



"I know baking cookies is a drop in the bucket, but it is something I can do. I have always had a heart connection to the homeless, I could easily be there myself."

Kat Carr delivers homemade cookies for our guests, volunteers, and staff every week.



"It's extremely hard to be homeless. You have to stand in long lines at certain times of day just to take a shower or eat. I'm so thankful for the people and resources here. My heart is so heavy though."

-Devona, meal guest



"I'm a blue-collar type worker, like digging ditches. Everywhere I go they say they're not hiring because of the virus. I'm sleeping outside now. I never met a more friendly and courteous staff than here. The food is good and the clean clothes really help me out."

-Joseph, meal guest

Human Warmth and Kindness Live Here

Living through the aftermath of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake informed and shaped the ideals with which Dorothy Day co-founded the Catholic Worker Movement and created the concept for Houses of Hospitality. Her memory of this traumatic time as recounted in Rebecca Solnit's *A Paradise Built in Hell* seems especially relevant to our experience this year at Blanchet House:

"What I remember most plainly about the earthquake was the human warmth and kindness of everyone afterward. Mother and all our neighbors were busy from morning to night cooking hot meals. They gave away every extra garment they possessed. They stripped themselves to the bone in giving, forgetful of the morrow. While the crisis lasted, people loved each other."

Solnit notes that Day's memory of the crisis was a touchstone for what a healthy community should be—people caring for one another.

If so, then the Blanchet House community is very healthy indeed.

The amount of suffering we have seen in 2020 is significant but so is the amount of kindness extended.

We see deplorable and inhumane conditions in our houseless community. Yet, our volunteers and supporters rise to meet the challenges of this crisis, propelling us to alleviate suffering with compassion and dignity. The kind of "human warmth and kindness" Day spoke of.

Human warmth and kindness came in many forms this year. Volunteers served coffee, milk, and hot meals day after day, week after week, month after month. Blankets, coats, tarps, and sleeping bags were handed out. Clothing was given so that living on the street could be made a little more bearable or would perhaps help someone look presentable enough to get a job and housing. Thousands of water bottles were

handed out during the summer and tens of thousands of sack lunches bearing inspiring words and art.

Together, we provided meals, clothing, and essential items to peer agencies, shelters, and emergency camps. The human services community pulled together this year, and our outreach has been all the stronger for this collaborative spirit.

I am mindful that the onset of a new year will not be a meaningful turning point for the people we serve, who often are unsure of the day or date. The suffering created by the pandemic's economic crisis will continue for many.

Yet, I have hope because I know you are committed to our mission, and that your generous love for the people we serve will continue during this crisis and beyond.

-Scott Kerman, Executive Director



Volunteer beekeeper Katy Fackler gifted the first jar of honey harvested from Blanchet Farm to Executive Director Scott Kerman.

Give Guide

Nov. 1 - Dec. 31

Donate to Blanchet House via [GiveGuide.org](https://www.giveguide.org) between now and Dec. 31 to receive special gifts like the 2021 harvest of Blanchet Farm honey and more. More details at [BlanchetHouse.org/Give-Guide](https://www.BlanchetHouse.org/Give-Guide).



Welcome Antoine

"Feeding people here is uplifting," says Antoine Golden, our new chef. **"I try to make the best meals possible for the homies outside. I've struggled myself like a lot of people. I even slept in my car at one time. It seems like a flip of the coin you know? I could be on the other side of the doors."**

Antoine is a well-seasoned cook with culinary school training and 25 years of experience. We're lucky to have him on staff to carry out the Blanchet House mission.



Blanchet House resident Chad prepares food in the kitchen.

Alcohol Led to Homelessness, A Hot Meal Led Him to Our House

Three months of homelessness nearly killed Chad. A brutal fight over a stolen tent landed him in the hospital with staples in his head. With nowhere safe to recuperate, he needed help. Heavy drinking lost him his job and the room he rented.

"I saw that the end result for me was gonna be a 6-foot hole in the earth or an 8 x 10 concrete room. Not places I wanna be," he says.

Chad has struggled with alcoholism since age 14 but always held a kitchen job and had a place to stay. Sometimes he'd lose a job because he overslept one too many times but he could easily find another.

This time, however, COVID-19 caused restaurants to close or scale back, so he was unable to find work. He stayed in hotels until money ran out. He found himself sleeping on the sidewalk in downtown sinking deeper into drinking and despair.

He sold plasma to earn money for alcohol and cigarettes. He waited in line for meals, clean clothes, and to charge his phone at Blanchet House.

"For a lot of people going through addiction, their family reaches a point where they've said enough is enough," Chad says. "Boom."

To make a permanent change for the better, Chad needed long term supportive and sober housing. People

trying to escape homelessness need help with everything from paperwork for medical care to navigating housing wait lists. It's not easy to do alone.

"Utilizing Blanchet's services I got to know some of the guys here," Chad recalls. "They told me about the housing program but I needed to sober up first. I took myself to DePaul, checked in, did 60 days inpatient rehab, and then got a referral here."

Six percent of adults suffer from alcohol use disorder, the medical term for what's more commonly known as alcoholism —a brain disease characterized by the inability to stop or control alcohol use regardless of negative outcomes. Medical intervention is needed. Withdrawal from alcohol dependency can be deadly and cause delirium tremens (DTs), a life-threatening psychotic state.

Now safely living inside Blanchet House, Chad works as a cook helping to serve houseless guests who are where he once was just a few months ago.

"As far as people looking to get out of their homelessness situation, whether they're dealing with addiction or just struggling to find affordable housing, Blanchet House is a great program," he says. "It's been over 100 days since I've had a drink. I can't say it's been easy. I take it one day at a time and utilize the services here so I can get back on track."

They Built a House of Hospitality

"It really is a family thing," says Ed O'Hanlon, son of Jim O'Hanlon Sr. "Blanchet House is just ingrained in us, it was always a part of our family. Dad and his friends dedicated themselves to running it."

Many of the things we value in life are passed down by family members. For the families of Blanchet's founders supporting the mission is deeply rooted.

"If it's important to him then it's important to me," says Steve Feltz, son of Gene Feltz.

While serving people in need the founding members forged a bond that lasted their lives and beyond. Only two founders remain, Jim and Gene, both in their 90s. They led the organization alongside their friends for more than 40 years.

"Once we started Blanchet, we had to keep it going because the need was there," says Gene. "It was our duty."

Steve adds, "What dad means by duty is that we do this out of love for our fellow man."

The Beginning

"The guy who really pushed us to start was Fr. Francis Kennard," recalls Jim. "He said, 'Go out in the street! Help people. Just don't sit on your heels!'"

In 1948, a group of young men wanted to start a social club to meet "gals and such" but instead they were challenged to give back and built a charity that has helped countless people.

"When we started we didn't have much money. We could only serve



Jim O'Hanlon Sr. (right) with son Ed O'Hanlon (left) at Blanchet Farm in 2018.

breakfast." Jim continues. "We paid \$35 a month for rent. We wanted to buy the building so we could give people a place to sleep. We needed to raise money somehow."

When people heard about what they were doing they wanted to support it. A local car dealer gifted them a 1953 Chrysler to auction. They sold tickets to the auction to raise money for the down payment. They had to take out personal loans for the mortgage. A big commitment for the young families.

"No one else was there to help people out. So that's what we did. We had to keep it going because the need was there," recalls Gene.

All along the way, they were blessed by acts of generosity that allowed them to help more people. A surprise bequest in a will gave them the ability to expand and further their mission to alleviate suffering.

It's easy to marvel at what they have built—a living monument of compassion—a rare thing indeed. How do they feel about this accomplishment?

"The kids have done tremendously well. They brought in new blood to keep it going. It's gotten better," says Jim, humbly giving credit to others.

A new generation of leadership brought new skills. Ed and Steve both served on the board. Along with many others, they raised a new building to increase meal service and bed availability to those on the street.

The Mission is Simple

"You have to live it. Be involved and support things that help people," says Ed. "The mission is to help people. Don't preach, just help. Free meals without anything in return."

On most any day at Blanchet House, you could meet a volunteer or donor who is a relative of one of the founders—a Carr, Christianson, Collins, Feltz, Harrington, Moore, O'Hanlon, or Petrusich. An extended family honoring a life long mission of service.

"We all support Blanchet House to honor our parents," Steve adds.

While the founders no longer serve meals or attend meetings, they still support the organization financially.

They created deep, multi-generational traditions of selfless charity that layout a set of principles to guide succeeding generations. There are no buildings named after these men but there is a legacy.

Every day someone in desperate need of food comes to Blanchet House and leaves with renewed hope thanks to the generosity of people like you.



Gene Feltz with son Steve Feltz at Blanchet's annual brunch in 2018.

Make Blanchet House Part of Your Legacy

With your help, Blanchet House can continue to serve the community into the future. Be part of a family that values the inherent dignity of everyone.

Contact Blanchet House's Development Director Brenda Ray Scott, CFRE at 503-241-4340 to talk about your options.

Visit www.BlanchetHouseGiving.org



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"We do this out of love for our fellow man."

-Steve Feltz, emeritus board member

More than a Meal



Nursing students from the University of Portland gave free flu shots to our meal guests. Thank you to Harrington Health Clinic, University of Portland School of Nursing, and Legacy Health for offering this important service to the community.

A Living Monument to Charity Built by Friends

Two of Blanchet House's founders, Gene Feltz and Jim O'Hanlon Sr. along with their sons, talk about their families' legacy of helping people in need.

[<< Full story inside](#)



Some of the founders of Blanchet House in the old kitchen circa 2011.