

Our Mission:
"To bring the Love and Hope of Jesus Christ to those we serve."

Along the Way

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



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

APRIL 2024

Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant. Enter into the Joy of Your Master.

On January 22, 2024, My Brother's Keeper co-founder Jim Orcutt entered into the joy of his Master. What a good and faithful servant he was!

Jim's passing was peaceful, surrounded by his loving family and friends, after a courageous 2½ year battle with mesothelioma. Jim faced his illness with optimism, determination, grace, and of course, a sense of humor. The physical pain Jim endured was significant to say the least but he never showed it. Instead, he chose to focus on the positive — all the blessings he had in his life and all the ways God used him to share His Love and Hope with others along the way.

Jim was sorry to leave us all behind, especially Terry, his beloved wife of 53 years, but he trusted fully and completely in His Father's love and mercy. Jim imagined with great expectation — and sometimes even a sense of excitement! — what going home to heaven would be like.

Jim's wake was held on Wednesday, January 31st at Holy Cross Church in South Easton and the size of the crowd who attended was befitting such an extraordinary man who lived such a meaningful life. The line of visitors was nonstop for more than four hours with the receiving line snaking through the parish center, up the stairs, and around the church. People of all faiths, backgrounds, and walks of life came to pay their respects including Cardinal Seán O'Malley of the Archdiocese of Boston and Bishop Edgar da Cunha of the Diocese of Fall River.

Jim's funeral was also held at Holy Cross Church. The Congregation of Holy Cross was particularly well-represented among the scores of priests and deacons in attendance. The celebrant was Fr. Willy Raymond, CSC, a dear friend of Jim's and former Superior of the Eastern Province of the Congregation of Holy Cross. Principal con-celebrants included Fr. John Denning, CSC, President of Stonehill College; Fr. Tony Szakaly, CSC, chair of the My Brother's Keeper Board of Directors; Fr. Jim Doherty, CSC, Spiritual Director of the Holy Cross

Retreat House; Fr. Pinto Paul, CSC, International Director, Family Rosary; and Fr. Tim Mouton, CSC, Director of First-year Experience at Stonehill College.

The liturgy itself was beautiful. Jim personally selected readings that were important to him and the church was filled with inspiring music provided by volunteers from the Holy Cross Retreat House and My Brother's Keeper.

Erich Miller, president of My Brother's Keeper, offered Words of Remembrance. His eulogy tried to capture the profound impact of Jim's remarkable life which was selflessly devoted to helping others and to making God known, loved, and served. Jim lived these guiding principles throughout his years and across all the aspects of his life: as a member of the Orcutt family, through his work as a union negotiator, being a friend of Bill's, co-founder of My Brother's Keeper, Program Director of the Holy Cross Retreat House, founder of On the Street Ministry, and equally important, in his everyday daily life.

For those who were unable to attend, a link to a video of Jim's funeral can be found at www.MyBrothersKeeper.org.

The community of My Brother's Keeper offers a special thanks to all those who helped make Jim's services so special such as Conley Funeral & Cremation Service in Brockton who handled all the arrangements with great care and compassion; Fr. Brad Metz, CSC and Holy Cross Church for making the parish fully available for two days of services; Stonehill College for allowing use of the Pettit Atrium at the Shields Science Center for a Celebration of Life reception; and ICON Advertising & Design, Prospect Hill, and J&R Graphics for donating printing services.

There will be an upcoming special edition of the My Brother's Keeper newsletter focusing on the impact Jim's life had on others. Have a story you'd like to share? Please send to emiller@mybrotherskeeper.org





EASTON BUILDING PROJECT COMPLETED

At the start of 2023, My Brother's Keeper teamed up with Acella Construction to completely renovate the Easton facility and strengthen our ability to serve local families in need.

Our timeline was ambitious, especially given recent labor shortages and supply chain issues. Our goal was to complete a successful 2022 Christmas Program and complete construction in time to return to the Easton facility for our 2023 Christmas Program.

We fully emptied the building on Friday, January 13, 2023, turned possession over to Acella Construction on Monday, January 16th, and began demolition on Tuesday, January 17th. Over the next 10 months, Acella and My Brother's Keeper completed all of our goals:

- 1 We built out a full second floor adding 11,000 GSF of new work and storage space and installed a passenger elevator and materials lift providing safe, efficient access to the new space
- 2 We greatly expanded the loading dock (+400% SF) and the number of vehicles which can be loaded and unloaded simultaneously (increased from 2 vehicles to 5)
- 3 We tripled the square footage of our walk-in refrigerator and freezer and made the doorways pallet-accessible
- 4 We doubled the size of our Prayer Room which helps us remain mission-focused
- 5 We doubled the seating capacity in our dining room which helps us build a stronger community
- 6 We also added a designated furniture repair room, one new office, tripled bathroom capacity, cleaned up the front landscaping, and enlarged our lobby to help us better welcome large volunteer groups.

Acella was able to secure a temporary Certificate of Occupancy on October 30, 2023 and a permanent Certificate of Occupancy on December 5, 2023, meeting our goal of returning to the facility to conduct our 2023 Christmas Assistance Program back home (see next page).

Total cost for the project was \$4,500,000. To date, My Brother's Keeper has raised \$4,160,000, 92.5% of our goal.

The Easton Building Project is an important investment in the effectiveness of our work for the next two decades. **Under a moderate growth assumption, the renovation will enable My Brother's Keeper to make 163,000 additional deliveries over the next 20 years worth more than \$53,000,000 in additional services for local families in need.**

While the Easton Building Project was underway, it was important to us to continue providing services at a high level given the rising level of food insecurity in our community. During the renovation, My Brother's Keeper leased a 16,500 SF warehouse facility from FX Messina Enterprises who generously gave us very favorable terms. We completed 8,634 food and furniture deliveries from our temporary location in Braintree serving 33,500 local children and adults. The value of these deliveries was approximately \$1.75 million.



Photos from the Grand Reopening of the Easton Building Friday, November 24, 2023



The Spirit of Christmas & Our Mission



Christmas has always represented one of the best opportunities each year to accomplish our mission... so many volunteers coming together to serve so many families in such a short period of time. This past year was no exception.

Over the course of a few weeks in December, My Brother's Keeper served 3,138 families — 12,232 children and parents — living in 110 communities throughout eastern Massachusetts ranging from Lawrence, Framingham, Boston and Brockton down to Fall River, New Bedford, and all the way to Orleans on the Cape.

More than 5,000 volunteers walked through the doors of our facilities to experience the joy of service... often children, parents, and grandparents serving together. We also welcomed an incredible 62 corporate groups representing 40 different companies. It was a special joy to have volunteers back in our newly-renovated Easton facility. There was such excitement to see the new space and imagine all the future possibilities!

The toys and warm clothing we delivered at Christmas are certainly important to the physical and emotional well-being of the kids we serve. From the standpoint of mission, though, we see every family's request as an opportunity to lift them up, remove their stress and anxiety, and remind them they are loved by God and by us.

These two thank you's are very different in writing — formal and informal — but the point of each is exactly the same. What a privilege it is that God uses us as individuals and as a ministry to be His answer to people's prayers.



Dear My Brother's Keeper

I pen this heart-felt message with immense gratitude and a soul replenished with hope. Your generous donation of Christmas presents and essential household necessities has truly bestowed upon me and my children a profound Christmas miracle.

In the midst of my sorrow, following the passing of my dear father, the weight of depression had clouded my spirit, leaving me distant from the joys of the holiday season. Yet, your act of kindness has illuminated the darkest corners of my heart, resurrecting the flickering flame of hope within.

Your thoughtful gesture not only filled our humble home with presents but also revitalized our faith in the boundless goodness that resides in the hearts of others.

Please know that the impact of your compassion reaches far beyond the tangible presents; it has kindled a spark of joy, gratitude, and renewed faith in our spirits. We are forever indebted to your selflessness and unwavering support during this challenging time.

May the blessings you have bestowed upon us be returned to you a hundredfold, and may your own Christmas be filled with boundless love, warmth, and the abiding peace that surpasses all understanding.

Text Message
Today 6:14 PM

Is this the amazing person that delivered our Christmas miracle

Hello! I was one of the volunteers who dropped gifts off today

I hope that you have a wonderful Christmas!

Omg I came home and literally broke down in tears because y'all just made our Christmas so magical

my children think this Xmas is not gonna be a good one but MBK MADE IT HAPPEN AND MY HEART IS MELTED

I cant express my gratitude and gratefulness for all of this GOD IS SO GOOD!!!!

+ Text Message

Strengthening our Educational Partnerships



I Haven't Thought of My Faith in Years

By Julie Carchedi, Program Associate

January 31st was a significant day for the My Brother's Keeper community. We were preparing to say goodbye to our co-founder and friend, Jim Orcutt. Jim's wake was scheduled to begin midafternoon. There was talk about closing the offices for the day to give staff and volunteers time to travel to Easton.

Ultimately, the decision was made to open for a ½ day because one of Jim's favorite school groups, Cardinal Spellman High School, was on the schedule to volunteer that day. It was the perfect way to honor our leader. Students arrived first thing, ready to embrace the day and the mission at hand.

Steve, a 63-year-old gentleman, found himself moving in with his brother and family after falling on hard times. He was sleeping in a small space in the living room of a 2-bedroom apartment. All he asked for was a bed and a blanket.

The bed was loaded onto the truck and our crew of students were on their way.

About an hour after the crew departed, I received a call from an emotional Steve. Steve tried to hold back tears as he complimented the team of students for their professionalism, upbeat spirit and kindness. He explained he offered the students \$10 each and was surprised they all immediately declined. "What a wonderful group of teenagers!" he expressed.

"And then, they offered me the crucifix." I could barely hear Steve through his tears. "I grew up Catholic but I haven't thought of my faith in years. Seeing the crucifix touched my heart. I'm just so overwhelmed holding the crucifix and knowing I can keep it. It gave me hope."

I, too, teared up for a moment. On a day filled with emotion for the My Brother's Keeper community, I couldn't help but be reminded by the clear message from Jim. I imagined him standing at the gates of heaven, looking back one last time, smiling and saying, "Our mission is *'To bring the Love and Hope of Jesus Christ to those we serve.'*"



An exciting development at My Brother's Keeper has been the steady return of student volunteers after the disruption caused by the pandemic. Since the start of the year, we have hosted groups from grade schools, high schools, and colleges like Barrington Christian Academy, Nativity Prep (New Bedford), St. Philomena, BC High, Bishop Stang, Cardinal Spellman, Colegio del Salvador (Buenos Aires, Argentina!), Portsmouth Abbey, Boston College, King's College, Providence College, Stonehill College, and UMass-Dartmouth.



Welcome Return

By Josh Smith, Director, Dartmouth

Last month, St. Philomena School in Portsmouth, Rhode Island brought all 45 members of their 8th grade class to My Brother's Keeper over the course of two days. This marked the resumption of this special service retreat for the first time since March 2020.

On the first day of service, my truck and a second vehicle set off filled with an incredible crew of volunteers: Quincy, Emily, Brody, Sidney, Cici, Rowan, Colton, Mrs. Principe, Mrs. Vane, and myself. Ten minutes later we pulled up to a large, multi-family apartment on a busy Fall River street. Up on the third floor, Rich was home by himself but eagerly watching for our arrival.

We had barely finished introductions before Rich shared how he had lost his wife just two months earlier on New Year's Day. Rich's grief was clearly still raw, but thankfully he still had family in his life. Rich's daughter, Hannah, and two-year-old grandson, Elijah, were moving in with him that very day. Hannah and Elijah had been "couch surfing" for months, most recently with an ex-boyfriend, and were very much looking forward to moving in once their new beds arrived. Without question, the new living arrangement would be a blessing for all three of them.

The students from St. Phil's set right to work bringing up three beds, dressers, a living room and kitchen set. My Brother's Keeper's 'linen ladies' had loaded them up with home furnishings as well — sheets and comforters, pots and pans, lamps, and even a vacuum. Rich was a former furniture mover himself, giving him an appreciation for how smoothly these 14-year-olds carried an apartment full of furniture up three flights of stairs. Rich joked that Hannah knew better than to trust her dad to decorate and left detailed instructions on how to set up the living room!

Finally it was time for Rowan to present the gift of the crucifix. Tears immediately began to fall down Rich's face but through the tears, he told us how much this all meant to him and his family.

Amazingly, our next delivery was equally moving. Much like Rich, Lily began to share her very personal story as soon as we filed into the high-rise lobby. Less than two years ago, Lily had been homeless, before turning her life around. Now celebrating 18 months of sobriety, Lily had gone back to school and was working with a program helping youth overcome addiction.

The inside of Lily's 7th floor apartment was completely void of furniture. However, the walls were fully decorated with religious pictures and signs of her faith. Lily's involvement with her parish was incredibly important to her and even in this small apartment, she made sure to make room for a desk for her scripture reading. Lily already knew who really sent her the furniture that day and said as much as she accepted the crucifix from Sidney.

Back at My Brother's Keeper, we broke the students into three groups to share about their mornings. One student admitted that he would be too embarrassed to call My Brother's Keeper. Several others reflected on how fortunate the experience made them feel and how many things we take for granted each and every day. Listening to such mature and insightful reflections, I thought about how fortunate we are at My Brother's Keeper to see such thoughtful and caring students return to the work of our ministry.



Our Facilities



EASTON



DARTMOUTH

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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