

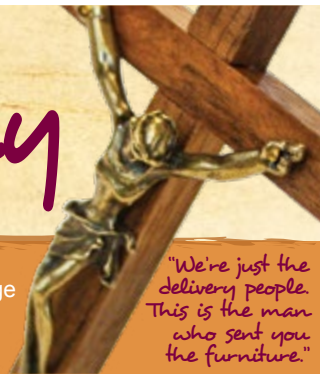


**MY BROTHER'S KEEPER**

A Christian ministry of loving service and education

# Along The Way

September 2019



*"We're just the delivery people. This is the man who sent you the furniture."*

**Our Mission** To Bring the Love and Hope of Jesus Christ to those we serve.

**We deliver furniture, food, and Christmas assistance** free of charge to local families in need. We have no prerequisites for service.

## A Bright Future

By Erich Miller, President



A varied group of volunteers joined me for furniture deliveries: Mike, Brian, Derrick, and Nick. Two work at companies which generously support our work, one is enrolled in an addictions treatment program, and one is a My Brother's Keeper Development Board member.

Though we were different ages, from different towns, and with different backgrounds, we were all on the truck for the same reason: to bring help and "the Love and Hope of Jesus Christ" to our neighbors in need.

Our first stop was at a beautiful new condo building in downtown Brockton. As we walked to the elevator, I asked Derrick, our volunteer in recovery, how he was doing today. "I'm a little down," he said. "A close family friend passed away and I can't go to the funeral in Maine. I don't have overnight privileges yet." All I could do was listen, encourage him to hang in there, and suggest he send a card. Little did I know what a gift from God this delivery would be to him personally.

Our delivery was to Ruby and we were profoundly touched by her story, her resilience, her faith, and her kindness. Ruby is 65 years old and she'd been a resident in a women's halfway house for the past two and a half years. She now works as an addictions counselor sharing the message and hope of recovery with others.

"I'm so excited!" she told us. "This is my first apartment. I've actually never lived alone before." Her apartment was absolutely beautiful: spacious and bright with nice floors, a beautiful kitchen, stainless steel appliances, and a separate bedroom with a walk-in closet.

It was totally empty, though...not a piece of furniture in the place.

With Ruby's help, we quickly changed that. She helped us carry everything in: a new queen bed, a matching dresser, bureau, and night stand, a white Ethan Allen couch, end tables, coffee table, kitchen table and chairs, a TV and TV stand, dishes, pots, pans, sheets, blankets, towels, and, last but not least, food.

Everything fit perfectly and she was thrilled with the quality of her new furniture. "My son came over last night to cook me dinner and we sat on the floor. Now look how beautiful my place looks!"

We congratulated Ruby on her many accomplishments... all she had done to make positive changes in her life. As much progress as she's made, though, it was clear she still struggles with her self-esteem. It was hard for her to believe that she's worthy of such love and kindness.

It gave us the perfect opportunity to deliver our last gift, the crucifix. Very appropriately, Derrick did the honors: "Ruby, we're just the delivery people. The furniture is from Him," he said and he gave her a cross, the symbol of the one who loves us all unconditionally.

Ruby broke into tears, gave us each a hug, and asked if she could lead

us in a prayer to give thanks to God. Mission accomplished!

Meeting Ruby was a privilege and gift for us all but especially for Derrick. He began the day discouraged but through his service to Ruby, he was lifted up and he saw how bright his future could be.

Only God could have brought us all together that day. As the old saying goes, "God writes straight with crooked lines."

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MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

# MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

## Saves lives

We recently received this beautiful anonymous thank you letter. The writer's words give us confidence that our physical help with furniture and food is deeply appreciated and that we are accomplishing our mission "To bring the Love and Hope of Jesus Christ to those we serve."

DEAR MBK

At MBK there are so many people helping so many people w/ help in need (including myself). It's mind boggling. All in service to our Lord God! I've been blessed w/ food & furniture etc. Otherwise I would go without.

Words alone will never totally describe the love that shines through you all, I receive so consistently from MBK.

All I can do is pray for your continued success, in reaching out to so many in need (of seeing & feeling God's love).

May God bless MBK & thousands fold in getting this message out there & accomplishing His mission.

In harder & desperate times MBK shines through w/ the light of Jesus.

To put it in bare knuckles truth, MBK saves lives!

- Anonymous

### TRANSCRIPTION:

Dear MBK,

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- Anonymous

"Let your light shine that others may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."



Starting in 2018, My Brother's Keeper has hosted seminarians from the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C., for summer service experiences at our Dartmouth facility. We were joined this summer by Br. Cyril Stola from Huntington Mills, Pennsylvania and Br. Zachary Sexton from Westerly, Rhode Island.



This partnership with the Dominican Order is an extension of our strong relationship with Providence College which is administered by the Dominican Friars. PC students regularly volunteer five days a week at our Dartmouth location throughout the academic year.



It was an extraordinary joy to share in the mission of My Brother's Keeper for nine weeks over the summer.

My Brother's Keeper brings together an authentic Christian community through service to our neighbors and I was struck by how well organized and far reaching the ministry is. We helped many neighbors in an extremely practical, concrete way. It was wonderful to pick up someone's piece of furniture and see the joy it brought someone else as it filled out their living room.

My Brother's Keeper truly brings different men and women into a brotherhood. That brotherhood is only made possible by the fatherhood of God, who we invoked every day. He animates the mission and sends us forth.

It was especially touching to witness the faith of many of the men and women we encountered by delivering Jesus on the crucifix into their homes. These souls understood the cross, they knew poverty, disasters, and human failure in many forms, but by their tearful receptions of the crucifix they taught me that they also knew God's providential care.

The crucifix is, above all, a sign of how strong God's love is for us, and I will fondly remember playing a small role in delivering that love into the homes of many through My Brother's Keeper.

Yours,

*Br. Cyril Stola*



Brooke Douglass served with us for eight weeks this summer through Providence College's Veritas Distinguished Internship program which provides stipends to students serving with nonprofits. This marks the third consecutive year that My Brother's Keeper volunteers have been awarded one of these highly competitive positions.

"To bring the love and hope of Jesus Christ to those we serve." This very special and beautiful mission is the reason why I wanted to intern at My Brother's Keeper this summer. Once you have visited, it is hard not to fall in love with My Brother's Keeper and the wonderful people who make it possible. The love, joy, community, and friendship found here is truly something special and is a direct outcome of the beautiful mission that unites each person who walks through our doors.

Through my experiences as an intern, I have learned that there is no task that is meaningless when your mission is to spread love and hope.

Each moment counts, because each moment is dedicated to lifting our brothers and sisters up the best we can.

Most importantly, I have learned the importance of the exchange of a crucifix from one person's hands to another: a physical representation of the uniting power of Jesus' love and hope.

Thank you, My Brother's Keeper!

*Brooke Douglass*

Providence College, Class of 2021

## **Favorite High School Memory Serving at My Brother's Keeper**

Haleigh Hunt from Taunton recently graduated 'Top 10' in her class from Coyle and Cassidy High School where she was involved in a wide variety of activities including Campus Ministry, their food pantry, math league, theater and choral group.

When asked by the Taunton Daily Gazette about her favorite Coyle and Cassidy memory, she shared that it was participating in community service at

My Brother's Keeper as part of her Junior Retreat. What a wonderful affirmation of the student volunteer experience we provide!

In the fall, Haleigh will be pursuing a nursing degree at Regis College where she received the Presidential Catholic Scholarship covering the full cost of tuition. Congratulations, Haleigh, and best of luck in college!





## King's College

### Senior Leadership Visit

The senior staff from King's College in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania came to Stonehill College in August for a leadership retreat. Given the strong partnership that we've developed in recent years, the King's team asked for an opportunity to visit My Brother's Keeper and learn more about our mission.

What a great privilege for us and especially for our staff member, Sasha Lopez, who is a 2016 King's alum.

Sasha led the tour of our facility for her fellow Monarchs which included the college's president, Fr. Jack Ryan, CSC, and six school vice-presidents.

In total, about 40 students and faculty from King's have come to My Brother's Keeper over the past five years for week-long alternative spring break service trips.

Two Kings alum— Sasha and Giuliana La Piana— subsequently completed a year of volunteer work with us, another student, Randill DeAssis, did a summer internship, and several others have visited at Christmas. It's beautiful how much our friends at King's love our work, our mission, and our community!

King's College is a sister school to Stonehill College and the University of Notre Dame. All were founded by the Congregation of Holy Cross.



## Bed in a Minute

By Sasha Lopez

"I haven't had a bed in a minute."

For those of you that don't know, "a minute" is slang for "a really long time."

This was part of a conversation I had with an 18-year-old young man that had just graduated from high school. Here's how the furniture delivery to him went:

My amazing crew of volunteers and I walked into an apartment building and were greeted at the door by Monica. She welcomed us into her home and apologized for not having any place for us to sit. I told her, "That's just one of the reasons we came; to bring you furniture to fill your home."

Monica told us the apartment complex had been infested with bed bugs. Through no fault of their own, Monica and her son Tariq had no living room furniture, no dining room chairs, and her son had gone months without a bed to sleep on.

We quickly got to work and brought the first half of a sectional couch into the apartment. Monica began to tear up because she was so excited. Then she called for Tariq to come out of his room. When he saw the couch, he got excited too. When we told him that it was one of two pieces, it was like we blew his mind! He had the biggest smile on his face and it was clear this was all a big surprise to him.

When it was time to bring in the second half of the sectional, Tariq asked, "Can I help?" As a team, we all worked together to twist and turn and finally pull in the couch. Tariq said, "This is going straight into my room it looks so comfortable."

One of the volunteers said, "If you put it in your room, there won't be enough space for your bed."

Tariq took a step back— genuinely shocked — and said, "I haven't had a bed in a minute."



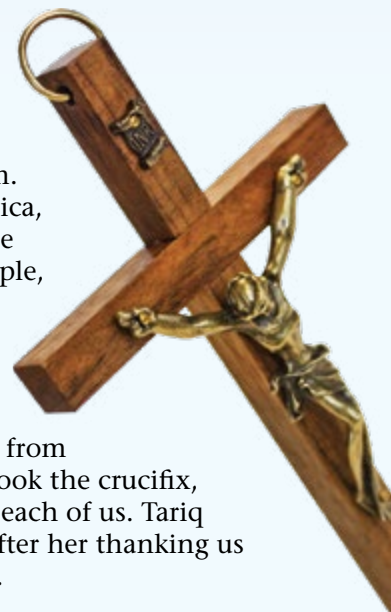
He looked back at his mother in disbelief and then rushed down to the truck to help bring it up to his room... a room that had a dresser, a TV, a lawn chair, and blankets piled on the floor.

"Would you like us to set the bed up for you, Tariq?" we asked but he quickly declined. "I'd like to do it myself. I want to set my room up just right and you've already done so much for me." He also told us that he had to get ready for work. He was beaming that he had a job to go off to.

As we do at every delivery, we tell those we serve that we have one final gift. We all gathered in the living room / dining room; an area that had been transformed with its new furniture. Monica and Tariq sat on their new couch and the volunteers and I circled around them. I said, "Monica, we're just the delivery people, this is who brought you the furniture."

Monica rose from the couch, took the crucifix, and hugged each of us. Tariq took turns after her thanking us individually.

On the ride back to the warehouse, we reflected on the delivery as a group. Tariq and Monica had made a lasting impression on us all because of their kindness, willingness to help, and gratitude.



## Help for Hungry Families This Summer

During summer, kids don't have easy access to free schools meals so our Easton facility made a concerted effort to increase food deliveries to local families in need.

This summer, we completed 800 food deliveries in July and August versus 675 during the same period in each of the last two summers.

The 18.5% increase in deliveries means an extra 2,625 meals were distributed to our neighbors struggling with hunger. The estimated retail value of this food is \$20,000.

A special thanks to all who donated to our 'Help for Hungry Families' appeal in our last newsletter, to generous partners like The Farm at Stonehill, Langwater Farm, P.Tavilla Co., and Grant Stanton Produce Co. and to our Food Assistance volunteers who packed the extra boxes and made the deliveries.



# NEW STAFF WELCOME! ABOARD!

My Brother's Keeper recently welcomed two new staff members—one in Easton and one in Dartmouth—to join our work and mission.



### REBECCA MERKEL

Rebecca joined our Easton staff for one year as a full-time volunteer through a post-graduate service program called Stonehill Service Corps (SSC). As part of SSC, Rebecca will live in community in a house in Brockton with other recent alum from Stonehill and Boston College. The program has 4 focal points or 'pillars': Service, Spirituality, Community, and Simple Lifestyle.

Rebecca is from Mertztown, PA and graduated from Stonehill in May 2019 with degrees in Criminology and Sociology and a minor in Chinese. She volunteered at My Brother's Keeper all four years in college, completed three internships with us, was our student coordinator in 2017, and also served as her Senior Class President.

Much to her credit, Rebecca was offered a management-level job the week before graduation but she chose to honor her commitment to Stonehill Service Corps and My Brother's Keeper. Her explanation why: "I tried to envision a future without consistently being involved with My Brother's Keeper and I simply could not. The mission, the service, and the people have become such an integral part of my life that I need to continue my involvement on a day-to-day basis for at least one more year after graduation. The privilege of ensuring someone knows their value and that they are loved is priceless."

Rebecca's work at My Brother's Keeper will primarily focus on direct service and supervising volunteers. What a great mentor she will be to our student volunteers!



### KATHLEEN BELTRAMELLO

Kathleen Beltramello of Bristol, RI joined our staff in Dartmouth as a part-time Administrative Program Associate.

She recently completed a year of part-time volunteer service with us through a program called Ignatian Volunteer Corps (IVC). IVC provides intensive year-long service opportunities to retired adults along with the opportunity to grow deeper in Christian faith through a spiritual reflection program rooted in Jesuit spirituality.

Kathleen is a licensed clinical social worker and has worked at the Visiting Nurse Home and Hospice in Portsmouth, RI. At My Brother's Keeper, she will schedule furniture pickups and assist with furniture and Christmas assistance request calls.

"I am thrilled to join the staff of My Brother's Keeper. There is a joy that pervades the place. Each volunteer that comes through the door is burning with the desire to carry out our mission in whatever way they can. I love that we gather for prayer each morning, reflect on the mission, give thanks for the work, and lift anyone in need of prayer. I also love our emphasis on excellence, because everything we do is in Christ's name."

Kathleen is very involved at her parish, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, and she lived in Cursillo in February 2019. De Colores, Kathleen!

# Upcoming Events

**Sept**

**Saturday, September 21**  
2nd Annual South Coast Soiree  
My Brother's Keeper  
Dartmouth Facility

**Nov**

**Monday, November 25**  
Hungry Men  
New Venue! - Quincy Marriott

**Nov**

**Friday, November 29**  
29th Annual Gratitude Mass  
My Brother's Keeper  
Easton Facility

**Have a question about one of our events?  
Please call Vin Shea at 508-238-7512.**

## My Brother's Keeper Prayer

Lord...

When I have food, Help me remember the hungry.

When I lie in my bed, Help me remember those  
who sleep on the floor.

When I have a warm home, Help me remember the homeless.

When I have work, Help me remember those without jobs.

When I experience the joy of giving to my children,  
Help me remember the agony of those  
who must watch their children go without.

By remembering, Help me destroy my indifference  
and arouse my compassion.

Make me concerned enough to act in your name,  
to help those who cry out to you  
for that which I so often take for granted.



## MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

A Christian ministry of loving service and education

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Easton, MA 02356-0338

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