

Life & Faith Partnership

By joining our **monthly giving program**, you offer a lifeline, providing stability that enables us to extend and enhance our various ministries. **To become a part of the Life & Faith Partnership, simply check the box marked “Make This a Recurring Gift” on the giving form at scny-lefsa.org/donate.** Thank you!

Meet the LEFSA Team!



Carl Petrus—Carl is the current Director of LEFSA, and is also the pastor of Center of Hope Church in the city. He began as a volunteer at LEFSA after seeing unhoused people being ignored on the streets and resolving to help them. “We don’t give up on anybody” is his philosophy.



Deborah Byrd—Deborah is an outreach coordinator. She participates in the Street Ministry and also goes to speak to people in the shelters.



James Addison—James’s involvement with LEFSA stretches back to its early days, more than 30 years ago. He served as Director and Operations Manager and, although he has officially retired, he still assists wherever and whenever he can.



James “JB” Butler—JB is the Housing Coordinator at LEFSA. He helps our community members find opportunities for stable housing and navigate the long, complicated application process for financial assistance.



Jerry Smith—Jerry recently took over as coordinator of the Creativity Group. He conducts group meetings twice a month and helps members of the LEFSA community express themselves through varied arts and crafts.



Joyce Waller—Joyce works in our Street Ministry and conducts outreach in shelters, especially Paul’s Place shelter and drop-in center on 14th Street.

Stay Up to Date with LEFSA

We have big plans for the coming year, and we can’t wait to share more good news with you! Visit us online so you can see stories and photos of our mission in action.



scny-lefsa.org



@scnylefsa



/scny.lefsa



@lefsanyc

Ways You Can Help



Hold a supply collection drive in your club, school, church, business, family or community. We have need of many different things that will help people who are living in shelters or on the streets, and those who participate in our gatherings and activities.

For more information, please see our website: scny-lefsa.org/ways-you-can-help/



Make a gift through our Amazon Wish List. Just pick an item off our list and have it shipped directly to us with no extra work on your part! Many of the items also have free shipping for Prime members.

Find the list at: tinyurl.com/yc7mkwxw



Purchase Creativity Group Note Cards. These card packs feature original art created by members of the LEFSA Creativity Group. The funds raised go to support the group and purchase art supplies for it.

Find the cards at: scny-lefsa.org/creativity-group-note-cards/



Make a Gift Your support of LEFSA helps break the cycle of homelessness by giving people hope, community, support, a place to be seen and heard, and an outlet for their feelings.

Use the enclosed slip or give online at scny-lefsa.org/donate.

You also have the option of giving automatically each month through our Life & Faith Partnership.



Life Experience and Faith Sharing Associates
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Life & Faith: Our Journey

Updates from LEFSA made possible by your prayers and support

Winter 2024

Letter from the Director

This year, LEFSA marked 38 years of working with the unhoused people of New York City, trying to address not only the symptoms of homelessness, but also the causes of it.

In 1986 our founders, Sister Dorothy Gallant and Teresa Skehan, came to the realization that the usual ways of helping people experiencing homelessness were doing nothing to alleviate homelessness itself. Giving someone a sandwich, a bottle of water, or a pair of new socks is a good way to get the process started, but more is needed. The people need to be shown that their lives have value, that there is hope, other people care about them, and homelessness doesn’t have to be a permanent lifestyle.

We talk to people in shelters and on the streets, and we give them opportunities to talk to each other and to God. In this way they can identify what needs to change in their lives so that they can move on and move up. The support given by friends, and the lessons learned from them, are a key part of this.

Not all homelessness is caused by mental illness, alcoholism or drug addiction, as the media tends to portray it. It includes many people who never dreamed they would be in this situation. They all need support and assistance, and for 38 years LEFSA has been able to help, thanks to dedicated volunteers and generous, caring supporters like you!

Please read on to learn about some of the things that have been happening in our LEFSA community. Thank you for being a friend!



Pastor Carl Petrus
Director

Exercise for the Mind, Body and Soul

Each week on Thursday, some of our community members meet for an indoor health and exercise class. By making the body healthier through exercise and movement, the mind, the spirit and the self-image improve as well.



A Refreshing Retreat

In June, a group of LEFSA community members and staff boarded a bus for a spiritual retreat at Mariandale, a facility in Westchester County. This was our annual co-ed retreat; we also have separate retreats for men and for women.



This is always an enjoyable event for people who seldom get a chance to leave the city for a few days of peace in the countryside. In addition to the quiet, privacy and good food, the retreat participants have scripture studies, group discussions, and watch spiritually inspiring movies. It's always a highlight of the year for those who attend.



Promoting Computer Literacy

Today, knowing how to use a computer is a necessity. Public libraries and other facilities have computers that can be used by people who don't have their own. People experiencing homelessness need to use computers to look for employment, housing and education opportunities, to gain information and communicate with others.

Every Monday afternoon, LEFSA offers a computer class to teach the basics: how to open

and use common applications; how to send and receive e-mail, create Word documents, print flyers, and use a web browser.

If you have recently upgraded your computer and your old one still works well, please consider donating it to LEFSA! Desktop and laptop models are always welcome as are peripherals such as keyboards, mice, and printers.

"I Know I'm Not Alone"

Helen Boben is a member of our LEFSA family whose life had reached rock-bottom, but whose participation in our community led her to see that her life was worth fighting for. Helen went from homelessness and drug addiction to working as a peer-to-peer counselor for a nonprofit, helping others find hope and a way out of the vicious circles their lives had become. Here is her story.

"I'm a recovering addict. I used to use drugs. I've been clean now since 1991. I don't know where I would be if I wasn't coming to LEFSA. They've helped me so much. LEFSA has changed my life because I've gotten to grow closer to God. I don't read the Bible like I should, but coming here every Wednesday, it helps me. I know I've grown. And the women's group, it helps me. I want to get closer to God. I want to do things for God and not for Helen. It's not about me, it's about God.



"I used to have low self-esteem. I didn't love myself—that's why I was using drugs. When I was smoking crack, I became homeless. I was doing things to get money for drugs; digging in garbage cans, begging people for money, sleeping on the trains. I didn't want to stop doing drugs. I wanted to die.



"But today, I can say I love myself and I love other people. I don't only care about Helen. I care about others. What I love about LEFSA is the people, the others sharing their stories. I know I'm not alone. That others have been through what I've been through. I don't have to feel ashamed to talk about negative things I've done, where I came from, because others have done the same thing. So I'm not alone.

"I'm a blessing to others today more than ever, because God has blessed me today that I have, that I can give, that I can bless other people. And I do it every chance that I get. Every day that he gives me life, I'm so grateful to be alive because I don't think I should be here. I think I should be dead, with the way I was living and things I was doing.

"I'm so grateful to be here."



Food, and Fun

Our annual summer picnic in Marcus Garvey Park was once again a hit, with plenty of good food and conversation, as well as opportunities for attendees to design their own fun t-shirts!



Creativity Group

The Creativity Group now meets twice a month on Tuesdays. Members have many options for expressing themselves artistically. Recently they have been working with watercolors and doing crochet, including a group project to crochet a blanket.

Mother's Day

In May we celebrated Mother's Day at LEFSA! A party was held to honor members of our community who are mothers, and some who are grandmothers. A good meal was provided with cake for dessert.



Our Annual Fishing Trip

July saw a group of LEFSA folks take to the sea for our annual fishing trip. Some tried their luck with the rod and reel, while others just enjoyed the cruise in the waters off Long Island.

