



MY BROTHER'S KEEPER
A Christian ministry of loving service and education

Our Mission:
"To bring the Love and Hope of Jesus Christ to those we serve."

Along the Way

We deliver furniture, food, and Christmas assistance free of charge to local families in need with no prerequisites for service.

OCTOBER 2021



"We're just the delivery people. This is the man who sent you the furniture."

What Will Christmas Look Like This Year? By Erich Miller, President



This year's Christmas Program is well underway! We hope to take the best of what we learned last year during the height of COVID while also returning closer to our traditional program.

STARTING EARLIER

Starting earlier was key to our success last Christmas and we're continuing that overall strategy in 2021.

This year, we formally began accepting Christmas requests on August 16, the earliest date in our history. Our Adopt-a-Family program opened online October 1 and we hope to make our first Christmas deliveries before November 1.

Starting earlier has several benefits. It decreases the risks associated with COVID and snow in December. It also reduces stress for the families we serve as well as our staff and volunteers who feel such a great responsibility for our Christmas Program.

NEW REQUEST REGISTRATION PROCESS

We have successfully piloted a new Christmas registration process this year. In past years, parents in need called My Brother's Keeper during publicized hours. Unfortunately, this meant busy telephone lines which wasted precious time and cell phone minutes for the people we serve.

New this year, parents in need can fill out a simple pre-registration form online. Once a week, we select entries at random and send a link to schedule a convenient phone appointment. My Brother's Keeper then calls parents at the time and day they selected.

The new system has worked great for families in need and also for our staff and volunteers working on intakes. More than 1,000 families are already enrolled in this year's Christmas Program.

ADOPT-A-FAMILY

Last year, we strongly encouraged families, businesses, schools, and other organizations to participate in our Adopt-a-Family Program. The response from our community was astounding.

1,900 families were sponsored in 2020 vs. 691 families in 2019 — an increase of 175%!

Our Adopt-a-Family Program is now open and we hope the response will be strong again this year. Please visit www.MyBrothersKeeper.org/Adopt to sign up.

GRATITUDE MASS

Our annual Gratitude Mass is an important evening for the My Brother's Keeper community to come together in prayer and offer our gratitude to God for the blessings He bestows on us.

We plan to return to an in-person service at our traditional time at 7 p.m. on the Friday evening after Thanksgiving. New this year, though, we are discussing the possibility of hosting the Gratitude Mass at Stonehill College.

Operationally, it's an enormous job to empty the entire Easton facility and a significant logistical challenge during our busiest time of the year.

Last year's virtual Gratitude Mass was a big help to the Christmas Program because it allowed us to continue our work in the building throughout November. Holding the Gratitude Mass at Stonehill would allow us to continue our work serving local families in need uninterrupted again this fall.

SANTA'S WORKSHOP

We know how much our volunteers missed coming to our facilities last year to select and wrap gifts. **We expect to welcome volunteers back to Santa's Workshop this Christmas!**

For everyone's safety and comfort, though, we will need to limit the number of volunteers in our facilities compared to previous years. We will also likely limit the number of times volunteers can come in to wrap gifts in order to share the joy of service with as many volunteers as possible.

More details about the Gratitude Mass and Christmas volunteering to follow in November. Thank you!

Yours in Christ,

Erich
Erich

A Joyous Reunion... The My Brother's Keeper Family Walk Returns!

The My Brother's Keeper Family Walk returned in August after last year's hiatus due to COVID.

The event is usually held each year in June. The date was new but some things never seem to change: the weather was sunny and beautiful and the crowd was large and joyous! Our guests were thrilled to reconnect with other members of the My Brother's Keeper family after such a long pause due to the pandemic.

The day kicked off with a prayer service with Alex Ogozaly offering the "mission moment." Alex serves on our Easton Development Board and has been deeply connected to My Brother's Keeper since his days volunteering as a Stonehill student in the mid-2000s. Earlier this year, Alex suffered a stroke and was diagnosed with leukemia. In his remarks, he shared how the My Brother's Keeper community has supported him and his family during such a difficult time.

One of the highlights of the day was co-founder Jim Orcutt leading an opening prayer along with Terry Orcutt.

The crowd was delighted to see him after recovering from major surgery in May.

The walk was 1½ miles through the beautiful campus of Stonehill College and ended with music, food, and fun inflatables provided by Barry Productions and Perfect Parties USA.

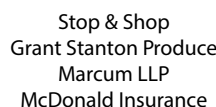
The event was a tremendous financial success raising more than \$200,000 to support our work serving local families in need with furniture and food.

Special thanks to all our attendees, donors, and event sponsors, especially our Platinum Sponsors: Boston Mutual Life Insurance Company, Wessling Architects, Sullivan's Castle Island, and the Dropkick Murphy's Claddagh Fund.

Our Family Walk is usually held in June so we're especially grateful to Stonehill College and the Congregation of Holy Cross for accommodating the date change this year.

Excerpt from Family Walk Mission Moment by Alex Ogozaly, Easton Development Board

"The pandemic has affected all of us in one way or another and many of us here have dealt with illness, tragedy, the loss of a job or a loved one. But it is in those challenging times that you find out who your community really is. And for me, the support I received from the My Brother's Keeper community was overwhelming. The endless number of cards, calls, emails, text messages, meals delivered to our house, and most importantly prayers offered on my behalf made my full recovery possible. There have been countless examples over the last few months where, through the prayers of this community, I've experienced what I would describe as a 'tsunami of God's grace.' Whether I know you or not, you being part of the community helped get me through one of the most difficult times in my life. And especially to all those who offered prayers for me and my family, thank you. You played such a big role in my recovery."



Feasibility Study Underway : Easton Facility Capital Improvements



It may be hard to believe but the Easton facility—our flagship location—will be 20 years old next year! The building and location have served us exceptionally well for the past two decades but we are a far different ministry today. Here are some statistics that highlight our tremendous growth:

- ▶ We made 14,000 deliveries from our Easton facility over the past 12 months vs. 4,000 deliveries in 2002.
- ▶ We received 1.2 million pounds of food in donation from the Greater Boston Food Bank over the past 12 months vs. 200,000 pounds in 2019.
- ▶ Pre-COVID, more than 4,000 volunteers served at our Easton facility annually vs. an estimated 1,000 volunteers in 2002.

In short, more people are helping us make more deliveries and do more good in Christ's name than ever before! As we move toward 2022, it's time to consider investing in the Easton facility for the next 20 years so we can continue to grow and effectively serve local families in need. To this end, we are working with an architect and construction manager to study the feasibility of capital improvements. Here are some areas under consideration:

1 WORK AND STORAGE SPACE / WAREHOUSE

Challenge: In response to COVID-19, we have doubled food deliveries from our Easton facility. Our goal post-COVID is to return our Furniture Assistance Program back to normal levels **AND** continue making increased food deliveries. Long-term, this will require more work and storage space.

Possible Solution: Our Easton facility has a 12,350 SF foot print with a 3,000 SF mezzanine over the front quarter of the facility. Continuing the mezzanine across the whole building would create 9,000 additional SF and give us the space we need to make important building improvements on the first floor.

2 LOADING DOCK

Challenge: Our current loading dock is only 350 SF with two loading bays. There is only one access point from the warehouse which creates a choke point. The dock height does not accommodate semi-trailers. Semis must be unloaded by forklift in the parking lot which takes additional staff time and is weather-dependent.

Possible Solution: A renovated loading dock could be larger, have additional loading bays, additional warehouse access points, and be built to accommodate a variety of vehicle heights.

3 WALK-IN REFRIGERATOR AND FREEZER

Challenge: Our walk-ins are too small to support our greatly expanded Food Assistance Program. Sometimes we must turn away food donations because of space limitations. The doors are 32" wide so all perishables must be loaded and unloaded by hand.

Possible Solution: If our walk-ins were relocated immediately behind the building, they could be larger, accessible from the warehouse, have service doors wide enough to accommodate pallets, and free up space inside the warehouse.

4 PRAYER ROOM AND KITCHEN

Challenge: Praying and 'breaking bread' together are important parts of the culture at My Brother's Keeper but we've outgrown our community spaces. Prior to COVID, volunteers frequently had to sit in the lobby during prayer and at tables in the warehouse during lunch apart from the rest of our volunteers.

Possible Solution: The prayer room could be expanded and a second entry/exit door added. Seating capacity in the kitchen could be increased by expanding the room and redesigning the kitchen layout.

5 OFFICES

Challenge: The office space does not accommodate our current staffing levels plus the volunteers who assist with administrative functions such as answering help calls.

Possible Solution: Offices could be added on the first floor with the possibility of expanding upstairs in the future.

6 BATHROOMS

Challenge: Our current bathrooms only have a two-person occupancy, not ideal given the size of our community.

Possible Solution: First floor bathroom size could be increased with additional bathrooms added upstairs.

The John Harrington Family and The Yawkey Foundation, longtime supporters of our mission, have generously partnered together to fund the feasibility study for My Brother's Keeper in loving memory of Maureen Harrington who passed away in December 2020. We will keep our community informed as we go through the assessment process and we welcome any feedback you may have.



A Reflection on Service at My Brother's Keeper

Mike Ryan, C.S.C.

“When we bring food or furniture to those who have requested it, we meet them as God meets us—in our own particular circumstances—and bring to them the love of God and the heartfelt knowledge that there is genuine hope amidst one’s struggles. But it is not about us as a team, as individuals, or as volunteers; it’s about God. Finishing the delivery by presenting a crucifix puts the focus not on us as “delivery people” but rather on God as the generous and loving creator. This makes God the true center of My Brother Keeper’s mission. A God who loves each of us beyond measure and who has provided these items for His children. In giving the crucifix, we educate people in the faith and leave tangible reminders of it: the delivered items and a depiction of God’s most loving act upon the Cross.”

Faith and Works: Congregation of Holy Cross



Since 2012, the U.S. Province of the Congregation of Holy Cross has sent men in formation to serve at My Brother's Keeper as part of their summer and winter service ministry placements.

This past summer, Holy Cross seminarians David Murray (Illinois), Ben Sasin (Indiana), Jacob Gorman (Indiana), and Mike Ryan (Ohio)

collectively served more than 1,000 hours at our locations in Easton and Dartmouth delivering furniture, food, and the Love and Hope of Jesus Christ to local families in need.

“Doin’ the Lord’s work” By Ryan Thorley, Director – Easton Facility



On a blistering hot summer day, I had the great privilege to make a special delivery to “Mike.” I was joined by Holy Cross seminarians Ben Sasin and Jacob Gorman.

We arrived at Mike’s apartment in Attleboro: an old textile mill that had been converted to senior housing. Mike had recently undergone a fourth surgery on herniated discs in his back and was in a constant state of discomfort. He had been sleeping on an air mattress on the floor and getting down to that low level with his

back condition was excruciating.

Mike’s apartment was empty, except for a blue recliner and small TV placed on top of a cardboard box. He couldn’t believe that we came out on such a hot day, saying, “I thought for sure that you would cancel. I sure do appreciate you doing this! I used to move furniture—I did it for years. I feel bad I can’t lend you guys a hand.”

We told Mike to just sit tight and we would take care of everything. We brought in a new bed, dresser, and nightstand for Mike’s room. We brought in linens for the bed and made it up to save Mike the trouble with his bad back. We carried in some end tables, a table for his TV, and a plush recliner with electronic controls. Mike couldn’t believe it, saying as he sat in the recliner, “Wow! This is awesome! This is so comfy—I may never get up!” We also had some new dishes, pots, and pans that were greatly appreciated as Mike only had disposable plates and cutlery.

It was then that Ben presented Mike with our final gift: the crucifix. “Wow, this is great! I can’t thank you guys enough. Here, I want you to take this” and Mike offered some money to Ben.

We thanked Mike for his kind and generous offer but let him know it was our practice not to take any money for deliveries: God had provided everything that we brought today and it was our privilege to serve him. Mike felt bad about not being able to compensate us but he understood.

Just a few days later we received this letter in the mail (see right). We were all so touched by Mike’s generosity, especially given his physical challenges. Mike’s heartfelt words of gratitude were all the compensation we could ever ask for!



Thank you for my furniture. I offered \$30 to the 3 delivery men for a tip. They declined but I would like to make a donation to My Brother's Keeper. The cross is beautiful. It's good to know there are good people in this world. You're doin' the Lord's work. Thanks again and God bless you.

– Mike

“Finally Putting a Face to that Voice” Joe Kennedy, Volunteer, West Bridgewater

Tuesday is one of my regularly scheduled days to volunteer at the Easton facility. Returning from the COVID shut down has me making small deliveries in the Brockton area with another one or two volunteers.

This day would be different as for the first time I would be going out with fellow Catholic Memorial grad, Jack Green. In all of our years volunteering, we had never made a delivery together.

Also, on the “never-happened-before” list, staff member Michelle Byrne joined us. This would be a special delivery trip for her because we were delivering to Paul. Michelle had been answering calls from Paul for quite some time but the calls were always for someone else in need in his apartment complex. This request was just for him so Michelle felt a special urge to hop on board and finally meet the man who has been so unselfish in the past.

Did I mention this was her first time out and about in the My Brother’s Keeper van named “St. Thecla” which her parish in Pembroke helped fund?

We had two other deliveries to make prior to seeing “The Man.” A stop in Whitman was looking like something out of the Keystone Kops era (Google it if you have no idea who they were). We had called and asked someone to meet us outside. When we got there, no one was waiting.



Michelle went to the right side of the building and knocked while I tried the left. Still nothing. A follow-up phone call did the trick as the woman’s daughter and son met us and took the items inside. We offered the crucifix to her son and asked him to deliver the message—“He is the one who sent this to you.”

Onto Brockton and one more delivery before we see the “voice.” A young woman, Liza, lived in one of the apartment complexes in downtown Brockton. We carried her mattress and linens to the back door and onto the elevator. She was extremely grateful for the items but said she had ample bedding and we could take it back for someone else. Having Michelle aboard had its benefits as she had packed those bags and threw in a few extras. Michelle accepted the returned linens but mentioned there were two smaller totes with personal items in the linen bag. Liza’s eyes lit up as she graciously accepted the

gifts within the bedding pack.

One stop left and the tension was building as our My Brother’s Keeper staffer recounted several calls with this gentleman. We were all off to finally meet the “Man behind the Voice” in Brockton.

Michelle called ahead to make sure he would be there. He would meet us in the lobby of the complex. A most helpful gentleman sitting on an outside bench offered us a simple solution to get the smaller items inside—use one of the shopping carts! Why didn’t we think of that? Well, the moment arrived and Michelle finally got the chance to put that caring voice to a face.

There was a moment of silence between the two phone friends—I think each was trying to size up the other. Paul had the look that said, “Could this petite woman be the one who has been filling my many requests so faithfully and without question?” While Michelle was in awe, “So this is the Gentle Giant with the caring voice and heart who has given so much to the residents of this Brockton high rise.” They spoke for a few minutes because words weren’t really needed—the looks, the faces, and the encounter was all that mattered.

Thank you Michelle for making my day—no, for making my year!

An Affirmation of Our Mission

My Brother’s Keeper,

I can’t express but in so many words the joy and comfort you have given my family. This is probably one of the most spiritual times in my life. This dwelling we have lived in now feels like a home. You have reached out time and time again, providing a support that changed my life and has brought humbleness to my soul. Thank you.

– Felicia

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Adopt a Family for Christmas

Please be a part of this year's Christmas effort by adopting a local family in need. We need your help more than ever!

See Special Insert

Our Facilities



EASTON



DARTMOUTH

My Brother's Keeper Prayer

Lord—

*When I have food,
Help me remember the hungry.*

*When I lie in my bed,
Help me remember those who sleep on the floor.*

*When I have a warm home,
Help me remember the homeless.*

*When I have work,
Help me remember those without jobs.*

*When I experience the joy of giving to my children,
Help me remember the agony of those who must
watch their children go without.*

*By remembering,
Help me destroy my indifference,
And arouse my compassion.*

*Make me concerned enough to act in your name,
To help those who cry out to you for that which I so
often take for granted.*



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