

Clare House Gazette

Putting the Pieces of Life Back Together!

Open Letter to Our Friends



We have heard springtime referred to as the season of birthing. What once appeared lifeless now renews itself. We see the green spikes of the daffodils pushing up from the recently frozen earth and the sunny eyes of the purple crocuses peeping from beneath the unfolding leaves of the tulips. The robins have returned for the season and songbirds

serenade us in the early hours of our busy days. Longer daylight hours, warmed with the golden sunshine, seem to stretch our spirits toward new growth. And isn't that what Clare House is all about: Renewal, Growth, Transformation.

The opportunity for new growth came to Clare House with six new residents. We welcome them with open hearts and look forward to encouraging and supporting these women in rebuilding their lives within their families and the community. We are happy to share with you that our house has almost reached full capacity and our extensive waiting list continues to grow.

Another dimension of growth this season at Clare House includes the addition of another new hire. Ashley Blake, who holds a Master of Science in Criminal Justice, will act as our Case Manager. On behalf of Clare of Assisi House Board, Sr. Eileen, the staff, our residents, and me, we offer a warm welcome to Ashley.

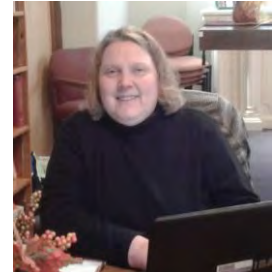
Additionally, we are planning our *Autumn in Italy* in September. Whether you have experienced the tradition of Italy firsthand or simply savor the cuisine, save the date and join us for an enjoyable Italian adventure. Details are enclosed.

Finally, thank you to all our supporters for your positive feedback on our first newsletter. We're glad you enjoyed reading it. We endeavor to keep you updated on Clare House news and look forward to your comments.

Please know that the continued growth of Clare of Assisi House totally relies on the generosity of our benefactors and volunteers. We are ever so grateful for all that you do. Visit our website for more information on how to donate or volunteer. May the beauty of the spring season bring joy to your heart.

Happy Spring,
Robin Ball
Executive Director

Pam's Celebration



Pamela Mills, Administrative Assistant

Good food and great company always add so much to a gathering, but when honoring a Clare House resident's completion of her one-year residency program, family spirit and female camaraderie soar. That's just what happened when Pamela Mills, the first graduate from Clare House, celebrated the occasion.

Pam expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to spend this transitional period at Clare House and gratefully accepted the Certificate of Completion presented to her by Robin Ball, Executive Director.

Pam is presently searching for a home in the Reading area and continues successfully in her capacity as Administrative Assistant at Clare House.

Congratulations, Pam!

Many More Thanks

Thank you for making our most recent events at Chipotle and Yogo Crazy a success. Your patronage is a blessing.

In the Spotlight



Caitlin Kasperowicz immediately presents the picture of a confident, self-assured young woman who knows where she's going and what she wants. She is, however, the newly identified Caitlin with steely determination to continue to work on realizing some important choices she has made.

Caitlin arrived at Clare House about a year ago in March from a facility in Berks County; she was still experiencing the painful effects of an abusive relationship and broken family ties. Initially, she had difficulty acclimating herself to life within the community of women at Clare House. It was tough for her to accept constructive criticism; however, working with the trauma group at Berks Counseling Center, she learned how to listen to advice and to forgive herself in order to move forward. "I allowed my past to define me, thinking I was always going to be broken, but I eventually opened up about the pain, and that set me free. I am not the same person that walked in here." said Caitlin.

Caitlin was born and raised in Mt. Holly, New Jersey, and her family eventually settled in Blandon when she was 15. She has four sisters and one brother; she's the oldest. She graduated from Fleetwood Senior High School in 2010 and attended RACC (Reading Area Community College). She is currently working part time at Burger King but seeking full-time employment.

Caitlin is also pursuing her Certification as Recovery Specialist. Robin Ball, Executive Director at Clare House, presented this opportunity to Caitlin, and after some prayer and discernment, she began seeking what has become her passion and dream. "God put this in my path," Caitlin said, "I want to give back, provide addiction help to those who struggle with the same things I did for four years."

After four months of continuous contact, letters, and calls through the Berks Community Health Center, Caitlin received a voucher from the Center of Excellence at Tower Health to fund her nine-week training program. Upon completion of the program, she looks forward to passing the test administered by the Pennsylvania Board of Certification for Recovery Specialists to qualify legally to serve as a Certified Recovery Specialist.

Caitlin very much desires to reestablish her family connection, and she communicates frequently with her father and brother. She spent the holidays last year with her family and recognized that accepting her and reuniting will require persevering in trust and love. However, she persists in working through the issues with her family because she wants to rebuild those important ties.

Most recently, Caitlin has said yes to another proposal from "a most wonderful man," as described by Caitlin. "He is my biggest supporter." So along with family and her fiancé, many others have walked with Caitlin in her journey and have greatly inspired her like Sister Chris, who held her hand and helped her succeed, and Pam Mills, who encouraged her by example to "stick" with the program. And she will. Caitlin is on track and views her world positively because of friendships, community, and forgiveness.

Wyomissing Family Restaurant



Some of the Bernardine Franciscans attended the event.

All you had to do with that ticket you purchased was show up and enjoy the food, especially the fried chicken. Friends, family, and neighbors joined the staff and residents of Clare of Assisi House for dinner at the Wyomissing Family Restaurant in Wyomissing on Monday, March 18.

By the look of the crowd seated between 4 and 8 p.m., the fundraising event appeared to be an overwhelming success, and funds raised from ticket sales will go exclusively toward assisting in day-to-day operations of Clare House.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the event. We sincerely appreciate your wonderful support of the organization's efforts to impact the lives of those women needing a second chance. We especially thank Mr. Hamid Chaudhry, owner of the Wyomissing Family Restaurant, who donated 100% of the ticket proceeds to Clare House.



Sr. Clare and Pam greet guests.

Our Mission

To provide transitional residential living and important life skills training to non-violent women with a history of domestic violence, substance abuse and/or prostitution upon their release from prison. While living in a safe, sober and home-like environment, residents find the encouragement and support they need to help put the pieces of their life back together.

On Sale Now!!!

Boscov's Friends Helping Friends Event

Wednesday, October 16, 2019

8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

Cost Only \$5.00 – Gets you 25% Off Shopping Pass

Refreshments – Prizes

Contact Clare House at 484-869-5483 for tickets.

New Case Manager



Ashley Blake, the new Case Manager for Clare of Assisi House, joined the staff on March 13, 2019. Prior to working at Clare House, Ashley spent eight years working for

the County of Lancaster, first in Domestic Relations as a conference officer and then in Bail Administration as a pretrial services specialist. Ashley grew up in State College, Pennsylvania, and graduated from Penn State University in 2009 with a Bachelor of Arts in Crime, Law and Justice. She then went on to pursue her master's degree, while working full time at the County of Lancaster, graduating from the University of Cincinnati in 2011 with a Master of Science in Criminal Justice.

SAVE THE DATE

Annual Holiday Brunch

Sunday, December 8, 2019

McGlenn Conference Center

Watch your mail for the invitation!



Who Was Clare?



No. Clare never stood holding lilies! Neither was she enclosed in a monastery her whole life. Clare fell in love, not with Francis of Assisi as in the movies, but with her God who came as one of us, Jesus.

She was a beautiful young noble woman of Assisi, and Clare's vocation to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, inspired by the example of the merchant's son, Francis, changed everything.

Yes, Clare did live in the monastery of San Damiano for over 40 years. So many others joined her, including her own mother. Here her sisters knew Clare's goodness and God's delight in her, as she listened to needs and heartache, baked bread, kept vigil with the sick, tended physical conditions, washed feet

Clare was also a reconciler of injustices, friend of the powerful and those with no voice, and while suffering a long illness, she trusted God's mercy.

Her monastery/home welcomed citizens of Assisi frightened in warfare; homemakers suffering anxiety; the hungry and so many without hope; others losing faith. To this day, San Damiano is a place of healing.

As is **Clare of Assisi House**, a place of building trust, new skills, sister-to-sister relationships, and courage for the journey. It could not have a better name. Clare prays, *"God loves you with a tender love."*