've biked dozens of times.

I wish I was sitting at our dining room table, playing yet another game of cribbage with my wife.

I wish I could look over at my cat, sitting by the window, waiting for me to take a nap with her.

I have Alzheimer's, a terrible disease that is destroying my mind. To find a peaceful, dignified death, Iowa's laws have forced me to leave my home.

The Iowa lawmakers who refuse to approve a right to die in Iowa are wrong, wrong, wrong.

How I respond to this terrible fatal disease is not their decision to make. It is my decision, period.

They have no business sticking their noses into this deeply, deeply personal matter.

They do not know better than me. In fact, they plainly do not understand my situation at all.

Instead of respecting the wishes of people in situations like mine, they impose their own religious beliefs on us.

I do not share those religious beliefs. That is my right as a U.S. citizen. Iowa politicians are denying all of us the right to choose a dignified death at home.

It is an outrage, and this morning, I am outraged.

If you aren't outraged, can I ask what the heck are you thinking?

Are you thinking you will never die?

Are you certain your own death will be one in which you are surrounded by family and friends, gathered around you, tenderly reminiscing on all the good times you have shared?

I truly do wish that sort of death for you, but it is far from guaranteed.

It is certainly not the sort of death that many, many Iowans experience, especially if they die from Alzheimer's.

When it comes to making public policy, we must always be grounded in the real world, end of story.

Continuing to ignore the pain and loss of dignity found at many Iowa deathbeds is shameful, and it must be addressed.

Until our laws change, you and your families are also at risk of an unhappy, undignified death.

Iowans, demand the right to make decisions about your death, and the power to carry them out in an orderly, dignified manner.

Don't settle for anything less for yourself and those you love.

On Nov. 3, vote for candidates who believe each of us has the right to the most dignified, peaceful death possible.

Rusty Martin and his wife Kay Meyer at their Des Moines home on July 17. Photos originally published in the Des Moines Register.



In Photos: DMCW 50th Anniversary Cookout

On August 28th, the Friends of the Catholic Worker hosted three hours of good food and hospitality.



(above) Laura Roan; Heather Jones-Brown, candidate for Polk County Supervisor; Chief Deputy Bob Stanton of the Polk County Sheriff’s Office; Samy El- Baroudui, candidate for Iowa legislature; Ray Blase; and Mary Kahl.



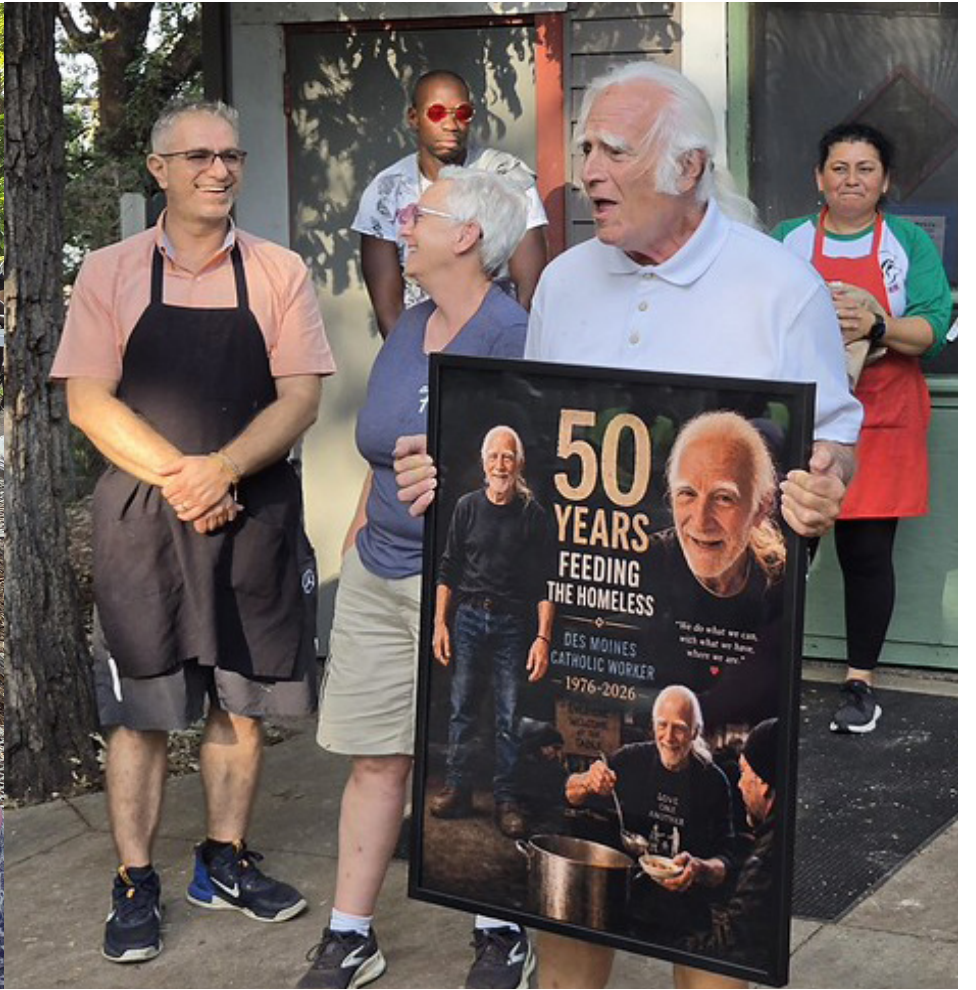
(left) Handyman and friend of the housw Dave Bruce grabs some delicious food from the cookout.



(below) A gathering of the Cordaro-Polish family. In back from left to right: Frank, Tom, Ed, David, and DeeDee. In front: Father Dave.



(above) Father Dave and Annie keep each other company.



(above) Frank gives away a framed 50th anniversary poster while Mohammed, Amy and Ariceli stand by.



From left to right: Mary Kahl, Dick Hoffman, Joe Cordaro and retired judge Steve Oeth serve food.

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U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
NEWTON, IA
PERMIT NO.
371

Via

voicis

The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker community

SEPTEMBER 2026 Find us at FB.com/DesMoinesCatholicWorker VOLUME 50, NO. 1

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VOLUNTEERS:

Individuals and work crews
for hospitality (serving food,
cleanup), cleaning and gen-
eral inside and outside main-
tenance . . . without them, we
burn out.

FOOD:

Fruit, Vegetables, Meat and
Fish, Milk, Cheese, Salted
Butter, Olive Oil, Sugar,
Coffee, Creamer, Juice (sugar
free), Salt, Black Pepper, Fresh
Garlic, Salad dressing, Soups
and Stews (both canned and
fresh). Leftovers from
weddings, funerals and other
social gatherings . . .

MEAL PROVIDERS:

Provide a meal for 100
people once a month! Call
or email for current
openings: 515-214-1030,
dmccatholicworker@gmail.com

HEALTH AND

HYGIENE:

Menstrual Hygiene Items,
Diapers, Baby Formula,
Tylenol, Ibuprofen,
Multivitamins, Antibiotic
Ointment, Band-Aids, Lip
balm

TOILETRIES:

Disposable Razors, Shaving
Cream, Shampoo,
Conditioner, Lotion,
Deodorant, Soap, Toothpaste

(Small sizes preferred for
handout), Toothbrushes and
Toilet Paper.

NEEDED CLOTHING:

Underwear, Socks, T-shirts,
Sweatshirts, Hoodies, Coats,
Work Pants. (All Sizes,
Especially Big) Sleeping Bags,
Blankets

HOUSEHOLD

SUPPLIES:

Bleach, Laundry Detergent,
Environmentally-Friendly Dish
Soap, Murphy's Oil Soap,
Pinesol, Trash Bags, Brooms,
Rugs, Candles, Energy-Eff-
cient Light Bulbs, Aluminum
Foil, Plastic Wrap, Sandwich

and Freezer Bags, Bath Towels,
Playing Cards, Candles, Phone
Chargers

HOUSE REPAIRS:

With four old houses, there
are plenty of projects large
and small. We invite do-it-
yourselfers--individuals or
groups--with skills in carpen-
try, plumbing, painting, electri-
cal, etc. to come in, look over
our housing needs, and choose
a project. Bring your own tools
if possible.

LIBRARY:

Peace and Justice books for
the Berrigan House Library
\$CASH MONIES\$:

Cash donations are essential
to pay our property taxes,
utilities, repair and
maintenance of property,
upkeep and gas for two vans,
purchase of needed supplies,
our community gardening
and for the continued publi-
cation and mailing of the *via*
paccis, a good twenty percent
of our annual expenses.

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Sue Evans and Melody Miller - the sweet corn ladies!