

The Claver Chronicle



Summer 2026



Claver House Science Saturday - April 18, 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

Early one morning in late June, YMSL volunteer-mom Catherine Hamlin, her son Thomas, and I were tending to our community garden when a neighborhood resident approached us. He introduced himself as Vaughn and asked if he could help. Who am I to say no to that? ☺

We chatted as we worked. Vaughn said how much he appreciated the garden, the food we distribute, and our overall neighborhood presence. He went on to say to me, “I met you previously. You had just arrived one Saturday and were headed into Claver House. I asked if you were distributing food that morning. You told me that this was an off week. I did not ask for it, but you gave me some money for bus fare. I really appreciated that. It is why I want to help you somehow.”

I share this story because it offers a glimpse of how our community garden is more than flowers and veggies. It is an informal place, almost a holy place, where for a moment the barriers dissolve and we who are “privileged” enter into relationship with those who are “poor”. Those moments may be rare, but they are profound. They are why Claver House is a special place – and worth the toil. Saint Vincent de Paul once wrote, “You will find that charity is a hard burden to carry...It is only because of your love, only your love, that the poor will forgive you the bread you have given them.” Claver House cannot bring about social justice. We cannot eliminate poverty. What we can do, however, is love. We can offer hope, extending dignity to those who too often are invisible or demonized. We hope you join us in this ministry.



“Vincent and the Beggar Christ” icon by artist Meltem Aktas



F3 group members install a Little Library in the neighborhood.

Helping Where Needed

Thanks to the F3 group for their volunteer efforts this past quarter. The group has been assisting with the installation and maintenance of the Little Libraries that we have placed around the Ville. They also assisted with our Saturday morning food distribution and dedicated a morning to replacing the floor of one of the Claver House upper decks. We very much look forward to their continued involvement.

Let it be presupposed that every good Christian is to be more ready to save his neighbor's proposition than to condemn it. If he cannot save it, let him inquire how he means it; and if he means it badly, let him correct him with charity. If that is not enough, let him seek all the suitable means to bring him to mean it well, and save himself.
—St. Ignatius, "Presupposition" to the Spiritual Exercises

Helping Our Neighborhood Schools

– Bob Marshak and Steve Hutchison



Grocery boxes ready for delivery to Sumner High School Families impacted by the May 2025 tornado

Saturday, August 8, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. is our **Ville Back to School Block Party**, a collaborative event where we will be distributing items to neighbors and neighborhood schools.

Claver House and Unfailing Love Christian Church are key Ville partners in organizing and hosting this event in the Ville neighborhood. This is one of the most attended events that the Ville Collaborative sponsors. Claver House will again have a booth and provide nonperishable foods and information about our programs for students during the summer and school year. Claver House will focus on items for the food pantries at Hickey Elementary and Sumner. This is a fun event every year. There will be free uniform shirts and pants, live entertainment, free haircut and braiding vouchers, backpacks, and school supplies, hygiene kits, and essential supplies. We are also inviting vendors and organizations to set up a table/tent and provide information on their programs and outreach efforts.

Claver House has been partnering with St. Louis public schools in the Ville since 2016. Today there remain but two: Sumner High School, the first high school for African Americans west of the Mississippi and one with a proud tradition, and Hickey Elementary, a school for pre-K through 6th grade students. The schools continue dealing with systemic issues of poverty.

Throughout the year we provide snacks and hygiene items for both schools for distribution to needy students. We do this at the request of the schools, and both schools are extremely grateful for our effort, as without these items attendance and classroom performance suffer.

With the help of private donors and a grant from Catholic Charities, this past school year we distributed over 17,000 items to Sumner and Hickey, including 40 boxes packed with groceries for 40 Sumner families who are still suffering the effects of the May 2025 tornado.

This is a major element of our mission, and our ability to help is in no small way due to the generous support of the St. Louis community. The challenges and services in schools with the demographics of Sumner and Hickey go far beyond classroom walls. We may not be teachers, but we can help with out-of-classroom services.



Join us at our August 8 Ville Collaborative Back to School Block Party!

Project Read and Feed

- Bill O'Neil

Project Read and Feed at Claver House helps provide neighbors in the Ville with food and other basic necessities. A key part of this effort is our Thursday meal distribution program, in which volunteers deliver 25 to 30 casserole meals, bread, and desserts to selected households in the Claver House neighborhood. These households include families and older adults who are especially vulnerable to food insecurity. The casseroles are generously donated by St. Ambrose and Ste. Genevieve du Bois parishes. Bread, bagels and sweets are donated by Panera and Einstein's and collected/sorted/prepped for delivery by a group of Ste. Gen parishioners. On occasion, the team supplements its meal distribution with select brands of frozen pizza. On a recent Thursday, 30 pizzas were donated by St. Louis' own Dogtown Pizza, whose kitchen and distribution hub are located only a few blocks away from Claver House in the Ville.

This spring, Claver House welcomed two St. Louis University students to our Thursday meal distribution team. Payton and Isabella first learned about Claver House's mission in their freshman theology class and were moved to get involved. Throughout the spring semester, the girls spent their Thursday afternoons helping deliver meals to residents in the Ville. They appreciated the chance to help bring both a meal and a friendly smile to our neighbors. Payton shared that the experience reminded her not to take even the most basic things for granted. She was also struck by how welcoming our neighbors were and by the strong sense of community in the Ville, even after the widespread damage caused by the 2025 tornado. Both students felt that the connections we build with our neighbors truly make a difference in their lives. Our Thursday meal distribution program continues this summer. We are grateful to Payton and Isabella for being part of the team this spring, and we are glad they plan to return. We look forward to seeing them again in the fall!



Board member Jim Moore delivers a Thursday meal to one of our Ville neighbors



National Charity League volunteers taking a break from distributing pantry items in our community garden

Another core element of Read and Feed is our Saturday Morning Food Distribution program. Twice each month we set up tables and distribute pantry items donated in kind or purchased through monetary donations. A typical distribution includes 1,500 items. Volunteers include neighborhood residents, church groups, and moms along with their sons and daughters from Young Men's Service League and National Charity League. Contributors include parish members from Ste. Genevieve du Bois and St. Gabriel the Archangel, DOT Foods, White House Retreat Center, Alleluia Baskets, Young Men's Service League, the West County Collaborative, and numerous private donors.

Claver House Community Garden

- Steve Hutchison



Our garden in early spring just after planting seedlings grown at the homes of many volunteers

This is a busy time at our community garden. Over the winter months Claver House and volunteers from National Charity League, Young Men's Service League, Ste. Genevieve du Bois, and St. Gabriel the Archangel grew seedlings indoors. April 11 was planting day, with all the growers pitching in to prep the garden beds and plant their seedlings. The weather was perfect for growing and by May we were harvesting lettuce, greens, and kale. In June our cherry tomatoes ripened, and in July our regular sized tomatoes followed suit. Neighbors are helping themselves to the harvest!

In the center of the garden is a large bed for growing native Missouri plants. For those of you who have visited our garden, you know that this garden tends to grow out of control over the course of the summer. Our garden exists to provide fresh veggies for our neighbors, but also to provide a beautiful space for all to enjoy. This year we are determined to make this the center piece of our garden. To achieve our goal, we have enlisted Kathy and Bernie Sammons along with their friends from St. Clare of Assisi Parish to lead the effort of managing the garden bed.

We are also excited to be the site of a **Counter Public Outdoor Art Project** that will further beautify the area. By the fall this group will have completed a wheel-chair friendly brick trailway winding from the street sidewalks through the front area of the Missouri Native bed. Along the side of the trailway will be two brick-based benches. In addition, **Forest Releaf** will be donating two trees for planting on either side of the garden bed.



Kathy Sammons, Bernie Sammons, and Jim Moore toil in the heat and humidity to beautify our Native Missouri garden.

Claver House – LOVEtheLOU STEAM Summer Camp

– Steve Hutchison



Campers honing their arts and crafts skills at MADE

Summer Camp started June 9 and ends July 30. Camp days are Tuesday and Thursday and involve 25 middle school and high school age campers. The day begins with a short prayer and motivational talk. Activities begin thereafter and run until noon. Campers divide into 5 groups, each group headed by a LOVEtheLOU young adult member. The groups rotate through 5 activity sessions. Activity leaders are university students or degreed professionals. The activity areas focus on engineering, life science, robotics, arts and crafts, and industrial design. We have non-activity days, and those days include field trips to MADE (a maker space), the Washington University Kemper Art Museum, Missouri Botanical Gardens, a fishing trip to a private lake in Forest Park that the Missouri Department of Conservation operates, and a morning of archery that the conservation department also oversees. On August 15, LOVEtheLOU will host a showcase where campers will set up table-top displays and demonstrations of some of their projects.

We wish to thank volunteers from Ste. Genevieve du Bois and St. Gabriel the Archangel parishes for providing lunches each camp day, Child and Family Empowerment Center for providing transportation on field trip days, and camp activity helpers from Young Men's Service League and National Charity League. We are so fortunate to have such broad volunteer involvement! Our hope is that summer camp is the start of a year around educational enrichment program, with after school and/or Saturday STEAM activities continuing. To do so, we need volunteers to lead and assist with activities. Please contact us if you are interested in helping.

This spring Claver House and LOVEtheLOU established a partnership to provide services to the Ville neighborhood and surrounding area. Both organizations have a history of providing such. Claver House has focused on providing STEAM activities. LoveTheLou has focused on work training and Social Emotional Learning. Working together we believe we can establish an impactful youth program.

Our first project is a STEAM Summer Camp that is adjunct to the LoveTheLou work program and which in the fall will enfold into our Science Saturday program. LoveTheLou will provide campers. Youth receive a small salary for participating in the overall program. Claver House provides leaders and volunteers for the STEAM activities and projects.



Building robots at LOVEtheLOU

YMSL – Hand and Glove with Claver House

– Catherine and Thomas Hamlin

Young Men's Service League (YMSL) St. Louis is one of the local volunteer organizations that partners with Claver House. Their 105 high school-age young men work alongside their mothers serving local non-profits. The St. Louis chapter, one of 200+ chapters across the country, is starting their 5th year and has partnered with Claver House from day one. YMSL members and young men play a part in such Claver House efforts as:



- setting up the Saturday food tables and sharing food with residents.
- serving as helpers in the Claver House summer camp and Science Saturday STEAM programs.
- Growing seedlings for the community garden, plant the beds, and maintain them (several years ago, they partnered with Home Depot to rebuild the raised beds).
- holding food, cleaning supply and hygiene item drives, including an annual Thanksgiving meal box project.
- staffing the Christmas in the Ville party, helping with arts and crafts, distributing gifts, and serving snacks and hot cocoa.

Ville neighbor May and YMSL volunteers distribute pantry items in our community garden

Claver House is a favorite with YMSL members. During their 2025-26 chapter year from May 2025 through April 2026, YMSL

Members and young men served 1,452 hours with Claver House, the most of any of their 30 partner organizations. As rising sophomore Thomas Hamlin puts it, "I like Claver House because of the variety of opportunities. I can work with kids at the camp and help them learn, or I can help families get food, or I can meet a neighbor working in the garden. I like getting to know the neighborhood and the people here."

Claver House Resident Community Notes

– Nicole Klco

The Claver House resident community is growing and striving to increase our engagement in the neighborhood. This summer we have two residents serving as summer camp activity leaders, and we are excited to in the Fall welcome our first exchange student from St. John's University in Belize as he studies in St. Louis for the year. To make our resident community more intentional, we are also developing a format of weekly prayer nights and community dinners.

I personally left the Ville for two years and moved back last August to live in community. Residing in the Ville feels like home. There is love, friendly hellos, support for one another, always someone out and about, and opportunities to engage. Community includes the residents in Claver House, but our intent is to in time host community nights and events that include Ville neighbors and our non-resident volunteer community.

The Ville is filled with historical pride and a work ethic that precedes its name. Community pillars include Homer G. Phillips Senior Living Center (formerly Homer G. Phillips Hospital), Annie Malone Children and Family Services, Sumner High School, Northside Community Housing, Northside Youth and Senior Service Center, LOVEtheLOU, Child and Family Empowerment Center, and many churches who serve the area. All of these are part of or add to a rich history built on strength and grit.

Living at Claver House is an opportunity to live in a resident community and a neighborhood that feels sacred. We aim to respect those that have gone before us and add some good as we go along. We soon hope to be inviting you to community dinners – or to become a resident!

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