



**MY BROTHER'S KEEPER**

A Christian ministry of loving service and education

# Along The Way

November 2012



*"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.



## CHRISTMAS 2012

**"When I experience the joy of giving to my children, help me remember the agony of those who must watch their children go without." Jim & Terry Orcutt, My Brother's Keeper Prayer**

My Brother's Keeper started accepting Christmas requests in mid-September and we've already promised our help to 1,500 families. We expect this number to grow to 2,700 families in the coming weeks—more than 10,000 children and parents!

So who are the families who reach out to My Brother's Keeper for help? What are their lives like?

Their stories are as different as there are people: parents and grandparents. . . working, disabled and unemployed. . . families living in Boston, the North Shore, the South Shore, Fall River and the Cape. . . good people from all over eastern Massachusetts.

Despite their differences, they all have one thing in common: they're hurting and they're doing the best they can to provide for the people they love.

Here's one letter we received from a struggling mom in Taunton:

Hi my name is Therese and I can use any help that's available with furniture, Christmas and other expenses.

My son Jason and I experienced an emotional and financial hardship a few months ago when we lost everything because of bed bugs. I used up all my savings finding a new place after going from home to home of family members.

Jason also has asthma and I struggle to pay for his inhalers. I don't have any money to get his refills at this time and I don't know when I will.

The problem is I work so I don't qualify for help from most places. I'm a single mom doing it all on my own. I have tons of problems but many blessings too so I figured I'd just try to see if you can help. I'd also like to say thank you for all you do for our community and your work for the Lord.

Thank you, Therese

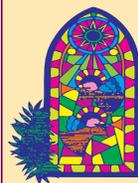
Stress, anxiety and disappointment: sadly, that's what Christmas means to parents like Therese and kids like Jason. When you struggle with basic expenses like rent, food, heating oil and medicine, a joy-filled Christmas is out of reach.

That's what makes our Christmas program such a blessing for so many. We can and we will help families like Therese's and be God's answer to their prayers!

Last December, My Brother's Keeper provided food, gifts, joy and hope to a record 2,662 families. Please help us serve even more families this year by returning the enclosed cards for our **Adopt-A-Family Gift Program** and **Loaves and Fishes Food Program**.

A special reminder... the Christmas effort starts each year in prayer with our Annual Gratitude Mass the Friday night after Thanksgiving at 7:00 P.M.

We will continue our effort to include all children in the liturgy. We invite each family attending to bring one unwrapped gift for kids to bring to the altar during the offertory.



### *My Brother's Keeper* **22nd Annual Gratitude Mass**

*"We come together in family and community to thank God and ask His blessing on this year's Christmas effort."*

**PLEASE BRING ONE UNWRAPPED GIFT PER FAMILY FOR CHILDREN TO BRING TO THE ALTAR**

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23rd @ 7:00 P.M.  
at MY BROTHER'S KEEPER**

*Principal Celebrant: Rev. James M. Mahoney  
Pastor, St. Bridget Parish, Abington*

*Homilist: Deacon Brian Kean  
Saint John Chrysostom Parish, West Roxbury*

*Reception following Mass  
Priests, please bring alb & stole to concelebrate*



**Congratulations to Rick and Cathy Shaw of Westwood who won our 'Cruise or Cash' Raffle. Special thanks to all who participated and to Superior Plumbing who donated the prize in full.**

# FOCUSING ON CHRIST

By Josh Smith, Staff



As a staff member at My Brother's Keeper, I have the tremendous privilege of delivering God's love and hope to families in need every day. Amidst our busy schedule, it can be easy to lose sight of this blessing, though, even for our staff. One recent delivery in Fall River's Flint neighborhood put this privilege into sharp focus.

As I climbed the narrow, winding stairs up to the second floor, I found myself consumed with calculating distances and angles in my head. *Would a full-size box spring really fit up these stairs? How about the couch and the long dresser?* But at the top of the stairs, the calculations stopped. The apartment was empty, if you could even call it an apartment.

We were here to deliver a bedroom set to Andrea, Mark, and their 2 ½ month old daughter, Jasmine. This was the family's first apartment after spending the pregnancy and past few months sleeping on a pullout couch in Mark's parent's home. And if this hadn't been hard enough, Andrea suffered from frequent epileptic attacks.

Andrea was so excited to finally have her own place that she didn't seem to notice the missing floorboards and exposed drywall in this shell of an apartment. Fortunately, Mark and a friend were hard at work and had already finished putting new hardwood flooring in the family's bedroom.

The renovations and deposit for the apartment had exhausted the couple's little savings so their only piece of furniture was an old range sitting in the middle of the living room. *"I've looked everywhere for a bed,"* Andrea explained as she gently rocked little Jasmine. *"I went from church to church but they don't have furniture and I couldn't get any help until I found My Brother's Keeper."*

Time to move the furniture in... the box spring and the rest of the bedroom set fit up the stairs without a problem. *"It's beautiful!"* she screamed as we set up the bed. *"I've never owned anything so big!"* But upon receiving the crucifix, Andrea became quiet. *"I'll hang this above Jasmine's crib,"* she whispered.

On my way down that same set of stairs, I remembered why I had come to Fall River today. No longer thinking about moving furniture or the day's logistics, I remembered the great privilege of serving in Christ's name.

## UPDATES ON OUR FALL RIVER EXPANSION

By Erich Miller, President



In every endeavor, our leadership asks the question, *"Are we following God's will?"* It's a difficult question... how can we know with certainty?

The late Father Richard Sullivan CSC, a founding board member, gave us wise yet practical advice: *"If you're prayerfully working towards a goal and things move forward relatively smoothly, you can be confident your actions are in keeping with God's will. If you're constantly running into roadblocks, though, God may be trying to tell you something."*

We are happy to say our efforts to expand to Fall River have gone very smoothly so we feel affirmed that God is indeed calling us to shine our light brighter and in new places. Here are some updates on our progress:

- ▶ We've made 40 furniture deliveries in 2012 to families in need in Fall River
- ▶ Families' reaction to the crucifix and the quality of our service has been overwhelming
- ▶ We've gotten great feedback from caseworkers at Citizens for Citizens, the Fall River nonprofit referring people in need to us
- ▶ We had very positive introductory meetings with Mayor William Flanagan of Fall River and Superintendent Meg Mayo-Brown, head of Fall River Public Schools
- ▶ Our own volunteers and supporters have been extremely encouraging... one example: we recently received a \$10,000 gift from a generous donor designated for our Fall River expansion
- ▶ We've received project funding from The Yawkey Foundation and our request is currently under consideration by two other major foundations
- ▶ The director of one prominent Massachusetts foundation reviewed our Fall River business plan and described it as *"thoughtful, smart and clear!!! The BEST plan I have seen in a long time."*

Want to read our Fall River Expansion Plan for yourself? Visit our website at [www.MyBrothersKeeper.org](http://www.MyBrothersKeeper.org)

## “WHERE DO YOU GET FURNITURE?”



Working below mattresses from Tufts University, Stonehill sophomores Mike DiRosario and Adam Marcoulier organize living room furniture donated by Faxon Woods in Quincy.

One of the most common questions we hear at My Brother's Keeper is “Where do you get your furniture?”

Our furniture donations mostly come from residences — our regular pickup area includes 35 South Shore towns! —but My Brother's Keeper is blessed with tremendous commercial and educational partners too.

Over the summer, Tufts University donated 550 twin mattresses and 300 dressers, all in excellent condition, as they refurbished dorms. Other educational partners include Stonehill College, Boston College and Providence College.

We recently received two other significant in-kind corporate donations. First, Keith Construction of Canton and Superior Plumbing in Dedham met one of our most urgent needs by donating 150 refrigerators from renovated apartment complexes in Beverly and Maynard.

The refrigerators are perfect for our use: they're apartment-sized to easily navigate tight stairways and reliable and energy-efficient at just 6-8 years old.

Faxon Woods, a residential community in Quincy, is responsible for our second generous donation, high-quality kitchen and living room furniture from the property's common areas: 7 couches, 25 upholstered chairs, 9 kitchen sets, 4 dressers plus coffee tables and end tables.

These large influxes of furniture are especially helpful because they allow us to quickly serve more families in need. With the help of commercial donations like these, My Brother's Keeper has made a record 1,100 furniture deliveries over the last 12 months.

Our special thanks to Tufts University, Keith Construction, Superior Plumbing, Faxon Woods and countless other commercial and educational partners who support our work so generously!

## 1ST ANNIVERSARY — NEW WEBSITE



Last November, My Brother's Keeper launched our new website designed by ICON Advertising & Design. Supporter Denis Concannon owns the company and generously discounts his work more than 75% to help us put our best foot forward as a ministry.

We've gotten many compliments over the year and traffic at [www.MyBrothersKeeper.org](http://www.MyBrothersKeeper.org) has been strong: 35,000 unique visitors in the past 12 months, 70% of whom are first-time visitors.

We are especially pleased that two pages of the website have been well-utilized: our Furniture Donation and Prayer Request forms.

The Furniture Donation form allows online visitors to not only offer furniture but also upload pictures along with a 'pick-up deadline,' the date by which the furniture must be removed.

We received 600 furniture donation forms over the past year and we believe this user-friendly tool will be especially helpful when we open a Fall River facility and expand furniture pickups to the South Coast.

As a Christian ministry, we are heartened when people reach out to My Brother's Keeper for prayers in their time of need. Since the website launched, 150 Prayer Request forms have been entrusted to us by those we serve as well as our supporters.

Here's one heart-breaking intention we recently received:

**Request:** *Please pray for my children & me. I am a single mother of 5. A year & a half ago I lost my job & our home is in foreclosure! I don't know how I am going to make Christmas happen this year or where we will live. I pray everyday for our health & that I am able to provide as much as I can for my children.*

**Name:** Wendy

## 3RD ANNUAL BOARD VOLUNTEER DAY “TO LEAD IS TO SERVE”

On Thursday October 4th, eighteen My Brother's Keeper board members put aside their busy schedules to spend the day serving together for the 3rd Annual Board Volunteer Day.

Like most charities, our board members typically donate their time on evenings and weekends. This annual board retreat focuses on the day-to-day work and it reflects our board's belief that direct, personal service makes our leaders more knowledgeable, more passionate, and more effective.

*“As board members, this Day of Service provides us with a unique opportunity to connect with each other, our fellow volunteers, and those we serve: our brothers and sisters in need,”* said Lori Grant, a member of the Development Board.

*“It's pretty amazing when we can see, hear and feel Christ's Love & Hope touching the life and heart of another person. What a tremendous privilege to serve our Lord through the loving ministry of My Brother's Keeper! Our thanks to the staff for organizing such an outstanding day.”*

My Brother's Keeper has two separate boards, a Board of Directors which governs and a Development Board which organizes events to raise the money we need as a 100% privately-funded charity. This division of activities has been especially effective as My Brother's Keeper and its board responsibilities have grown.

It's often said *‘Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery’*: a number of local start-up charities have given us the greatest compliment by choosing to duplicate this leadership model.



Board members Brendan Sullivan of Milton and Brian Walsh of Holbrook (left to right) help load a kitchen table for a family of four.



Left to right, board members Luzann Noonan of Easton, Ginny Motta of Milton and Lori Grant of Easton finish loading the kitchen set.

## RECENT GRAD APPOINTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT BOARD



Alex Ogozaly, the first person to fill a special 'student board position' on our Board of Directors, has accepted an invitation to join the My Brother's Keeper Development Board.

Alex graduated from Stonehill College in May 2012 and will be finishing an accelerated Masters in Accounting program at Northeastern University in December, ending his eligibility as a student board member. In January, he will begin working in Boston at PricewaterhouseCoopers, the world's largest professional services firm.

During his two years on the Board of Directors, Alex brought an invaluable young person's perspective to the board along with hands-on experience gained from making hundreds of furniture, food, and Christmas deliveries to families in need.

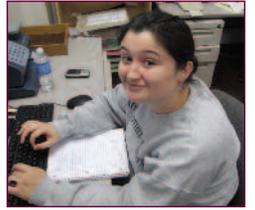
*“We are thrilled to keep such a talented, dedicated person in a leadership role,”* said Erich Miller, President of My Brother's Keeper. *“Because of Alex's great contributions to the Board of Directors, we are deeply committed to continuing a student board position in the future.”*

Originally from Hollis, New Hampshire, Alex first came to My Brother's Keeper during his sophomore year at Stonehill to fulfill a class service requirement. He quickly fell in love with our work and became one of our most dedicated student-volunteers. During senior year, Alex helped create the first-ever My Brother's Keeper Special Interest House at Stonehill, a program which allows students to live and work together around a common purpose.

In addition to his board responsibilities, Alex has also been the administrator of our Facebook page since it was launched last December. ([www.Facebook.com/MyBrothersKeeperMA](http://www.Facebook.com/MyBrothersKeeperMA))

## “THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I’VE EVER ASKED FOR HELP”

*By Heather Gallagher, Staff*



This year, I have the privilege of answering Christmas Helpline calls for the first time. While on the phone, I’ve had many wonderful and uplifting connections with those we serve, but I was moved in a special way by a first-time caller named Grace.

Grace is a 65 year old grandmother with custody of her three grandkids ranging from 7 to 11 years old. *“This is the first time I’ve ever asked for help,”* she told me. *“I’ve always been the type of person who takes names off the Giving Tree at my local parish. I’m on a fixed income, though, and making ends meet has become harder and harder with three new mouths to feed.”*

I took gift requests for the whole family— things like hats, coats, Barbies, Pokemon, arts & crafts, and action figures— and as we were reaching the end of the call, Grace was no longer able to contain her relief. She began to cry and said, *“I never expected to be in this position at this point in my life. I can’t imagine not being able to give my grandkids a Christmas.”*

Grace was so grateful and I explained, as I always do, *“It’s our privilege to serve you. May God bless you and your family.”*

As I ended the call, I was moved to tears as well reflecting on the beauty of the My Brother’s Keeper Christmas Program: we will deliver toys, clothes and joy to the children and *‘the Love and Hope of Christ’* to a special Grandmother.

## “LITTLE BY LITTLE THE BIRD GROWS HIS NEST”

*By Christina White, Volunteer, Canton*



Today, as I think of everyone at My Brother’s Keeper and many others that do God’s work, Matthew 5:14-16 comes to mind, *“You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house. So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”*

This world is so, so, so big now yet it’s the tiny, tiny lights that keep working for the Lord. I love to think of these lights in terms of a great Haitian proverb, *“Piti, piti zwazo fe nich li”*... *“Little by little the bird grows his nest.”*

Thank you once again for giving me the privilege to help spread Christ’s light via My Brother’s Keeper last week. Both days were wonderful, but Thursday ended in such a special way.

Our last delivery was to a family we help periodically. The mother Karen lives downstairs, the son Chris lives upstairs and we serve both. On this particular day Chris’s twin brother, Matt, was visiting. Matt was extremely outgoing as compared to the quieter Chris and he thanked us over and over as we walked in.

While we were there, we met a new puppy that Chris was giving Matt *“so he could have something to love himself.”* The story was just so cute because Chris had just put his dog to sleep a few weeks earlier and was still mourning her, not feeling ready for a new pet. But this little white dog, covered in oil, followed him home one day. He couldn’t help but take her in, even though he was still thinking about his last dog. You could see by the dog toys that Chris had grown attached to the new puppy but he wanted his brother to have her. Together, they decided to name her ‘Angel.’ It was so, so heartwarming: one twin was sacrificing for the other...in order to give him ‘love.’ Chris was truly his brother’s keeper.

After we delivered the food to both apartments, Matt insisted that we say a prayer with their family before we left. We all stood around their living room, held hands, and Matt started the prayer. He recited a wonderful, wonderful poem that he had written about Jesus sacrificing His blood for us. It was an incredible poem which brought tears to my eyes and we ended with an Our Father.

It was my first experience volunteering at My Brother’s Keeper where I was a part of something so overtly, devoutly and eagerly spiritual while on deliveries. Matt’s prayer showed me how much light My Brother’s Keeper does indeed shine ‘out there’ and how *strongly* that light shines.

God’s nest is constantly, constantly growing with all His many birds adding their *“little by little”* every day.



**PLEASE JOIN US!**

**22ND ANNUAL GRATITUDE MASS—FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23RD AT 7:00 PM**  
**CHRISTMAS VOLUNTEERING STARTS ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8TH**



**MY BROTHER'S KEEPER**

P.O. Box 338, Easton, MA 02356-0338  
 Furniture Assistance . . . 508-238-4416  
 Donations / Business 508-238-7512 – Fax 508-238-3613  
 501(c)(3) tax-exempt  
[www.mybrotherskeeper.org](http://www.mybrotherskeeper.org)

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 Theresa Orcutt, **Secretary**  
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**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.