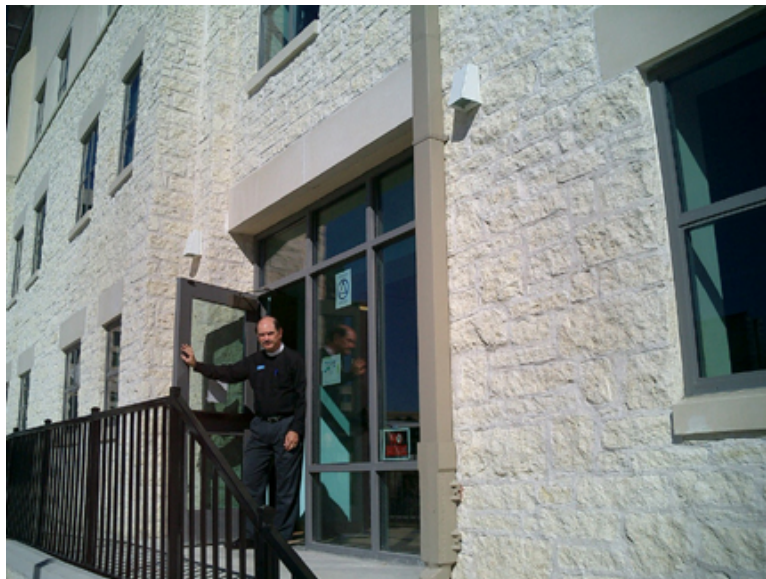


New Trinity Center Opens

Center Offers Food, Community, Companionship and More to Those Less Fortunate in the Austin Area

Story by Stacey Frank

David, a homeless man with a slight mental disorder, had no place to practice his spiritual beliefs, and was unable to acquire a hot meal. Suddenly, he was given the chance to take part in religious services as well as have the opportunity to eat a meal every Sunday. Homer, another man who attended worship for several months, needed help when he was given custody of his three-month-old nephew by the child's mother, who is a crack addict. Fortunately, Homer received donations of formula and diapers. These gifts David and Homer received would not have been possible without the new Trinity Center at St. David's Episcopal Church. This center was created as an outreach to the homeless in downtown Austin. Trinity Center's Reverend Kern Huff sat down and discussed with me the center's goals, programs, and challenges.



St. David's Episcopal Church has been a downtown church since 1854. In 1994, the church members decided that they "needed to do something that the Christianity teaches - reach out to those that are less fortunate." At the time, the facility now known as the Trinity Center was non-existent. Therefore, the

church members would meet at restaurants in downtown Austin after the Sunday service. St. David's decided to contribute 3,500 square feet in order to build a center that would be able to "offer food, community, companionship and a worship space to allow their clients to improve their spiritual, mental, and physical well-being." In 2001, the adventure of building this new center began. Volunteers donated many hours of their time in constructing this center from scratch by painting, installing doors and shelves, and completing many other tasks. Finally, on December 21, 2003 the beautiful white stone Trinity Center was officially open at the intersection of East 7th Street and Trinity.



Trinity Center offers many ongoing programs and has aspirations to pursue a number of others in the future. One of their key goals is to enhance the homeless' spiritual well-being in every aspect. Every Sunday afternoon at 3:00, the center's has a worship service with a meal following, although it is not a requirement that a person attend the service in order to eat. The services held at the center are very similar to those that would be found in any church. Many musicians contribute their time by singing and playing the piano, which was donated. Volunteers also have food ready for those that want to take part in the meal. The help does not end on Sunday afternoon as all patrons are allowed to attend the facility throughout the week for their own worship. For safety precautions, Reverend Huff must have at least one volunteer with him in the center at all times. But, the lack of volunteers during the week has caused this to be a slight problem. In the near future, there will be morning services Tuesday through Friday and separate bible study classes for both men and women.

Another principle mission is the homeless' mental and physical well-being. Trinity Center provides Alcoholics Anonymous with a place to hold meetings three times a week. Future projects include having meetings for ex-offenders, and supplying "English as a Second Language" courses.

As is the case with most nonprofit organizations, financial support is a concern for Trinity Center. According to Reverend Huff their largest donor is the Barbara Jordan Trust which grants funding for the construction of the facility and the hiring of two employees (one being a professional fundraiser). As of today,

their main goal is to raise enough money to allow them to buy their own equipment for the now empty kitchen. Currently, they have been using the kitchen at St. David's Episcopal Church to supply the meals every Sunday. Although this process is working, having their own would conserve both time and effort.

In order to raise these funds, the center has been planning their second annual fundraiser on February 20th at the Driskill Hotel. This extraordinary event will be in honor of Barbara Jordan while embracing a Mardi Gras theme. The center is hoping that this will bring in enough funds to complete the construction projects and to begin many new programs in the future.

The efforts being put forth by the employees and volunteers of the center are tremendously helpful in reaching out to those that have many needs and are without homes. Even with its limited budget, gift certificates to stores such as HEB and bus tickets are given to the underprivileged. As mentioned before, Trinity Center is in need of financial support, kitchen equipment, and volunteers during the week.

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