

Gerard Place

A homeless mother and her two children call from the streets of Buffalo, NY looking for safety, shelter and guidance to learn how to become self-sufficient.



Gerard Place takes this family in ...

Founded by the twelve women religious congregations in Western New York and now sponsored by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious of WNY. Gerard Place opened its doors in November of 2000 with a mission to offer transitional housing and supportive services for homeless single parent families. Now almost 13 years later we have had over 225 families reside on-site and have achieved a 95% success rate! This means that 95% of homeless families that come to Gerard Place to escape poverty graduate to permanent housing, educated and employed and ready to live a self-sufficient life. One year later 90% of these families remain in the community and never go back to homeless again.



Maureen Harris, OSF

The WNY LCWR continues to sponsor Gerard Place and Sisters from the various congregations volunteer their time as Board of Directors, teachers, committee members, administrative functions and other essential roles that our organization needs.

In 2009 Gerard Place expanded our mission, renovated a former convent and opened a community education building to begin to work with this very poor surrounding community. After studying the community and talking to the people we found that 30% of adults do not have a GED, there is 56% unemployment for those without vocational training and 85% of female headed households live well below the poverty line.



Bea Manzella, SSJ

Our collaborative education building brings over 35 different trainings for our on-site residential families as well as the community that includes: GED, Literacy, Computer and Job Readiness Training, Health/Nutrition classes, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Education, Parenting classes and much more. Our community outreach programming includes: Flu shot day, Breast Cancer Awareness Seminars, Health Fairs, Boys/Girl Scouts and a community carnival.

After studying the community again in 2010 we began to look at barriers people in this community have to escaping poverty. Three barriers were evident.

1. The community lacks quality child care.
2. People in this community cannot afford transportation to vocational training classes.

3. There is a lack of opportunity and resources for people to acquire necessary education and job skills training.

In early 2012 we purchased a former parish hall next to Gerard Place. This 1923 building has nine classrooms, gymnasium, cafeteria and industrial kitchen. This past September over 100 Sisters from all 12 congregations gathered together to celebrate the past accomplishments of Gerard Place and commit to expanding the vision to



include a community center that responds to the need of job training, getting kids off our violent streets and quality child care so that our parents can attend the job training they need to become self-sufficient. This \$3.7 million dollar renovation project is underway and we are looking to all who believe in our mission of serving the poorest of the poor and providing them a hand up and not just a hand out to consider becoming a part of the Gerard Place family.

For questions regarding the renovation project please contact David Zapfel-Executive Director- (716) 897-9948 ext. 100 or dzgerardplace@aol.com

Every day the Sisters, staff and volunteers help those most vulnerable in our community. Our reward is to hear comments like these:

"I was homeless.....Now I have a home and I am safe."

"I had nothing.....Now I have my GED, a job and my children."

"Gerard Place saved my life"

Submitted by:

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Leadership Diocese of Women Religious of the Diocese of Western New York

Daughters of Charity St. Vincent De Paul
Felician Sisters
Franciscan Sisters of Allegany
Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph

Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart
Missionary Sisters of St. Columban
Sisters of St. Mary of Namur
Sisters of Mercy
Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity
Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities
Sisters of St. Joseph
Sisters of Social Service