The Claver Chronicle

Revitalization 2000, Inc. Claver House

Fall 2026









STEAM Summer Camp 2026

Working and learning with the Historic Ville Neighborhood of North Saint Louis, we bring people together to build relationships, support, educate, inspire, and promote positive change.
- Revitalization 2000 Mission Statement

President's Corner

– Steve Hutchison

Today is casserole day at my parish. Every month 25 or so members of Ste. Genevieve du Bois make casseroles for the Claver House for our Read and Feed project. One parish friend missed the morning pickup and delivery to Claver House, and so she brought her casserole over to my home for delivery later in the week. While we visited, she commented how the casserole program is "such a well-oiled machine." People seldom say that about any of what we do!



Many hands make light work!

As I read the articles in this newsletter and think more about my friend's comment, I realize how many hands touch our Claver House ministry. I am humbled by the number of people who quietly go about supporting and engaging in our programs. While beneficial to our resident friends in the Ville, the food we grow/collect/distribute, our summer camp, and our special events are but the means to an end. That end is accompaniment, to listen, to love, and to help heal – both the marginalized and ourselves. Speaking about his 40 years working with gang members at Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, Fr. Greg Boyle S.J. elaborates (and I paraphrase), "What a gang member hopes for is a place to feel safe. Then they can be seen and cherished; and if the traumatized are likely to cause trouble, then the cherished can find joy. They tell me, 'We are used to being watched but not seen.' Changing that opens themselves to self-healing and loving themselves. Contributing to healing does not require qualifications per se. It requires listening. Stop trying to reach them and allow your heart to be changed. You go to the margins to let those in the margins change you. This is how one enters into kinship. 'Jesus was moved' says the gospel. He Himself was changed through those with whom he interacted."

Claver House hopes you join us in this ministry that brings a touch of dignity and hope to the margins. In accompanying, you too will be moved.



Bill and Claver House neighbor Renee Robinson deliver dinner to a needy family

Thoughts from a New Board Member

– Bill O'Neil

My introduction to Claver House came about two years ago through a simple request in our parish bulletin: donations of canned goods and non-perishable items for the food pantry. It felt like a small, easy way to begin supporting Claver House and the residents of the Ville neighborhood.

Not long after, I volunteered at a Saturday morning distribution event. Seeing the Ville community firsthand was eye-opening. It helped me better understand the daily challenges and basic needs of the families and seniors living around Claver House. That experience stayed with me.

Shortly thereafter my wife and I joined our parish's monthly casserole program, preparing meals for households in the Ville neighborhood. Again, it was a modest contribution, but one that felt meaningful - a way to share a bit of what we have with those who have less. Working and visiting with seniors has been one of the most rewarding parts of my involvement. Offering a warm smile, a brief conversation, and a meal at someone's doorstep is a simple act, yet it carries real human connection. These efforts, along with Claver House's education enrichment programs, Back to School support, and Thanksgiving and Christmas in the Ville events, collectively make a tangible difference in the lives of the residents. I am grateful to be a part of an organization that brings comfort, dignity and hope to those who need it the most. The need is great, and our mission depends on people willing to lend their time and talents. If you feel you can join us, I encourage you to reach out to Steve Hutchison at shutchison515@gmail.com.

Helping Our Neighborhood Schools

– Bob Marshak and Steve Hutchison



In 1875 Sumner High, the first high school for African-Americans west of the Mississippi opened in response to a requirement that school boards support black education per the 1865 Missouri Constitution. It is also the original home of Stowe College and the Lincoln University Law School .

Claver House and our partners are again working with Sumner High School and Hickey Elementary School to stock food pantries and personal care item cabinets for their students during the 2026-2027 school year. As in the past, the schools are requesting snack foods and drinks as well as personal care supplies. Without them, students are hungry or embarrassed. They then skip school or cannot concentrate in the classroom.

Our first distribution for the 2026-27 school year occurred on August 20 as part of the Sumner High School Open House. Claver House delivered over 10,000 breakfast treats and hygiene items for distribution throughout the fall semester. We are currently collecting items for delivery to Hickey Elementary in October.

We have made assisting in this way a key part of our mission, and we thank the organizations and individuals who contribute both funds and volunteers to make these programs successful. **Would you like to help?** Contact us! Consider making a financial contribution or organizing a pantry item drive at your church, school, or business. This is a very worthwhile program and something that fits well with schools and organizations wanting to assist in a simple, concrete manner. Schools such as Sumner and Hickey, whose needs surpass what their annual budget can cover, are extremely appreciative of this type of support .

Community Collaboration

– Bob Marshak and Steve Hutchison

On August 8th Unfailing Love Christian Church and Claver House hosted the Ville Collaborative Back-to-School Block Party. Together we served 128 families and 226 children. Traditionally held on the former St. Matthews church parking lots, our purpose is to help prepare for the school year and to provide families with many nonperishable foods. The day proved to be a successful neighborhood event. School uniforms, backpacks, underwear and socks were distributed. Entertainment included music, a bounce house, games, and lunches for all.



Volunteers setting up at the Back-to-School Block Party

While Unfailing Love and Claver House were the hosts, volunteers and contributions from many organizations and individuals were core to making the day happen. We are especially thankful to St. Anselm Church for donating socks and underwear for students, DOT Foods for providing a portion of the nonperishable food that Claver House distributed, and both YMSL and our Claver House neighbors for helping set up and distribute items at our Claver House tent.

Neighborhood events like the Block Party and the upcoming December 12 Ville Collaborative Christmas Party are examples of the cooperation and collaboration of churches, organizations, Ville residents, and other individuals who recognize the importance of supporting on an ongoing basis this neighborhood that Claver House proudly calls home.

Project Read and Feed

– Jim Moore

Read and Feed began more than 10 years ago, when Kim Spain, a neighborhood leader and volunteer, suggested we offer Saturday morning pancake breakfasts to the kids knocking on her door for food snacks. After breakfast, other volunteers would provide learning experiences until about noon. Phase II began when the covid pandemic shut our Saturday doors, but Kim began delivering food to some of the Ville families in need. This evolved to our current "every Thursday" home delivery of donated casseroles, now serving more than 25 households. They have come to rely on us and wait by the door for our knock.



Kim making a home delivery in the COVID days of Read and Feed

Kim also persuaded us to add a food pantry for those who would come to the house for help. That pantry grew into our Saturday food and personal items giveaway twice a month in the community garden. (The garden predated the food giveaway.)

Upcoming Special Events

– Steve Hutchison



Christmas in the Ville 2025

The back-to-school collaborative with Unfailing Love Christian Church and others, our Thanksgiving meal distribution to more than 50 households, and the annual Christmas in the Ville celebration are collaborative events involving individuals and organizations from the Ville and around the metro area. We now are planning for Thanksgiving, collecting names of those interested in receiving a Thanksgiving meal and identifying volunteers and donors. This is only possible with the generous support of Young Men's Service League and Ascension Parish, both of which contribute food or funds to the effort. Last year, one of our Saturday morning visitors suggested we offer Cornish hens for seniors rather than a turkey since that would be easier to prepare and have less wasted food. We took that advice and added the hens to our shopping list along with going "turkey hunting "at the Restaurant Depot. Much to our surprise, we discovered all the turkey's had been liberated by others! So, instead we gave two chicken fryers to families and Cornish hens to those who requested them. The birds are accompanied by a box full of sides and fresh vegetables. Volunteers from Ascension parish also helped with the deliveries to over 50 doors the Tuesday before Thanksgiving.

Claver House and our Ville partner, Unfailing Love Christian Church, are also busy planning for the December 12 Christmas in the Ville celebration. Hundreds of children and their families attend this event, and **we need your help** to make this successful! Please consider visiting our website and signing up to volunteer or provide items for this very special occasion.

Claver House Community Garden

- Steve Hutchison



Our new walkway and benches make for a great food distribution site

Thank you Counterpublic for your gift of a walkway and benches! Claver House is very fortunate that this group included our garden site as one of three locations for installing outside art in The Ville. The walk and two benches, constructed with St. Louis brick collected in the Ville following last year's tornado, make for a much nicer distribution setting and add to the aesthetics of the overall garden space. Designer Margaret Honda shared that she did not foresee the utility of the walkway but was pleasantly surprised at how it proved fitting for our Saturday pantry distributions.

We always look for ways to enrich the encounter with and between neighbors and volunteers. The walkway definitely offers an enhanced environment for such. With that in mind we hope to soon build on the intentionality of the space, adding a bit of hospitality with cool or hot drinks and some cookies or snacks as people wait in line for our table setup (many neighbors arrive long before our typical 9 AM start time).

This was a rainy summer, and such made for a success season for growing veggies in our garden beds. Particularly abundant were lettuce, kale, greens, and tomatoes.

Our Missouri native plant garden, newly planted this spring also flourished in the wet weather.

Thank you Kathy Sammons and the Claver House residents for tending to both of these gardens amidst the heat and humidity! Also thanks to all the groups who planted, weeded, and harvested items. The effort reflects the overall way that so many hands touch our projects and how we collectively contribute to the neighborhood. Besides your donation of time, talent and treasure, you offer dignity and hope to our residents. Your presence is a sign that you care. In thanking you I am only repeating what so many of our neighbors say to me.



Our Missouri native plant garden taking shape.

Claver House – LOVEtheLOU STEAM Summer Camp

– Steve Hutchison



Campers at work on their bots

In our previous edition I wrote about the start of our summer camp partnership with LOVEtheLOU. This was our first joint effort, and we are both pleased with the results and excited about future camps.

The camp started June 9 and finished July 30. We made a few adjustments in the second month. The first was to reduce the number of activities from 5 to 4 to allow additional time for each activity. The second was to continue rotating our groups of 5-6 campers through each activity versus having them pick a particular area for the entire month. That allowed everyone more time to discover their interests and to allow each activity time to complete a more robust project. The activity areas included life science, robotics, arts and crafts, and engineering. Each activity area completed a project and presented it at the August 15 Showcase held at LOVEtheLOU. The presentations included launching model rockets, a dual between robots, an imaginary "monster habitat" that included the life-support elements necessary for the monster's safety and survival, and a 10-foot-long arts and crafts mural.



I caught one!



Drenched campers taking shelter

July also included a field trip to the Missouri Department of Conservation Fish Hatchery in Forest Park. The morning was extremely warm, and the MCD counselors warned the campers (many of whom were first time fisherman) that the fish may not be biting. Happily they were wrong! As the morning went on, clouds began gathering, and that seemed to trigger an appetite in the fish. It also made for an extremely wet ending, as the rain went from drizzle to downpour in less than a minute, catching all of us by surprise!

An Interview with Claver House Volunteer Robert Cohen

– Jim Moore



Claver House volunteer Robert Cohen delivering a frozen casserole meal to a Vill neighbor

Jim: What are you currently doing at Claver House… how do you offer your help?

Robert: I'm on the Thursday meal delivery team.

Jim: How did you learn about CH and first get involved?

Robert: Before doing volunteer work I was a staff photojournalist at the Post-Dispatch for 26 years. During that time I worked on stories involving all kinds of organizations, mostly non-profits, that worked with their communities to enhance the lives of its residents. I made mental and written notes, filing them away, about groups that I felt were doing good work and had their hearts set in the right place. I thought when I retired that I might contact some of them to see if they needed volunteers. One such organization was Claver House, where I met Kim Spain one chilly afternoon near Thanksgiving. When I retired, I contacted Kim once again to see if she needed volunteers, and that's how I came to help here one afternoon a week.

Jim: What do you enjoy or how do you profit from your efforts here?

Robert: I've always been a people person, and the Thursday afternoon opportunity was a great fit as a photographer. For me, that's the most enjoyable part of the work, just knocking on doors and talking to folks about their day. It's an extension of what I did in the past, but now I get to be more personal. How are they doing? What do they need? How can Claver House help out?

Claver House Resident Community Notes

– Noah Sokol



Our live-in community has grown over the summer. Presently we have six full time Claver House residents! In addition to veteran residents Louis and Niki, our community now is home to Alban, Arneze, Glory, and myself. A fuller house has brought abundant laughter, meaningful fellowship, and just a touch of joyful chaos.

The environment and the increased sense of community already is contributing to the growth and formation of its members. Residents have been challenged to recognize their vulnerability and through it deepen their relationships with one another as well a engage intentionally with the broader Ville community. Over the past two months, the community has gathered weekly for fellowship outings, volunteered together in the neighborhood, and even participated in the annual Ville Trap Run.

May we keep this year's Claver House residential community in our prayers as they continue to learn to be present to each other and the neighborhood.

To learn more about our resident community, visit https://www.claverhousestl.org/ and click on the Claver House Community photo.