



# ...THE NEWS!

SERVING HUNGRY AND HOMELESS LONG ISLANDERS

VOLUME XXXVI NO. 6

[www.the-inn.org](http://www.the-inn.org)

SUMMER 2020

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- September 3<sup>rd</sup> – INNkeepers' Ball
- September 24<sup>th</sup> – INN Golf Classic



Vince Vitiello

## NOW IS THE TIME

Many of us, especially residing in downstate New York, have been through many crises in our lifetime. Stock market crashes, near depressions, skyrocketing interest rates and of course, 9/11. But this crisis is different. Where many historic ones primarily affected finance, this one's focus is on life, death and health. Financial hardship has become a consequence of COVID-19.

In my visits to supermarkets, my greatest concern was seeing empty shelves where paper towels and toilet tissue had been plentiful. Perhaps somewhat due to news reports, my anxiety increased as to whether there would be empty food shelves on my next visit.

Unfortunately, guests of The INN are living the reality of empty food shelves 365 days per year, each one wondering where their next meal or safe night's rest might come from. What a terrible way to live. Without your help, and The INN, sometimes there is no meal and no place to slumber in peace.

If you have ever thought of helping those in need during a crisis, now is the time. Guests, volunteers, staff and resources have NEVER been under this much pressure.

Contact us at [www.the-inn.org](http://www.the-inn.org) or call my cell phone directly at 516.381.9879 if you are not sure how best you can help The INN today.

Thanks,  
Vince Vitiello, INN Board President

## GUEST STORY

In early March, a young woman, whom we will call Jennifer, arrived at the Center for Transformative Change (CTC) late in the day because she was hungry. The kitchen had closed and after receiving a bagged lunch, she met with a CTC social worker. Jennifer revealed that she was pregnant and although living in a hotel with a friend, her housing and life situation were precarious. By the next week, she was back at CTC to tell us she had no place to stay. This



Center for Transformative Change

was right around the middle of March when COVID-19 restrictions presented a scary and almost insurmountable set of problems and restrictions. CTC social  
(continued pg 3)

TO SPONSOR A MEAL, PLEASE CALL (516) 486-8506, EXT. 115

## NEW CHURCH MAKES HELPING THE INN FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS

The many life changes brought on by the pandemic have been a source of extreme stress for numerous Long Island families. Lincy and Jerry George of Hicksville are no exception. The couple both work on the frontline as essential employees; Lincy as a nurse in a local hospital and Jerry as a clinical scientist. The pressure of working in the healthcare field through the peak of the COVID-19 crisis, coupled with their equally essential jobs as parents to three children ages 5, 9 and 11, proved to be a challenge. Adding to their responsibilities, in February 2020 they started St. Andrew Malankara Orthodox Church in Port Washington, created to give young families like themselves, who were raised in this Indian religion, a chance to make their own mark in their new Long Island communities. Geared towards mission work, their goal is to give back in any way they can. Early on, they were introduced to The INN.

Lincy recalls how in the beginning of the global crisis it was difficult to focus on anything but their own dilemmas and hardships.

“Once we started getting into what became our new normal, we came to the realization it was time to



*Greetings from your friends at St. Andrew Malankara Orthodox Church*

come together and reach out to others,” Lincy said. They reached out to 75-80 adult and school-age parishioners, asking for monetary donations. This would do the greatest good, as it would enable The INN to allocate the money to where it was needed most. Within two weeks, nearly all 18 families had donated a total of \$5,400! The Georges don’t plan on stopping there. Their next effort will be sharing The INN’s Amazon wish list of needs with their parishioners as the crisis continues.

Lincy says, “We asked ourselves, how can God use our hands to help those who really need it? Our goal was to use our own hands to help others, while simultaneously teaching our children our beautiful and rich history of service.”

## STAYING SAFE AT THE INN

For most Long Islanders, March 11 began as a normal day. Until early in the afternoon when Governor Cuomo announced SUNY schools were closing due to the COVID-19 virus.

The Mary Brennan INN soup kitchen has been open and serving meals since that day. The INN’s emergency shelters have also remained open. We consider ourselves fortunate. Our staff has remained healthy (other than the usual bumps and bruises). While almost all the volunteers have been self-quarantining at home, we have done our best to stay in touch with them and can gladly report they are all safe. Regarding the guests at the soup kitchen, we are not aware of any guest who is deceased as a result of COVID-19. Regarding the guests at The INN shelters, everyone is healthy.

In response to the Governor’s mandates, meals

at the Mary Brennan INN (MBI) switched to “give n’ go” on Monday, March 16. The building remained opened for guests to use the restrooms and showers until March 27. After March 30, the restrooms and showers had to be closed to ensure everyone’s safety. Safe distancing, masks, gloves, frequent hand-washing and other safety protocols became part of the daily life at MBI. The INN facilities staff constructed a plexiglass booth so INN staff could safely pass bagged lunches to guests at the front door. Guests were waiting outside the MBI at 8:00 am. Six-foot interval markers were placed on the sidewalk to help



*(continued pg 8)*



Jean Kelly  
Executive Director

## REFLECTION

### "THANK YOU"

There are so many new "things" going on in this new world. Sometimes it can be exhausting just trying to keep up. And with the weekday/weekend world having changed to a seven day "new week", there is no designated rest period!

As I write this in June, The INN remains in crisis mode. I am grateful to report The INN's programs remain in operation, with major changes to ensure the safety of all. There are no reported life-threatening, COVID-19-related health issues with any of the staff, volunteers or guests.

There is one aspect to our new world that I would like to share with you: The INN family has been incredibly kind and generous during the COVID-19 crisis.

While the demand for The INN's services has increased dramatically since March, the support from The INN family has also increased dramatically. Without you, The INN's "guests", who were already the most vulnerable members in our community, would have figuratively and literally fallen to the wayside. Each of you deserve the biggest possible thank you. (And a hug. When that is permissible!)

To all the individuals who made a contribution

in any amount, large or small — thank you. To the amazing couple who donated five weeks of lunches at the Mary Brennan INN — thank you. To the over 1,000 individuals who sent a food donation via Amazon — thank you. To the members of the Cherry Valley CC who organized an impromptu golf outing to benefit The INN — thank you. To the Mary Brennan INN volunteers who support The INN with donations while they are unable to volunteer — thank you. To our generous grantors — thank you. To the FaceBookers who organized fundraisers on their pages — thank you. To all the churches, mosques and temples who have been sending in financial and in-kind contributions — thank you. To our loyal school and civic organization friends — thank you. To all the small businesses who have been sharing with The INN — thank you. To the intrepid volunteers who were able to continue their service — thank you. To all our corporate supporters — thank you. To The INN staff who never missed a beat since the start of the crisis — thank you. All of you are impressive beyond words.

Thank you for always inspiring us with your remarkable kindness and generosity. May all that lies ahead find us remembering that together we can manage whatever is needed for all of us to be safe, healthy and happy once again.

Love,

Jean Kelly  
Executive Director

## Guest Story (continued from pg 1)

workers stepped in and provided a respite room. Jennifer went to the Department of Social Services where she was placed in a shelter with an attentive and caring staff. Hopefully, Jennifer will be eligible to stay in housing reserved for pregnant women and new mothers in the near future.

However, a global pandemic is no match for CTC staff. They have made sure Jennifer's SNAP (food stamp) benefits have been restored; they helped her obtain a new phone and one staff member even

secured her to a pre-natal doctor's visit, just before all appointments switched to telemedicine.

Since The INN currently is unable to accept clothing donations at the boutique, a staff member put the word out on her personal Facebook page and was able to coordinate donations of maternity and newborn clothes which were sanitized and given to Jennifer. Staff has continued to reach and support her in every possible safe and permissible way.

## DONORS RESPOND IN TIME OF NEED

At The INN, we are fortunate to receive the broadest possible variety of donations. From apples to yoyo's (sorry, no "z's") and financial to food, we are grateful. To list each donor over the past four months would easily surpass these eight pages. We apologize for not being able to list all the donors, and ask for your understanding.

Starting in mid-March the needs of The INN took on a very new look. Here are a few examples of the donor response:

**Food:** Trattoria Diane of Roslyn has donated over 10,000 meals to the Mary Brennan INN. The switch to "give n' go" meant easy to pack, easy to heat meals were a necessity – turkey chili, chicken stew, frittata and stuffed peppers are a few examples.

Many of Diane's "regulars" joined the effort by purchasing needed ingredients. Treasure Isle Foods, the Community Party and Holiday Farms have been contributors of meat and vegetables. Volunteers have driven the meals to The INN. This was the perfect marriage of the desire to help and the wisdom needed to succeed.

**Sanitizer:** When hand sanitizer was scarce, Catharsis Co. was there to help The INN with 100 bottles. Catharsis CEO Samantha Eller echoed the words of many donors, "It was a group effort. We were in a position to help people. It was the right thing to do."

**Food:** Serving "give n' go" requires lots of individually packaged snacks and lots of bottled water. The Chaminade swim team has organized numerous and sizable

snack, water and food drives, and delivered each to The INN's kitchen.

**Masks:** Like hand sanitizer, face masks became a necessary, but hard to find, item. The INN is fortunate two of its donors were able to reach out to their international manufacturing associates and arrange for a donation of 10,000 masks. Many other groups have donated homemade masks and we are so grateful they are washable.

**Bags:** The INN distributes thousands of bags of food each week. The food is obviously more important than the bag, but the bag is needed too. The New York Mets, in addition to their extensive donations now and throughout the year, gave The INN thousands of cloth carry bags.

## A FAMILY OF VOLUNTEERS

In this Newsletter you may have read this year's Golf Honoree is the daughter of the 1996 Golf Honoree. The INN is proud to acknowledge generational support and recognize its importance.

The McCabe family of Rockville Centre is another example of such generational support. Several years ago mom, Maryellen, began volunteering with her elementary school age daughters Maddie and Grace. The three McCabe's, along with a group of Maddie and Grace's friends, would come to the Mary Brennan INN to bake Christmas cookies, Valentine Day treats, brownies, sprinkle covered cakes and other desserts for the guests. "Home-Made" desserts are always a big hit with the guests. Their activity expanded, in a very natural way, to include decorating the Mary Brennan INN for holidays, replenishing the children's book section of The INN library, organizing clothing in the boutique and assisting with the INNkeepers' Ball. The highly spirited volunteerism of "McCabe and Friends" is a

joy to behold. And an inspiration.

Not to be outdone by their sisters (including Emmie who helps when she is home from

college), older brothers Brendan and Connor have also become INN volunteers. While the girls bring laughter, creativity and an artistic touch, the boys bring serious muscle power and a driver's license. During the COVID-19 crisis, Brendan and Connor have been especially helpful in picking up much needed food donations.

I think we all know children don't develop values in a vacuum. Parents lead by example. The INN thanks the parents of all those children who volunteer at The INN. We could not do what we do without you – children and parents. Thank you all!



## INN EVENTS – UPDATES

There are two INN events scheduled for September: the INNkeepers' Ball on Thursday, September 3 (rescheduled from May 7) and the Golf Classic on Thursday, September 24. We realize the Ball and the Golf may require a new format in order to be held safely and within state guidelines. We are planning creatively and flexibly. We are hopeful, and quote Dr. Anthony Fauci, "I would hope by the time we get to September, it's not going to be the way it is right now."

### INNkeepers' Ball

The honorees for the 2020 INNkeepers' Ball are Frank J. and Janet DellaFera. Frank and Janet are energetic, upbeat, work in the medical field and have a demonstrated commitment to the mission of The INN. They are the perfect honorees for this year! Their good friends Claudio and Debra Del Vecchio will be serving as honorary chairs. *Ticket, sponsor and journal information is available at [www.the-inn.org/event/2020ball](http://www.the-inn.org/event/2020ball).*



Ellen Goodwin

### INN Golf Classic

The INN Golf Classic will honor Ellen Goodwin. Ellen arrives with three distinctions: 1) her mom, Irene, was the honoree at the first INN Golf Classic in 1996; 2) Ellen and her husband, Kurt Pohmer, have been supporters of The INN since high school;

and 3) She is the best golfer in the family. Please visit [www.the-inn.org/event/2020inn-golf](http://www.the-inn.org/event/2020inn-golf) for additional information.

### INN Luncheon

The INN Luncheon, originally scheduled for Friday, October 16, has been rescheduled for Thursday, December 3. We are pleased to honor Ernst & Young – Long Island. More information to follow in October Newsletter. *Please visit [www.the-inn.org/event/2020-inn-luncheon](http://www.the-inn.org/event/2020-inn-luncheon).*



L to R – Vince Vitiello, Jean Kelly, Janet & Frank J. DellaFera, Debra & Claudio Del Vecchio, Rob Kammerer

## Our Wish List **The INN is in need of:**

- Fresh fruit and vegetables
  - Non-perishable foods in bags/boxes and cans – **no glass please**
  - New underwear for men, women and children
  - Supermarket gift cards – \$10 and \$25 denominations
  - Auction items for upcoming INN events.
- Please call Nora White at (516) 486-8506 ext. 108

*Please bring your donations (except auction items) to the Mary Brennan INN, 100 Madison Avenue, Hempstead, 11550, M-F, 9-11 am or 2-3 pm. (516) 486-6243. Thank you.*

## This is the first in a series of articles introducing you to The INN's staff.

The Mary Brennan INN (MBI) was the first INN program, beginning in May, 1983. As such, we start with the MBI staff. They work very closely with hundreds of guests, volunteers and donors each day. Strengths of heart, mind and soul bind this hard-working team together — with each other and those they serve.

We asked them two questions: 1) what do like about working at MBI?, and 2) what helps you relax?



**Deokie Santo** – Administrative Assistant. *“Cheerful, eager to help, resourceful”*. Deokie answered, “Working at MBI is a very fulfilling job. It’s amazing to see how the donors give to us so abundantly and the interaction is always pleasant, and we have an awesome staff.” She relaxes by, “talking with friends and family, praying and watching movies.”

**Michelle Singh** – Manager of Volunteers & Special Projects. *“Effervescent, instinctive listener, attentive to detail”*. Here is why Michelle likes working at MBI: “it is a special opportunity to interact with individuals in a wholesome and productive way. I get to experience some of the pain of not having something and the blessed relief of receiving a donation that’s “right on time!” And I’m inspired by working alongside staff and volunteers who bring their best selves each day... I enjoy the experience of working in the safety booth. I try to get the guests to smile or at least chat back with me. It’s nice to see people come alive when you are speaking to them and them only.”

Here is how Michelle likes to relax: “pray, eat “healthy”, sleep, quiet time and talk on phone with loved ones.”



**Jason Tessler** – Donations Manager. *“No job is too big, perpetually in motion, appreciative”*. Jason, “enjoys interacting with the guests, giving out the items that generous donors have donated and seeing the items go directly to the guests.” For relaxation, Jason likes, “driving in the car listening to music, especially on a nice day.”

**Arlene Tucker** – Service Assistant. *“Soft-spoken, gracious, naturally empathetic”*. “I enjoy working at MBI because we have hard-working staff and volunteers, all unique in their own way; that come together everyday to meet the goal of helping support our community. When I’m relaxing, I’m usually around my family, they joke a lot and make me laugh. This keeps my vibration high. I also practice meditation, it brings me inner peace when dealing with stressful days.”



**Jean C. Victor, Jr.** – Manager of Guest Services. *“Multi-talented, gentle power, unflappable”*. “The number one thing I love about working at MBI is the service to others, it is the highest form of service.” For relaxation, Jean, “listens to music, enjoys yoga and meditation, exercises and cherishes time with family.”

## Volunteers, donors and staff work together to make The INN possible. Elsewhere in this Newsletter you will read about donors and staff, but here we feature five Mary Brennan INN volunteers who have been serving since day-one of the COVID-19 crisis.



**Cheri Rice** has been a volunteer in the soup kitchen and the main office since April 2019 and recently been volunteering every Wednesday. "People were in need of continued support from The INN," Cheri said. "I believe in what Jean Kelly is doing. She is amazing."

**Christopher Wilson** has been a staple in the soup kitchen every Monday and has volunteered for many holidays. He has come into the soup kitchen between three and five days each week since the start of the crisis. "I just had to show up protected and prepared physically and mentally," Christopher says. "Without donor support, we couldn't be a lifeline to the guests."



**Erika Nelson** has been volunteering in the soup kitchen and the main office since August 2018. She has been helping in the soup kitchen three days a week since the pandemic began. "I know there's a lot of volunteers that are unable to come in right now, so I'm grateful to be available and able to step up."

**Benjamin Sekreta** has been coming in twice a week since mid-March. "Continuing to volunteer during these troubled times makes me feel like a better person. It's also given me something worthwhile to do during the week!"



**JoEllen Mckenna** has been working as a volunteer in the Center for Transformative Change's boutique since 2014. When she heard help was needed in the soup kitchen, she began making sandwiches and lunch bags. JoEllen says, "I see a need and it's so rewarding knowing I'm helping people."

**We thank you for your extraordinary effort which allowed The INN to continue to serve the guests who come to us in their time of need.**

**These five individuals represent the hundreds of Mary Brennan INN volunteers who have had to temporarily remain at home. We miss them all, keep them in our prayers of gratitude, and look forward to the date when it will be safe for them to return.**

## The Little Things I Miss

I miss smiles.

I miss being close to people, sensing their personality, seeing the texture of their skin, noticing their hair is actually lots of individual hairs.

I miss feeling the squeeze of a hardy handshake.

I miss meeting new people just because they happen to be along your path, and how a friendly little greeting can open the door to a wonderful little conversation.

I miss people traffic, donors approaching with arms full of vegetables, or apples, or pasta.

I miss the ambiance of people, the atmosphere they create simply by occupying a space. I miss walking in that space — the dining room at the Mary Brennan INN. Seeing, communicating with eyes, sometimes words. Simple words, such as “good to see you”, or “how do you like the soup today?” Simple conversations too. They mean so much. And are so valued.

I miss hearing words and hearing laughter. Of course, I can and often do laugh at myself. But I miss laughing with others.

I miss the volunteers. I miss hearing about their lives. I miss being in the same kitchen with them and their joyful, selfless nature. You know, that can be contagious.

I miss that some words and phrases are not exactly the same anymore. An “infectious smile”. All the good stuff that is “contagious”, such as laughter and pitching in to help another (a lot of times this requires that you be close).

I miss the anticipation of what is going to happen just because I am going to be “out and around”. Now I am rarely out and around, and when I am, it is mostly a solitary exercise.

I know the “things” I miss will come back, but for now I miss them.

And of course, I am grateful for the opportunity to grow, to be forced to grow in new ways.

*Anonymous INN Volunteer*

## Staying Safe (continued from pg 2)

guests maintain a safe distance. To minimize time in line, lunches were given out starting at 9:00 am. The staff from the main office were called in to assist the MBI staff with the increased number of guests. 36,916 meals were served between March 16 and May 22 (approximately triple the same time period in 2019).

Adjacent to the MBI is the Center for Transformative Change. The counseling services offered there have also continued uninterrupted, either face to face across a protective plexiglass shield, or, if need be, using TracFones. Continuity of counseling is critical to its success and 2,865 guest interactions have taken place since March 16.

By its nature, the Edna Moran INN (EMI) family shelter presented seemingly unconquerable challenges. Picture a large house with ten families. Adults and children in close living quarters, where maintaining six feet of separation is a full-time job. Children not in school, at home all day. Everyone sharing a living room, playroom, dining room and bathrooms. Now make this a safe environment. Thanks to a committed and caring INN staff this was accomplished! Personal hygiene and protection equipment (The INN uses more than 2,000 masks each week), non-stop monitoring, cleaning and sanitizing, and a culture of “we can do this!” made it possible.

The Donald Axinn INN men’s shelter also has many residents in one large and friendly house. With similar circumstances to the EMI, the staff and guests responded similarly and everyone pulled together.

The residents in The INN’s long-term housing program have also incorporated the required safety protocols.



“Serving Hungry and Homeless Long Islanders”

211 Fulton Avenue Hempstead, NY 11550  
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### OUR MISSION

As a not-for-profit, volunteer-based organization, The INN provides a broad variety of essential services to assist those challenged by hunger, homelessness and profound poverty. We partner with those in need in a dignified and respectful manner to help them achieve self-sufficiency.

Follow us on:

