



# Rochester Catholic Worker

A Publication of St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, Rochester, NY  
Fall 2009

## Catholic Worker Farm – Chris Phillips

In mid-August on St. Fiacre Gardens Microfarm we planted the last of our seed for greens and roots for the Winter CSA, and we are ready for picking season among the orchard trees. Very soon peaches, pears, apples, and grapes will be gracing the tables of our members.

The vision for a Catholic Worker Microfarm/Agronomic University keeps fleshing out. We had the first applicant for the CW Farm Apprentice position come as a working guest to consider the program for 2010. This was so encouraging. There really are people out there who want to work hard, learn organic farming, share house holding communally, and join in morning and evening prayer every day.

A new partnership has come together between Fiacre Gardens, St. Joseph's Church in Penfield, and Penfield First Baptist, to create a 5,600 square foot Gift Garden. This space will be dedicated to growing carrots, which will then be gifted to food programs serving the poor. Growing surplus to give away to the hungry has been a goal for the Microfarm to grow into as we get more land under cultivation.

But when the members of St. Joseph's "Caring for God's Creation" group learned about this angle on practicing the Works of Mercy with prayerful work, they believed in it and ran with it right away. The last week in August they planted a pilot plot of winter carrots, which will be harvested between November and April, and delivered to area food programs. The growing, picking, etc. will be done by volunteers, while I provide the design and training.

Peter Maurin: "The cathedral at Chartres was not built by workers working for wages. Churches ought to be built with donated money, donated material, donated labor. The motto of St. Benedict was *Laborare et Orare*, Labor and Prayer. Labor and prayer ought to be combined. Labor ought to be a prayer."

Gardening and giving away carrots can be prayer too.

Have you seen *Food, Inc.*? It's been playing at the Little—  
an eye-opening documentary on the food system. I came

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## Summer Time and the Livin' is Wonderful...

– Chava Redonnet

We have had such a lovely time at the house this summer with the wonderful infusion of young people. Caroline has joined us for a year. Tim and Joe were here all summer, and Sara, Vanessa, and Alex were here for parts of it. It has been an energizing time. We have discussed Liberation Theology, prayed and worshipped together, watched "Romero" and "The Soloist," shared our treat day with the community as well as time at the beach and walking along the river.



*From left to right: Joe, Tim, and Caroline*

Tim posted a quote from St. Basil the Great on Facebook shortly after he left us. This generation keeps in touch via the Internet, and it's a blessing to be able to connect like that. Tim posted, "The bread you do not use is the bread of the hungry. The garment hanging in your wardrobe is the garment of the person who is naked. The shoes you do not wear are the shoes of the one who is barefoot. The money you keep locked away is the money of the poor. The acts of charity you do not perform are the injustices you commit." Immediately, someone wrote to say how impractical that was, how extremist. Myself, I think it is very Catholic Worker!

About the time Tim posted that, I learned the sad news that a friend of mine from divinity school had died, the Rev. Larry J. Gipson, who once did a service for our guests. Larry had been a part of the group from school that went to El Salvador in 2005, and I dug out some photos from that time as a remembrance. One was a photo of Larry in the middle of a

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## Catholic Worker Farm (continued from page 1)

away with a resolution to bring more non-harming to my meat consumption. But the prices can be prohibitive for a large family or for those on a limited budget. Myself and a group of Fiacre Gardens consumers are forming a Local Meat Bulk Buying Club. We will need 15-20 members to take advantage of volume discounts from local farmers when their meat comes available this fall.



In closing, my thoughts turn to the Farm Workers Fair Labor Practices Act (A1867/S2247). This bill still needs to be brought to the floor of the N. Y. State Senate as of this writing. If passed it would give farm workers rights to collective bargaining, the option of a weekly day of rest, overtime pay, an equal minimum wage, disability insurance, and more.

If the workers were owners,  
and the owners worked,  
and if people were willing to pay farms  
the true value of their work,  
would it be possible to maintain  
this caste system which moves  
the food to our table? †

For an information packet on the CW Farm Apprenticeship program, or to get involved with the Carrot Gift Garden, or to join the Local Meat Buying Club, call Chris at 288-1073 or email [fiacregardens@yahoo.com](mailto:fiacregardens@yahoo.com).

All are welcome to attend the monthly Peter Maurin/Green Revolution Study Group on second Fridays and learn together about the philosophical, spiritual, and socioeconomic roots of the Catholic Worker movement. Have a bountiful autumn! ☞

## Summer Time... (continued from page 1)

group of children, standing in a garbage-strewn field outside of Santa Ana, where they had come to play.

Looking at that photo I was thinking about those kids—growing up in conditions like that—just a few out of billions like them around the world. I thought of the quote Tim posted from St. Basil, and the reality is, a few of us in the world do have more than we need, more than we can use, more than enough. So many have nothing, nearly nothing, materially—not enough food, not good enough health care—children playing among garbage.

Far from extreme, I think Basil was right: we lose sight, in our comfort, of the day-to-day realities of those beyond our vision. Thanks, Tim, for posting that and thanks to all of you, Tim, Joe, Caroline, Sara, Vanessa, Alex, for sharing yourselves, your time, your hope and vision with us this summer. God bless you all, and we hope to see more of you! ☞

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## Comings and Goings – Mirabai

“There shall be eternal summer in the grateful heart.”  
—Celia Thaxter

My goodness, summer is, indeed, the season of growth! The population of the third floor residency doubled June 1 with the arrival of three college interns: **Joe** Lavoie, **Alex** Calhoun, and **Timothy** Wotring. By the time you read this they will be studying back at school. **Caroline** Kristofferson, a May graduate of Miami University of Ohio, moved in the first of July for a year commitment.

Their enthusiasm, curiosity, and interest in all things Catholic Worker is contagious and a reminder of the limitless, abundant energy of the young: spending their mornings in hospitality, catching a quick nap after closing at 1 p.m., then planning for the afternoon outings and evenings at a local “happening” coffee house: field trips, attending Mass and protests, going out to eat or the movies as community, and occasionally just being quiet in the third floor living room, watching a video or DVD related to the Catholic Worker movement. Our Monday and Thursday morning prayer time with our resident Minister, **Chava** Redonnet, has expanded into a Saturday late afternoon prayer time sharing gospel readings, discussion, and communion.

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## Catholic Worker Food Program in Haiti

– Sarah Ahmisa

Hello from hot and humid Haiti! Kevin and I just returned to Cap Haitien from our trip home to the States to find that there is no power in town, and we are suffering a bit from the heat and mosquitoes after having been in much cooler upstate New York. We are preparing for the part of the hurricane season that is considered most dangerous, late August and September. A few months ago, a local prophet had a vision that a hurricane this season would dump “two buckets of water on a map of Cap Haitien and one bucket on Gonaives, if Haitians did not repent for their sins.”



After the devastation that occurred last year when three hurricanes successively hit Haiti where winds destroyed most of the gardens throughout the country and massive flooding resulted in hundreds of deaths in Gonaives and water levels up to 4-feet high in Cap Hatien, Borgne, and other places people took this vision seriously. They organized a day of fasting, repentance, and prayer. Churches throughout Cap Haitien led their congregations, clad fully in white, on marches that converged at the coast where they prayed for God to spare them. Stores were closed, streets were empty of cars, and tens of thousands of people participated in the event. Please join us in praying that God hears their plea and spares us this year.

A good thing that came out of last year’s hurricane season was St. Joe’s commitment to fund a food program for the elderly and disabled in Borgne. We began serving 25 people in October and doubled the number in April. We serve traditional Haitian dishes made with local food, like corn meal with bean sauce, mashed veggies with crayfish over potatoes and plantains, rice and beans, hot flour and milk drink,

beef stew with dough balls, or squash-based rice soup. Food runs \$700, and we serve 50 people, two days a week. Thanks to many of you who donated specifically for this program and Tom’s organizing of St. Joe’s participation in the Assisi Walk for Peace enough money has been raised to keep food on the table through the end of the year!

However, because we added 25 more people, we need of a larger building to serve food in, and recently rented one for \$300 per year. Now we are in need of a little help repairing the building, patching holes in the cement floor, painting, adding secure doors, building a small bridge over the drainage canal so you don’t have to jump over it, and putting a corrugated metal roof on the kitchen. The repairs are estimated to cost \$700. (I know this is more than two years rent. I guess that is why rent was so cheap!) ☪

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## Assisi Walk for Peace – George McVey

The Assisi Walk for Peace that we participated in on June 13 was a great success with over 125 walkers. St. Joe’s raised the most, and Tom Malthaner from the House was the highest individual fundraiser. St. Joe’s raised over \$4,300 with half going to St. Joe’s, who decided to donate all to the Haiti Catholic Worker Food Program run by Sarah and Kevin Ahmisa (see related article on this page).

Sarah said they are feeding dinner twice a week to 50 elderly and disabled persons living in Borgne. This supplements what food the poor find begging from other residents, most of whom are also living in poverty.



*St. Joe’s Group (left to right): Chava, Don, Emily, Tom, Joseph, Timothy, Red, Alex, Mark*

**a pilgrimage\*** – Joe Lavoie

*We do not think ourselves into new ways of living.  
We live ourselves into new ways of thinking.*

—Richard Rohr

On August 5, 2009, after a day's work, Timothy Wotring and I came down the stairs of St. Joseph's House of Hospitality. We nodded to Tim Sigrist as he rose from a meeting taking place in the dining area. The meeting was uninterrupted as we each grabbed a granola bar and made our way to the door.

Timothy, Tim, and I looked at each other, took a deep breath, and exited the building. We were going for a walk. We were going for a 20+ mile walk, from the front door of St. Joe's in Rochester to the front door of the Abbey of Genesee in Piffard. All we had on us were two empty water bottles, three granola bars and faith. It was 3:00 p.m.

The conversation we three pilgrims had will remain on that trail, intimate, and sacred. Though I cannot share with you those conversations, I will try my best to share some of the other experiences with you:

At the beginning of our journey a large hawk in the grass, staring, spreading its wings and taking flight. Deer bounding through open fields.

Sore feet. A walking stick. Mosquitoes. The sweet nourishment from freshly picked corn, reviving energy, and quenching thirst better than any sports drink. Mosquitoes.

A rope swing over a cool river. Swimming in one's underwear. Converting a walking stick to a laundry stick and carrying underwear, soaking wet, into town over our shoulder. That underwear never drying. More mosquitoes. Sore feet and now sore calves. A few bucks found. Cheesy fries. Sun setting behind a sea of corn stalks. Regret eating cheesy fries. Bright, full moon guiding our way. An hour of silence.

Pain. Thirst. Being unable to walk straight. Laying on one's back looking at the stars. An endless dark path ahead. Willing your legs to move one more step, one more step. Sore everywhere. Sitting on a bench holding your head thinking you've never been this tired, never been this sore. Thinking Jesus had to walk everywhere. Giving it all to God. Giving every step, every breath, every sore and ache to God.

Praying. Every step turning into a prayer. Singing "Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, help me

stand. I'm tired, I'm weak, I am worn." Smiling. Thirst. Offering it all to God. Hearing the bells of the abbey in the distance.

Smiling wider. Walking silently into the Abbey Guest House thinking "this is the most beautiful place in the universe." Drinking water long overdue. Eating a slice of bread and a grape. Laying down on the floor of the Abbey dining room and thinking "this is the most comfortable place in the universe."

Waiting for Caroline to pick us up at 3 a.m. with a smile. Driving home Caroline gets pulled over. Hugging Tim Sigrist and thanking him, our guide, our friend. Climbing the stairs of St. Joe's slowly thinking about work the next morning. Laying down in bed, finally, exhausted. It was 5:00 am.

Walking 20+ miles without a map, without cell phones, without rain gear, without any first aid supplies, with two empty water bottles, with three granola bars, a few spare dollars and wearing the only pair of sneakers you own is, without a doubt in my mind, insane. I would not have had it any other way. With faith and prayer anything is possible. Faith and prayer can just as easily push three pilgrims through the night as they can move nations.

I want to thank my brothers in Christ, Tim Sigrist and Timothy Wotring, for a walk to remember; my sister in Christ, Caroline, for picking us up; and the man who planted the seed, my mentor and brother in Christ, Chris Phillips. Next time I feel the urge for a 20+ mile walk, Chris, I hope you'd be willing to lead the way.

## **The Pilgrimage**

Life is a pilgrimage. Sometimes it just takes a walk or a journey to a holy place to remind us that we are all Pilgrims in life. You start out with such great energy and enthusiasm. You will get tired and your legs will get shaky and at times you will be unable to walk straight. Prayer and faith will keep you going but only by giving it all to God will you make it.

My summer at St. Joe's has been truly blessed. It has been a reawakening that reenergized me on my own personal Pilgrimage. I will miss Timothy, Caroline, Tom, Mirabai, George, Tim, Chris, Chava, Don, Darryll, Ralph, Rich, Joe Moore, Joe B, Mark, Harry, Mary-Anne, Raphael, Martin, Linda, Deacon Tom, James, and all the wonderful and dedicated volunteers.

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I ask you to please pray for these beautiful children of God as they continue to do their work as testaments of God's love on earth, as examples of perfect imperfection, and as persons on their own pilgrimage. I hope that you have the opportunity to journey with them as I have, even briefly, for I assure you the Christ light within them will help illuminate the way.

*Joe is a student at the University of New Hampshire where he is in his junior year. He spent two weeks of his winter break with us and then these summer months at St. Joe's.*

\*The title of the first section is lowercase signifying that the walk was a pilgrimage but not "the" Pilgrimage, which is life. ☞



*Joe and Tim enjoying beautiful Letchworth State Park*

### **Reflections on the Summer** – Tim Wotring

*Give some of your food to the hungry,  
and some of your clothing to the naked. Tobit 4:16*

The first time I attended the Tuesday service at St. Joe's, I volunteered to read the first reading from the book of Tobit. One of my character traits is to jump into things and this event became a forerunner for the rest of my time at St. Joe's.

Coming here was like walking into the darkness. I did not know anyone; I did not know the area or even a person who lived nearby. One of my reasons for doing this was to do something that I would feel uncomfortable, but that did not last long. This community was welcoming and was excited for me to be here, and in turn, I showed the same enthusiasm.

During this past spring semester, on my free time, I would study different communities and how they functioned. I would tell my friends how great it would be to live in an intentional community and how I want to do it one day. Therefore, when I got the opportunity this summer I took it.

Being a member of an intentional community is a full-time responsibility where you have to be on your

toes about what you are doing and how it's going to affect the rest of the house. The main purpose of my coming was to serve others. To treat and respect others how I want to be treated.

I came to love unconditionally my brothers and sisters—the guests in hospitality—and become all things to all people. This has been a good challenge for me and made me examine who I am and who I need to be. I have learned so much from them about life and the importance of friends. I will miss this community and hopefully one day I will return.

I will miss cooking with Mirabai, going on trips with Tom, finding spontaneous things to do with Joe and Caroline, the community meetings and events with the "Out House" Community, farming with Chris, and my many hours with my brothers and sisters in hospitality.

As I return to Philadelphia, I will take all that I have learned here and use it. Thank you St. Joe's for being my summer family and for all your encouragement and support

*Tim has returned to Eastern University, which is outside of Philadelphia, for his sophomore year at this Baptist college. ☞*

## Unity Acres 40th Anniversary Celebration

– Tom Malthaner

I have wanted to visit Unity Acres for many years. St. Joe's has been referring male guests there who need to deal with substance abuse in a supportive setting. The opportunity presented itself on August 16 when Unity Acres celebrated its 40th anniversary by inviting guests and donors to a Mass and picnic.

Over the years I have been hearing great stories of what a wonderful place "The Acres" is. Our summer interns, Joe, Alex, Vanessa, and I drove to the farm located in the country about 40 miles north of Syracuse near Pulaski. It is such a picturesque place—136 acres of white buildings, beautiful flower and vegetable gardens, green grass, and a stream running through the back of the property. The sign right in front of the property says Unity Acres—Mind-Body-Spirit. Fr. Jones, the celebrant of the Mass, said this is a place of Constant Miracles.

The Acres was an old, abandoned sanitarium founded by the late Fr. Ray McVey and Kate Stanton, who were inspired by Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement, and made a deep commitment to do the Works of Mercy particularly, to serve the hungry and the homeless. They established a house of hospitality for homeless men who are no longer able or willing to live on the streets of our cities. Today there is a flourishing community providing shelter, food, clothing, and support to as many as 80 men.

From the Unity Acres brochure it states that "men from violent pasts who have never 'fit in' anywhere, today live in peace and fellowship, voluntarily obeying the one cardinal rule of Unity Acres: No drinking and no fighting."

Upon arriving at The Acres I just felt this air of peace and serenity. It felt so good when Malcomb and John, guests from St. Joe's that we recently sent to The Acres, approached and welcomed us to their new home. I also talked to Joe, another guest of ours, who has been there over 6 months and is doing very well.

After a faith-filled Mass attended by 150 supporters and a scrumptious buffet lunch, Malcomb, who has only been there a couple of weeks, took us on a tour of the property. He explained how the men voluntarily maintained all the buildings and gardens, and worked with the animals (6 baby pigs and 12 roosters).

What was most heartening to me was Malcomb's sharing how his life has changed. He is finding peace and God in his life. Through his smile and soft words you could see and feel the excitement and acceptance of his new path in life.

It was a great experience being at The Acres. What I have come away with is that Miracles do happen when we don't interfere with God working in a person's life. With the peace and serenity of Unity Acres it sure seems that a person can get in touch with themselves and find their God. ☩

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## Comings and Goings (continued from page 2)

**Timothy**, a novice vegetarian, worked on creating a garden out on the perimeter of the parking lot; he even started a compost pile. One of the last times we spent together one-on-one was to see the film "Julie & Julia," a lovely film about Julia Child and an aspiring blogger about food, life, the universe, and everything. Upon our return to the house we were inspired to create a meal to share with our brothers and sisters: the residents of the third floor.

**Ralph**, who has dedicated his skills to overseeing the kitchen's needs and coordinating the kitchen volunteers, has gone out West to be near family.

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*Participants in the July picnic at Durand Eastman Park.*

## Comings and Goings (continued from page 6)

Caroline has assumed Ralph's duties. We had a picnic at Durand Eastman Park one hot July evening to see off Ralph and **Sarah and Kevin** Ahmisa who were heading back to Haiti the next day.



*Caroline and Ralph*

We would like to thank the **Spiritus Christi Youth Group** for spending a July morning helping out by sorting and folding donated clothes, repackaging razors, straightening the food in the cellar, and helping to serve and clean-up the lunches served. Mark and Siobhan Potter along with Mimi Youngman offered an adult presence for this lovely crew of junior and senior high school students:

Alyssa Keller, Eddie Addmides, Thomas Maricuno, Alex Baker, Sadie Aman, Monica Lynch, Zach Paitner, Alexander Frazee, Molly Mayfield, Jenna Mae Hanson, Camryn Vankerkhove, Joaquin Agurto-Munding, Robie Ryan, Katen Boucher, Jessica Fields, Nicole Kase, Ryan Malia, Jonah Boucher, Denise Ellis, Blake Ellis, Jeremiah Piersante, Leah Duncan, Emma Milligan, and Katie Hackett. Thanks for a great, fun, and productive time together.

Early August, we were visited by Josh Armfield, an Iraqi veteran, traveling by bicycle, touring the East Coast. He was on his way to live at the Chereth Brook Community, a Catholic Worker House in Kansas City, Missouri. Food and conversation about the military, the Catholic Worker movement, and the Works of Mercy filled the evening.

Last, but not least, is the July 13 birth of Jaheim Jamar to community member **James** Arnold and Shawnta Sanders who are parents to beautiful boy weighing at 7 lbs. 2 oz. Congratulations! ☘

## Project Homeless Connect Rochester

In December 2008, a coalition of homeless shelters and service agencies, including St. Joseph's, came together to develop Project Homeless Connect Rochester. Our goal is to help homeless people in our community get better access to the services they need to survive.

We work to bring together a variety of free services and make them available to homeless people throughout our community at a central location on a single day. This project is modeled on an innovative initiative launched in San Francisco in 2004 that has inspired similar outreach efforts in hundreds of cities across the country.

### Our first event in Rochester and Monroe County:

The War Memorial at Blue Cross Blue Shield Arena  
Exchange and Broad Streets  
Thursday, October 15, 2009  
9:00 a.m. to 3:00p.m.

On that day we will help homeless people get access to healthcare, housing, legal, dental, vision care and mental health services. We will also provide assistance with Medicaid and Social Security Benefits, Veterans Benefits, DMV Identification Cards, and more. Partner organizations will also provide free food, haircuts, foot care, transportation, education, and entertainment.

If you have ideas on other potential volunteers or would like to help on any specific aspect of the planning let us know. We are focusing on (i) building our Coalition; (ii) signing up Service Providers; and (iii) Recruiting Volunteers. We are targeting September 29 for our big press conference. If you would like to take responsibility for building our relationship with a particular institution, contact Doris Armstrong, 749-1771. ☘

### Calendar

9/7	Labor Day Picnic in the Parking Lot
10/5-9	Closed for Maintenance
10/15	Foot Clinic at the War Memorial
10/19	Shelter Opens

[www.saintjoeshouse.org](http://www.saintjoeshouse.org)

☘ Visit our website! ☘

**St. Joseph's House of Hospitality**  
Rochester Catholic Worker Community

*Some of us live in houses; some of us live on the street; some of us have a room of our own, or a bed and a place to keep; some of us have a cot or piece of a couch or patch of floor to return to each night; some hold special positions of power and roles with specific responsibilities, some do whatever they can. Our aim is to try each day to "build a new society in the shell of the old" as we practice the various works of mercy and labor with whatever resources, physical as well as spiritual, that we have been given at the time.*

George McVey - Editor	Matt Rieck - Layout
Tim Sigrist	Joseph Moore
Tom Cleary	Linda Condon
Harry Murray	Mirabai
Chava Redonnet	James Arnold
Don Strickland	Kevin Ahimsa
Trish Pielnik	Sarah Ahimsa
Diana Nielsen	Rich Behrend
Caroline Kristofferson	Tom Malthaner
	Mark Janeshek

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**House Needs:**

Prayers	Sugar	<b>GLOVES</b>	Blankets/Sleeping Bags	Bath Towels
Butter/Margarine	Boots/Sneakers	Hats	Hoodies	Socks
Laundry Soap Powder	Jeans/Cords	Foot Powder	39-gal trash bags	Paper Towels
Men's Underwear (32-44)	Jelly/Jam	<b>Forks</b>	<b>Razors</b>	<b>Toothbrushes/Paste</b>

***Volunteer Opportunity***

**Help Staff the Night Shelter.**

*Will Train.  
Can Sleep on the Job!  
Plenty of choice hours.  
Good supervision.*

**Call Tom at 232-3262.**

Celebrants for

**5:00 p.m. Tuesday Ecumenical Service**

*We suggest that you call the House in case the service time or celebrant has been changed.*

Sep. 8	Pastor Marc Egbujar
Sep. 15	Pastor Thomas Felton
Sep. 22	Mae Lee
Sep. 29	Myra Brown
Oct. 6	Rev. Lawrence Hargrave
Oct. 13	Minister Christian
Oct. 20	Fr. Richard Brickler
Oct. 27	Fr. Jim Callan
Nov. 3	Deacon Bill Coffey
Nov. 10	Fr. Dick O'Connell
Nov. 17	Craig Bullock