

Dear Friends,

Every time we have a Youth Street Reach breakfast I tend to say "This was the best one yet!" So in keeping with that tradition, "This was the best one yet." When we began our program in 2007 a very special couple attended one of those early breakfasts. Bob and Cheryl are pictured above at yesterday's breakfast. They have been in housing now for years but continued to come to see us for the hospitality and often to donate clothing. We had not seen them in over a year because Bob's health has deteriorated. He has a terminal cancer diagnosis but he said he wanted to come one more time to see what he called "the good people" who had helped him over the years. They ended up coming before we even were ready to open which gave us time to introduce them to all the volunteers. They stayed about an hour and we had a lot of tears from the volunteers who had known them for years. Watching them hugging Deb and Paul Golden was a beautiful sight. It was just another example of what a difference a smile, a cup of coffee, and hospitality can make in someone's life.

If there was a theme to yesterday, I would say that it was all about family. We had many youth volunteers who came with one or both parents. When we had our closing circle, I was struck with what the very youngest volunteers had to say. They articulated every clearly that they liked being able to help others. One of the mothers shared that this was clearly a community where everyone was respected and accepted. One of our guests ended up staying in the circle at the end and he expressed such gratitude for being part of the group.

I think that everyone felt like part of a very special family. Of course, I had my daughter Kris and my grandson Isaac there as well. Isaac somehow managed to bring another new friend to participate and his friends insisted that he tell the "Starfish" story at the closing circle. When they left one of his friends said "goodbye Nana". It is great to be a "Nana" to so many

Since 2016 a group from Christ the King Parish in Mashpee has come for every February weekend. They have consistently held a "Super Bowl" fundraiser at their church and given a generous financial donation from their parish. Cheryl and David Ryan have made sure every year that each group understands what is involved. Our donation list was totally full. Usually our "egg man" Steve Goveia cooks between 90-100 eggs. Yesterday he cooked 140! All our coffee was gone as well as all the egg dishes. Usually, we end up sending some left-over food to Baybridge Club house but this time there was almost nothing left! I think it was because our volunteers took seriously our invitation to be sure to sit and eat with our guests. The sense of community filled the whole room. There was no sense of "us" and "them" but rather a sense of family.

I told everyone there that each one would go home with a story and I know that is true. I don't have all their stories but watching the smiles and the hugs told me all I needed to know. Our resident Barber Frankie again worked his magic and basically was busy from 7 am until the end. At about 8:30 am someone whistled to get everyone's attention and a woman who was leaving with a bag of clothes simply said "Thank you everyone!" And everyone applauded. That pretty much sums everything up.