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## Melissa's Story: Moving Forward with Grace

When Melissa Turner, 34, walked into the St. Francis Center Employment office last year, hers was not the average story of a woman recently out of a halfway house and seeking work. She still wore a Department of Corrections watch on her wrist, but rather than carrying bitterness, she expressed only faith and strong resolve to do good for herself and for others.

Born in Oklahoma, Melissa was married by the age of 15 to a man involved in the military, and dropped out of high school at his request.

They divorced when she was 26, and Melissa lost the stability she once had. Now in Denver and with several children to support, she began dealing drugs, though not before sending her children to be with their father so that they would not become involved. Drug dealing and custody issues with her children set off what would become for Melissa years of her life in and between prison sentences. Six felonies and two misdemeanors, a nine year prison sentence,

penitentiary and Department of Corrections time, as well as a five-year parole tail were what she faced by her mid-20s. In Melissa's understated words, "It's been a long journey."

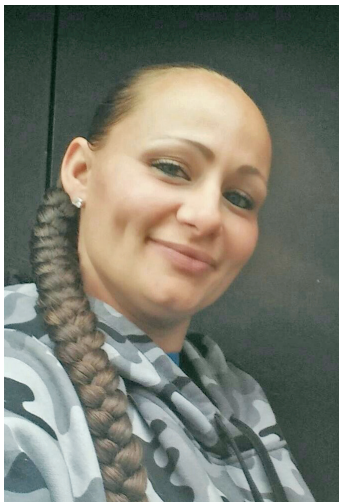
For years, the times spent between prison sentences were some of the most volatile. It was the lack of a support system that kept her stagnant in her lifestyle: "If you don't have a support system, what do you do?"

Melissa asks. "You're running aimlessly."

Melissa found herself back in prison after leaving a halfway house program before completion, and with no family in Colorado and no hotel voucher after her release, she became homeless. "If you don't have somewhere solid to sleep at night, then it's really hard to get back on your feet. That's why I failed so many times," says Melissa, mentioning that

she was homeless each time she left prison. "You can't take a shower, you have nowhere to hide your stuff because people are going to steal it, because now you have no work clothes."

But, once again in a cell in Adams



County after years of this cycle, something changed. Alone for 18 hours a day, Melissa started to pray. Spending hours reading the Bible, she felt her composure shift, describing, "That's when I became spiritually strong."

It was this newfound faith that gave Melissa the will to begin acting on her desire to live differently. She spent her time in the Department of Corrections working hard to earn her GED and other certificates.

She was released, completed the halfway house program she had left unfinished, and connected with St. Francis Center's Employment Services program. "[St. Francis Center] helped me with a bus pass, mentoring class, if I wanted to just talk to somebody they were always here for us," Melissa says, describing how difficult it is to find resource centers that are as helpful to ex-offenders as St. Francis Center is. "St. Francis helped me the whole way."

But even with her new frame of mind and her acquired knowledge at her back, difficulties still slowed her. She progressed through a housing application for an apartment before learning

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## THOUGHTS FROM TOM



“Summertime and the living is easy!” So goes the song. While that may have been true to some degree at St. Francis Center in the past, times have changed. Now, homelessness is a challenge for people as much in the summer as in any other season of the year.

The huge influx of people coming to Denver in search of work has created a dynamic that we have not experienced before. People are finding jobs—including through St. Francis Center Employment Services, which helped 499 people find full-time employment last year—but the lack of safe, affordable housing options poses a huge challenge. Stuck waiting for housing, many people come to St. Francis Center to shower, store their possessions, use our mail service, and to feel grounded in a place until they find a home of their own. St. Francis Center is also often a step in finding housing: last year, we helped 355 people gain housing access.

Because of the current job market, many of the people we serve are transitioning out of homelessness more quickly. In 2016, of the more than 10,000 people St. Francis Center served, 8,000 of those were out of services within 34 days or less. But even with this transition, many people still rely on St. Francis Center for community and essential services. As our population’s needs change, we continue to change as well.

I hope you will enjoy catching-up with new developments at St. Francis Center. I also encourage you to follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Social Media outlets give us the opportunity to communicate happenings at a greater pace.

Thank you for supporting our efforts throughout every season!

*Tom Luehrs*

Executive Director

*Continued from pg 1*

that the complex would not accept people with felonies newer than five years. Resource lists from parole officers sent her searching for resources that often didn’t materialize. She felt unfairly haunted by her past even though she also felt diametrically changed.

But it was her faith, work ethic, and an extraordinary capacity to treat shortfalls as lessons that carried Melissa onward. Through St. Francis Center’s Employment Program, she has put in months of work at the Metro Taxi call center and also

earned her highway flagger certificate.

It has been less than a year since her release from the halfway house, but Melissa’s present situation is a striking testament to her character. Not only did she buy a car and will soon move into an apartment, she is also working to become an ordained minister, recently got married, and is expecting a baby in September. Today, she is enthusiastic about her maternity leave and continues to preach, pray, and volunteer devotedly. In a sense, she is thankful that her time in prison ultimately led her make positive life changes that had been elusive for so long. As for the

### SNAPSHOT:

#### St. Francis Center Employment Services

Participants in the Employment Services program come from St. Francis Center’s day shelter program, drug and alcohol programs, parole and corrections transition services, and other community organizations.

The program helps men and women develop skills, gain work experience, and connect with full-time employment.

Services are designed to end the cycle of poverty and promote economic self-sufficiency.

Department of Corrections watch, she wears it “not as a reminder of ‘I don’t want to go back,’ but as a reminder of what I’ve been through.”

Melissa carefully reflects on her past, is grateful for her present, and takes pride in her future. “If you allow grace to come in and change you, then you’ll begin to walk it and live it. That’s what happened for me.” She smiles. “I walked in self-discipline. And I made it. I made it and I was so thankful.”•



*At work inside the Employment Office*



## 2017 PATH Lunch Raises \$100,000 for Saint Francis Apartments at Cathedral Square

More than 250 people came together on Tuesday, May 9 for the third annual PATH Lunch and collectively raised more than \$100,000 to support Saint Francis Apartments at Cathedral Square, St. Francis Center's second permanent, supportive housing facility.

Guests enjoyed a delicious lunch and an interactive panel presentation on the realities of, and collaborative solutions for, addressing homelessness in our community. Panelists were Katie Symons, LeBeau Development, Tyler Jaeckel, Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab, Rev. Sally Brown, retired Episcopal Deacon and St. Francis Center volunteer, and Tom Luehrs, Executive Director of St. Francis Center. The panel moderator was Diana Flahive, Women's Homelessness Initiative.



*The panelists share their expertise*

St. Francis Apartments at Cathedral Square will be welcoming 50 new residents home before Christmas this year.



*"[Through the St. Francis Apartments at Cathedral Square project] we are seeing the secular cultural practice of "re-gifting" transformed, redefined and lived out in a holy way by parishioners and clergy "re-gifting" our own blessings, offering to our future neighbors at St. Francis Apartments the gifts of our time, talent, and treasure. **Frankly, people of faith have no other option but to do just that in obedience and gratitude to God who clearly calls us to justice and compassion.**"*

*-Rev. Sally Brown, 2017 PATH Lunch panelist*



SEASONS OF SERVICE

**Date:** Sunday, October 1, 2017

**Time:** 6:00 p.m.

**Location:** McNichols Building

## Plans Underway for 2017 Gala

Please join us for St. Francis Center's 34th Anniversary Gala, Seasons of Service. The evening will include custom-designed culinary stations sure to please every palate, interactive displays guiding guests through St. Francis Center's different "seasons," exciting games for a chance to win prizes, and an opportunity to engage in our mission through vital financial support.

Tickets- \$100 (if purchased before Sept. 15)

*Sponsorships and full table purchases also available.*

Purchase tickets and learn more at [www.sfcdenver.org](http://www.sfcdenver.org)

## Welcome to the newest members of the Saint Francis Center team



### CHARLES

Employment Case Manager

Started at SFC:  
May 17

Hometown:  
Athens, GA

Strangest food he has eaten:  
Bacalhau



### EDDY

Intake Specialist

Started at SFC:  
end of May

Hometown:  
Edgewater Park, NJ

Strangest food he has eaten:  
Chocolate-covered grasshoppers



### MARY

Outreach Worker

Started at SFC:  
end of April

Hometown:  
Hamilton, OH

Strangest food she has eaten:  
Spanish Eel



### SARAH

Basic Services

Started at SFC:  
end of June

Hometown:  
Grand Junction, CO

Strangest food she has eaten:  
Crickets and other bugs

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: PARI PASSU

For the past year, St. Francis Center has been partnering with Wonderbound Dance Company to bring creative movement and dance to the guests, volunteers, and staff at the center. Taking place on Thursdays weekly, the dance sessions give participants a chance to request songs, sing, dance, and share stories about their experiences. The program is called “Pari Passu,” a Latin phrase meaning “with equal step” or even “equal footing.” This name is representative of the inclusivity and creativity of the program which emphasizes social equality through movement and music. The Limbo, the Twist, and the Macarena are among favorites, and for many, dances like this are a way to express creativity and feel a sense of belonging away from the realities of daily life. In addition, Wonderbound provides free tickets to their performances, giving participants the opportunity to take field trips to shows. This program is a shining example of the power of creative expression in making lasting social change.



*Participants pose after they finished dancing*

## SAINT FRANCIS CENTER OFFERING ADDITIONAL STORAGE OPTIONS

The City and County of Denver has funded a pilot storage program with St. Francis Center in response to community concerns about lack of storage for people experiencing homelessness. A major complaint of homeless individuals during the city sweeps in the Ballpark area was that space for personal belongings for those living on the streets was insufficient. The city asked St. Francis Center to provide more storage and the Center responded by developing 250 additional spaces at our Employment Services location.



## MONARCH GROUP HELPING CELEBRATE SUMMER

Hundreds of St. Francis Center guests were thrilled to celebrate the advent of the Summer season with help from the staff of the Monarch Group on June 28. Monarch continued its generous tradition of coming to the Day Center and distributing seasonal essentials—a hat, sunglasses, beverage tumbler, and sun block—for every guest. Additionally, Monarch Group visits in the winter to distribute new long underwear and other much-desired cold weather gear.

Our thanks to Monarch for providing these essential items to make surviving the Denver elements just a little bit easier for those we serve.



## SAINT FRANCIS APARTMENTS AT CATHEDRAL SQUARE TO OPEN NOV. 1



Progress on the Saint Francis Apartments at Cathedral Square is moving along beautifully. The building should be ready for residents come November, providing a home for 50 people who have been without stable housing for many years. The roof is constructed and the building has taken its final shape. The views from the upper floors are quite breathtaking with the State Capitol building and downtown to the west backed by the foothills and mountains behind. The building will be an attractive addition to Cathedral Square and the Saint John's Cathedral community is looking forward to welcoming the residents to the neighborhood.

Funding opportunities are still available as the construction is wrapping up. If you would like to contribute please call Andrew Spinks at 303-244-0745.

## CHFA GOLF TOURNAMENT BENEFITS SFC TO THE TUNE OF \$75K

144 golfers enjoyed a picture-perfect day at Fossil Trace Golf Course in Golden, Colorado in support of St. Francis Center at Colorado Housing and Finance Authority's David W. Herlinger Golf Tournament. The July 18 event had the support of 30 corporate sponsors, resulting in a very generous \$75,000 donation to St. Francis Center. We are grateful to the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority for their hard work in putting together a great event.

Funds raised through this event will support St. Francis Center's general operating budget.

*From Left: John Odell, Andrew Spinks, Laura Kuhlmann, Bob Fullerton, Tom Luehrs, Joel Cassidy*



# Volunteer Corner



*Bill and Tom, Thursday  
Basic Services volunteers*

In 2016, volunteers contributed 18,888 hours of service to help the more than 10,000 individuals who walked through the doors of St. Francis Center in search of safety, community, and an opportunity for a better life, and they did so willingly and joyfully. There are many ways for volunteers to serve and SFC is able to accommodate a variety of schedules and circumstances.

Due to the ever-changing nature of SFC programming, current volunteer openings are listed on our website:

[www.sfcdenvr.org/volunteer](http://www.sfcdenvr.org/volunteer).

The possibilities for volunteering are as many and varied as the volunteers who donate their time and talent. Please contact us with your ideas!

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Retired, Utility Manager/Attorney

### **RUSTY PICKARD**, Vice Chair

Retired Development Executive

### **BEN KAPNIK**, Treasurer

Attorney, Colorado Attorney General's Office

### **KATHI RUDOLPH**, Secretary

Volunteer

### **FRAN BERRY**

Retired Educator

### **LAURA DURKHEIMER**

Sr. Director of Product Management, Comcast

### **CHRIS GERHOLD**

Sr. Global Commercial Manager, Molson Coors

### **JOHN ODELL**

Vice President, Moody Insurance Agency

### **TOM LUEHRS**

Executive Director, St. Francis Center

### **RT. REV. ROBERT O'NEILL**

Bishop of Colorado, Epis. Diocese of CO

### **ANN PONTIUS**

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### **REVEREND STACE TAFOYA**

Rector, Epiphany Episcopal Church

### **AL TEDESCHI**

1st Vice President, Wells Fargo Advisors

## HOW DO I BECOME A VOLUNTEER?

### It's as easy as 1, 2, 3!

### 1. Apply

Fill out the online volunteer application at  
[www.sfcdenvr.org/volunteer](http://www.sfcdenvr.org/volunteer).

### 2. Interview

Volunteers are placed into assignments based on their interests, skills, and the needs of SFC. You will have a brief 10-15 minute phone call with the director of volunteers to talk about your interest in volunteering at SFC and current openings.

### 3. Orientation

Tour St. Francis Center and talk with the director of volunteers about what it means to be a volunteer at SFC. Many volunteer positions offer on-site training with the position supervisor once you've completed orientation.



*Chrisann, Wednesday  
Basic Services volunteer*

## CONTACT

Laura Kuhlmann | Director of Volunteers | [laura@sfcdenvr.org](mailto:laura@sfcdenvr.org) | 303.244.0761



## IN-KIND NEEDS

In-kind contributions are greatly needed and appreciated at St. Francis Center, as they enable us to offer much-needed items to our guests, while keeping our costs as low as possible and to spend a full 91% of our funding on direct services and programs.

Our most pressing current needs are:

- Towels
- New underwear
- Shampoo & Conditioner
- Jeans
- New socks
- Sunscreen
- Bar soap/shower gel
- Lotion



Guests at the Day Center

## The impact of a monthly donation

*In the words of the Cecils, generous donors for the past 20 years*

“We have been involved with St. Francis Center for going on twenty years in a number of capacities. We were so touched by the friendliness of your guests and their appreciation of the help we could provide. As with so many examples of reaching out to help the less fortunate, the “givers” ultimately are touched as much as the “receivers.”

Motivated in part by our experience with SFC and other volunteer occasions, we initiated a class in Service Learning as part of the McBride Honors Program in Public Affairs at Colorado School of Mines where we both held teaching appointments. A major emphasis in the class has been to have the students spend one afternoon per week for the entire semester at an off campus volunteer program devoted to the under-

served. SFC was one of the options. The students who volunteered at SFC again were so impressed by the good people they were helping and the staff.



Ed and Meridee Cecil

Our appreciation of the work SFC is doing has gone beyond the volunteer efforts from us and our students. Specifically, about ten years ago we initiated a monthly monetary donation. It has been just a few hundred dollars

per month, so it's hard to measure the net impact. We hope our donation is helping and is probably more beneficial to SFC over the months and years than any one time lump sum contribution we could afford.

We look forward to continuing to help SFC and would hope to renew our volunteer work there.”

## MATCHING GIFTS

Have you recently made a financial donation to St. Francis Center? Many companies match their employees' donations dollar-for-dollar. Make your donation to SFC go further by checking with your human resources department to see if your company will match your donation. If they will, please be sure to let both us and them know about your donation to St. Francis Center.

## ENTERPRISE ZONE TAX CREDIT

St. Francis Center is a Denver Enterprise Zone (DEZ) designee. Cash contributions from \$200-\$100,000 per year are eligible to receive a 25% Colorado income tax credit, in addition to the normal federal and state charitable contribution benefits. In-kind contributions valued at \$250 and more receive a 12.5% credit. Both individuals and businesses are eligible for DEZ credit. The credit cannot exceed Colorado tax liability; however, excess credit may carry over for up to five years. We are required by the Colorado Department of Revenue to submit your paperwork with the last four digits of your Social Security Number or State or Federal Tax Payer Identification Number. If we don't already have your number on file, please provide it with your donation.

## CONTACT

Andrew Spinks | Director of Development | [andrew@sfcdenver.org](mailto:andrew@sfcdenver.org) | 303.244.0745

St. Francis Center  
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Denver, CO 80205

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*Saint Francis Center's mission is to reveal God's love for humanity by providing a safe place for people who are homeless in Metro Denver to meet their basic needs for day-to-day survival while offering them assistance to transition out of homelessness.*

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Saint Francis Center  
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SAINT  
FRANCIS  
CENTER

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