



## McAuley House: Cooking with the BEST Ingredients

For nearly a half century, the staff and volunteers of McAuley House have welcomed each and every guest with hospitality and compassion ... and delicious meals. But with rising food costs and other persistent challenges, these vital meals wouldn't be possible without two very special ingredients: the hard work and creativity of our kitchen staff.

Following the retirement of our beloved, longtime kitchen manager and cook Larry LoVerde, Ray Thimas was hired earlier this year to fill the same role. Coming to us after being regional manager of a popular Mexican restaurant chain, Ray immediately began adding his personal touch and culinary skill to our dishes. There were new flavors, such as sazón, adobo, garlic and herb, and smokehouse. And new, culturally diverse dishes.

Ray created the multi-cultural, healthy menus to reflect and appeal to the House's diverse guests, who have welcomed the bold new tastes. Dishes like chili lime tilapia, beans and rice, chicken chili, and Asian stir fry have been among guests' favorites. And he has been particularly kind as to introduce a few of his own secret recipes, including one for a sticky meatball dish, that's gotten rave reviews. Ray also has plans for the future. If you stop by the McAuley House dining room this winter as the weather turns cold, expect to find comfort foods – with a twist – ready to warm guests' hearts and bellies.

As with any strong team, Ray has a tremendous teammate in chef Mary Ellen Leonhardt, who joined our staff more than five years ago and is no stranger to cooking dishes of all kinds. She is happy to serve Ray's menu innovations alongside

House classics like her jambalaya, and Mary Ellen always emphasizes her main goal is to make the meals as nutritious as possible. One of the ways she keeps the meals nutritious, and delicious, is the use of fresh produce donated by Jamestown Farm throughout the summer months. By tailoring the menu around the best ingredients possible, Ray and Mary Ellen create meals both they and our guests feel good about.

It is the unwavering dedication of the entire McAuley House family and our partners that allow us to continue to provide our 300+ daily guests with nutritious meals, despite the meteoric rise in food costs over the last several years.

Another way we feed our neighbors is through the House's food pantry.

## A Message from the Executive Director



### Mercy and the Strength to Carry On

I won't ever pretend to be an expert in Greek philosophy, but I have never forgotten the words of Plato, who once said, "Music is medicine for the soul."

And recently, I was reminded how true these words are.

It was a sunny afternoon in September when Maura Legare, one of our dedicated Trustees, excitedly shared an inspiration from the Dave Matthews Band song, *Mercy*, after a walk by the ocean. The lyrics moved her, and she wanted me to take a listen. By the middle of the first verse, I was hooked – the song is amazingly profound, especially here:

#### Lift up your heart

**Singing Mercy will we overcome this  
Oh one by one could we turn it around  
Maybe carry on just a little bit longer  
And I try to give you what you need**

Maura was right, the song sounds like it was written about our work. It is the McAuley community that is united in "Mercy" and devoted to giving what we can to those we serve, so they may have what they need to "carry on" just a little bit longer with hope in their heart.

Every day at our ministries, we see people struggle to "carry on" amid the severe challenges in their lives, often not a simple fix but rather a persistent battle of financial insecurity, systemic racism, hunger, and the risk of homelessness. Thanks to people like you, we offer our most vulnerable neighbors what they need for themselves and their families. But most importantly, we do so by showing compassion, dignity, and respect to all as we work to lift their spirit.

The levels at which our ministries address the evolving needs of our community is inspirational; it is a sight to behold. And it is the incredible generosity of our donor community that makes it all possible. A donor community that has also enabled McAuley Ministries to "carry on" for 48 years and do the work we do.

You make a difference, each and every day, in the lives of those who need it most and I will forever be grateful for your kindness and generosity. Thank you for being our hope so that together, we may bring hope to others. God bless.

With gratitude,

*Barbara Haynes*



*Mary Ellen and Ray*

McAuley House opened its food pantry in 2019, and it has since grown to provide 50 families with bags of groceries each week. Thanks to quality products we receive from the Rhode Island Community Food Bank and through donations, pantry bags are filled with nutritious foods and special attention is paid to meet the needs of those with diabetes, celiac disease, and other dietary restrictions.

Following the success of the House pantry, we are happy to share that with a grant from Farm Fresh RI, our Ministry recently opened a satellite food pantry at McAuley Village. Now, each Wednesday, the women of the Village choose groceries from the pantry for themselves and their families. Our "client choice" model is especially welcomed, as it allows our diverse group of mothers to select the culturally relevant foods important to them but are sometimes a challenge to afford with their limited incomes.

Feeding our neighbors in need is both challenging and rewarding work. And we will forever be grateful to the many generous friends and supporters who make our mission

possible and who help to make new programs a reality. Not to mention our amazing staff who continue to inspire us with their creativity and kindness!







*Andres beside Catherine's statue outside the Mercy International Center in Dublin, Ireland*



## *Catherine's Corner*

“A community in which this universal charity reigns, is capable of surmounting all difficulties.”

– Catherine McAuley

Each and every day, it is only thanks to our McAuley Ministries community – volunteers, donors, staff, friends and supporters – that we are able to lighten the burdens carried by our most vulnerable neighbors. Whether our charity comes in the form of a hot meal, a compassionate ear, emergency housing assistance, or an escape from domestic violence, we are living the essence of Catherine and following in her example of mercy.

This past summer, our own Andres Montoya, administrator of The Warde-robe, spent his personal vacation visiting Dublin, Ireland and the birthplace of Catherine McAuley. It was a moving trip that helped to reinvigorate Andres' faith and passion for his work to help others. We are grateful for the words he has chosen to share with us.

“Catherine's home is a place of pilgrimage and renewal for those who wish to feel her spirit and the origins of the Sisters of Mercy. Her chapel, room, and sacred grave are powerful links that connect the past with today's cries of the poor that have assumed global proportions. Never can we lose sight of those most in need of God's compassion and mercy.”



*The Village Kids ... at Multicultural Night.*



*... meeting a chicken.*

## The Gift of Fun

It is thanks to the generosity of McAuley Village’s donors and corporate partners that the children who call the Village home have plenty of fun. Hardly a laughing matter, research shows that positive experiences during early childhood can have a direct and positive impact on a child’s development and mental health in the future, particularly if they have been exposed to past emotional and or physical trauma. It is in this spirit of providing positive, joyful experiences for the children that the Village has hosted a talent show led by student volunteers from Brown University, a Halloween costume party hosted by students from La Salle Academy, a visit to the Jamestown Community Farm on a beautiful summer day, and a special

visit from animals straight from the Roger Williams Park Zoo, including a turtle, a tenrec, and even an armadillo! Each of these events was an astounding success, as measured by smiling faces, busy minds, and the sounds of little voices laughing.

Earlier this Fall, McAuley Village hosted a Multicultural Night, which featured a special presentation given by Rachel Briggs from the Rhode Island Black Storytellers. Rachel shared with the children the story of “The Eagle That Thought it was a Chicken,” the moral of which was that no matter how others may treat or label you, those labels don’t matter, and everyone is valuable exactly as they are. And, every week for a month, art classes were provided by

the Art Connection nonprofit and the kids enjoyed an afternoon of collaging, painting, and drawing. Kids took this opportunity to express themselves in ways they would have been otherwise unable, and, for some, these classes sparked a true interest in art, which the children will keep long after this particular activity is over. This is what it is all about. This is the result of the donors’ generosity toward these children: showing these kids the world is bigger and more beautiful than they know and we at McAuley Ministries feel blessed to help open their minds and hearts to the endless possibilities of a brighter future.





*... enjoying art class.*



*... cracking up at the zoo!*



*... harvesting fruits and vegetables.*



*... wrapping up some Halloween fun!*

# More than a Thrift Store, a Place Where all are Welcome

For friends and supporters of McAuley Ministries who have been to The Warde-robe, you know what a special place it is. And for those yet to walk through our beautifully merchandised store on Broad Street in Central Falls, it is a place where you are always welcome.

Founded in 1996 by Sisters Alberic Martin and Lois Harten, The Warde-robe has always been more than a thrift store offering clothing and household essentials. Thanks to its dedicated volunteers and caring staff, it has long been an oasis of hope, support, compassion, and hospitality.

Andres Montoya is The Warde-robe's administrator. Having immigrated to the United States from Colombia, he, and his

staff, which includes others from South American nations, are well known by neighbors who rely on the storefront and consider the people there an extension of their own family. It is a local favorite – a place where bonds are built.

An unbreakable thread in the fabric of its community, The Warde-robe often collaborates with other nonprofits that are also helping to better the lives of our neighbors in need. This year, a partnership between The Warde-robe and the Pawtucket School Department was born.

Through the partnership, The Warde-robe provided forty \$50 gift cards to staff across the Pawtucket School District. Pawtucket teachers could then distribute these cards to their students in need so they could buy themselves clothes at the Warde-robe. The new endeavor has helped Andres showcase the wonderful, gently used clothing available to kids and teens when “thrifting” at The Warde-robe.

Other, notable partners that The Warde-robe has recently worked closely with include Project Weber/Renew in support of the local homeless population, and the Blackstone Valley Advocacy Center, which provides housing and other services to women experiencing domestic violence.

Everything The Warde-robe does is only possible thanks to the support of our generous community. Please remember The Warde-robe when looking to donate used clothing and housewares. All contributions are appreciated by our grateful shoppers.

The Warde-robe is open for donations Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and by appointment by calling (401) 729-0405 or emailing Andres at [amontoya@mcauleyri.org](mailto:amontoya@mcauleyri.org). The store is located at 1286 Broad Street in Central Falls.



*Side note!*  
**Check out our new van  
given to us by the  
RI Community Food Bank!**  
**Thank you!**





# Building the Best Life Possible

For over thirty years, McAuley Village has provided a safe and caring environment for more than 1,000 mother-led families. The immediate emotional relief that safety and privacy bring is the beginning of these families' journeys to build the best life possible.

This spring, a mother and her teenage son moved into the Village after living in a car for over 90 days. It was a joyful sight when they walked into their fully furnished and stocked apartment, complete with wireless connectivity and food in the kitchen. In the six months that have passed, mother and son are doing great. In fact, she just recently finished her education and is now interviewing for CNA positions.

"I'm just so grateful for McAuley Village, they helped me out of my terrible situation," she says. "We are so blessed to have had this opportunity."

This past year alone, twenty-five moms and sixty-five children have called McAuley Village home. And with the support of our partners Sojourner House, Children's Friend, and others, we are unified in helping these women set goals for building their housing and financial independence. As such, one of our sharpest areas of focus at the Village is ensuring our moms receive the education and coaching that removes barriers to gainful employment. We do this through our flagship McAuley Works program.

Most recently, we have added a Customer Solutions Training program to McAuley Works. The module provides more than 50 hours of instruction at McAuley Village, delivered by gifted educators from CCRI, who instruct their 'students' in essential professionalism and soft skills, including proficiency in Microsoft Office, customer service best practices, and call center structure. Additionally, as part of the curriculum, representatives from local businesses such as AAA and Amica offered insight on the roles available in their companies, and Leadership RI alumni did practice interviews with our moms. There were also sessions that connected the mothers with opportunities at CCRI to earn degrees and certificates in healthcare and general education, including the BRIDGE program, which prepares adult learners to return to the classroom. We are already planning a second session this winter and are looking to



expand participation to those served by our partner nonprofits.

McAuley Village and CCRI were able to offer these uplifting educational opportunities thanks to the Leadership RI Sigma II Class that introduced our Executive Director to the college's Industry Partnership Program. It was the foresight of CCRI to include McAuley Village in a grant from the RI Department of Labor and Training to fund the school's involvement.

Funding for McAuley Works also includes sustaining support from the Papitto Opportunity Connection, which facilitates salary support for staff and financial assistance to students for childcare, transportation, emergency expenses, and more. We are eternally grateful to our community of supporters who help to provide the resources our Village moms need to achieve their personal goals and realize a bright future for their families.

Serving the Most Vulnerable in our Community with Hospitality, Compassion, and Dignity

622 Elmwood Ave  
P.O. Box 73195  
Providence, RI 02907

401-941-9013 | McAuleyRI.org



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*A family grateful for the help they needed to rent their new apartment.*



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Shop our Amazon Wish List

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Donate on our website

Volunteer your time at any  
of our ministries

Donate non-perishable  
food items to our pantry

Donate clothing and small  
household items to  
The Warde-robe

Shop our  
Amazon Wish List