

# Life & Faith: Our Journey

Updates from LEFSA made possible by your prayers and support



SPRING 2026

## Letter from the Director

Spring is here, and we are grateful for the departure of a very cold, snowy and harsh winter. It was a very tough season for the unhoused people here in New York. More than 20 people in the city lost their lives due to lack of shelter, many others suffered cold-related injuries, and it was a frightening time for people who must live on the streets, or in shelters that accommodate them only at night.

But here at LEFSA, we found ways to foster hope, as we have been doing for 40 years since our establishment by two visionary Catholic sisters, Sr. Dorothy Gallant, SC and Sr. Teresa Skehan, RSM.

In this newsletter you will read about our activities to not only lessen the burden of homelessness, but to help people find a way out of it, into stable housing, and into the better lives God wants for them.

Everything we do is possible only because of the generosity of caring people like you, who understand that we see the face of Jesus every time we look at any of our neighbors... especially those who suffer and who need a hand up, not just a hand out.

I like to say that, thanks to our donors and sponsors, people come to LEFSA with nothing and leave with everything... everything they need to escape the vicious cycle of poverty and homelessness and take control of their lives. Read on to find out how that can happen!

**Rev. Carl Petrus**  
*Director*



*Pastor Carl Petrus, Director*

## Street and Shelter Ministry: Expanding Our Outreach

A key part of LEFSA's outreach is sending team members out into the streets and into shelters to give out food, water and other items, and to encounter people who might be interested in joining our community.

The Covid pandemic put a big dent into our shelter visits, but we are now able to visit seven different shelters and drop-in centers in the city to talk and pray with people. We meet people of all ages and ethnic groups, including whole families. Some have jobs or go to school, but can't afford permanent housing.

Thanks to gifts from donors and sponsors, we are able to distribute sandwiches, bottled water, toiletry kits, new socks, backpacks, protein bars, and winter clothing to the people we encounter who need them. Thanks to our partnership with World Food Movement we've been able to expand the amount of

food we are able to give out, and we can provide vegetarian meals as well.

The need is tremendous, however. We often give out our entire day's supply of food in 15 minutes.

Our hope is that the people we meet and help will choose to show up for one of our men's or women's group or co-ed meetings and make new friends who can help them survive, not just physically but emotionally and spiritually.



## More Needs, More Ministries

Cleanliness is important not only for health and self-image, but for opportunities in finding employment, housing, and community. Many people don't have access to bathing facilities, so LEFSA offers a shower ministry where people can get themselves clean, wash their hair, and get fresh socks and undergarments. We are partnering with Shower Pop, a group that offers mobile shower facilities, to promote our program and hopefully expand it to a weekly event rather than the monthly event it is presently.

James "JB" Butler coordinates our housing ministry. When people apply for subsidized housing, the paperwork and bureaucracy can be very difficult to navigate. James assists his clients in knowing what they have to do, what forms they need to fill out, and following up on applications and opportunities. Getting stable housing is the first step for many people in building new lives for themselves.

Our Creativity Group has proven to be extremely popular and important to its participants. The value of having a creative outlet and a means of self-

expression is so important to people. Team Member Jerry Smith is now leading the group, since the 2023 death of its founder, Mario Pimentel. Group members have the opportunity to paint, color, create bracelets and other jewelry items, tie-dye, crochet, and sew.

Our popular Computer and Exercise classes are currently on pause while we look for new instructors, but we hope to bring them back as soon as possible!

### 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](https://scny-lefsa.org/donate). Thank you!

## Bringing People Together Is at the Heart of Our Ministry

There are many organizations that work to help homeless people. What makes LEFSA different is the emphasis we place on building relationships and a community. Through mutual encouragement, support, and the sharing of information and ideas, people can be shown that they have value and that "homeless" is not the same as "hopeless." Nothing helps people persevere more than knowing that they are not alone, and that people care.



LEFSA conducts monthly Men's and Women's Empowerment Groups, where people come together to talk, pray, learn, compare experiences, offer advice and support, and bond. These meetings have really grown; we have seen as many as 25 people attend.

We also have a Team Enrichment Group each week that focuses on learning about topics such as faith, social justice, women's history and Black history. We study the trials that people have gone through in the past and how they overcame them.

Each fall, a group of 22 women and a group of 22 men travel upstate to Ossining, NY to the Center at Mariandale for week-long spiritual retreats. For many of them, this is the only opportunity they have to get out of the City to relax in the country and breathe fresh air. Some report that it is a life-changing experience. Each spring, we also take a co-ed group of 44 people to Mariandale.

## Special Fun Events Help Build Community and Relieve Stress

For people dealing with the daily stress of homelessness, having fun events to look forward to can make a huge difference.

Each summer we hold a barbecue at Marcus Garvey Park in Harlem, where people can enjoy plentiful food and socialize for a few hours among the trees and nice weather.



In July we have a fishing trip in the waters around Manhattan and Long Island. Some people fish, while others come along just to enjoy the cruise and look at the water. Whoever catches the biggest fish gets a prize of \$200, while the runner-up gets \$100.

The holidays can be an especially hard time for people living on the streets or in shelters, so LEFSA tries to make sure they don't have to go through them hungry and alone. At Thanksgiving we host a feast of home-cooked food and fellowship to fill the belly and warm the heart. Christmas time brings another gathering with food, presents, and entertainment.

Super Bowl Sunday has become an unofficial American holiday as well, and it's not neglected at LEFSA! Our community members are invited to gather to watch the game and enjoy some snacks, as tradition requires!



# Stay Up to Date with LEFSA

Our latest news and activities are available on our website and our social media outlets:



[scny-lefsa.org](http://scny-lefsa.org)



[@scnylefsa](https://www.instagram.com/scnylefsa)



[/scny.lefsa](https://www.facebook.com/scny.lefsa)

## 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/](http://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](https://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/](http://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.

Give online at [scny-lefsa.org/donate](http://scny-lefsa.org/donate).

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

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**LEFSA**  
LIFE EXPERIENCE AND  
FAITH SHARING ASSOCIATES