



KINDNESS IS THE ONLY INVESTMENT THAT NEVER FAILS

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THANKSGIVING WEEK 2023

Monday of Thanksgiving week starts with a parade of donors coming to The INN with food donations and a stream of phone calls from good-hearted people wanting to volunteer. Inside the Mary Brennan INN turkeys are being roasted, fixings are being prepped, and a festive atmosphere is all around. This energetic pace ticks up on Tuesday and again on Wednesday.

Wednesday, Thanksgiving Eve, ended with a bang. A very real bang on the door. It was three hours past normal closing time, and the driver of a large truck had 1,000 fully cooked dinners to donate. Fortunately, there were three people working late (one staffer and two volunteers), and with the help of two additional "emergency" volunteers, the truck was unloaded by 10 pm.

Thursday was an especially happy day at The INN. "It was a blessing to serve the Thanksgiving dinner indoors", said volunteer Paula Maturo, "the first time since before Covid (2019)." For the occasion the dining room was decorated and the tables were festively set. Each guest received a traditional Thanksgiving dinner from their own volunteer waiter. It was also the first time The INN's new to-go windows were serving meals on Thanksgiving. (Many guests had asked that we continue the to-go option after Covid.)



A full crew of volunteers — Thanksgiving 2023

Even at The INN there are sometimes leftovers. And on Friday, probably like many of you, turkey was again on the menu.

The week ended with the volunteers, donors and staff rightly pleased with all they had accomplished (5,700 meals were served). Thank you to them for making Thanksgiving week at The INN meaningful, memory-filled, and inspirational for the guests.

In closing, during this busy week, one can still be fortunate to meet many people who make a distinct impression. This is the story of one of those impressions.

On Wednesday, a weathered and throaty-sounding van pulled up to the donation's door. Out of the van appeared a genial man with a big smile, "I have some turkeys for you". As soon as he opened the rear door of the van, I spotted two large pans, each with a dark golden turkey. "I smoked these for you", Brian continued, as the still warm turkeys sent a heavenly aroma into the air.

(continued pg 2)



Jean Kelly
Executive Director

REFLECTION

Making a Choice

Guests arrive daily at The INN. They ask for our help and hope we will be to help them. We hope the same.

Along with their asking, they usually want to share their circumstances, which most often includes something like, "I really am trying my best. But things are happening, and I am forced to make a difficult choice. There is no one else to help me."

One time a young mother came to ask for diapers because she had run out of funds and had to choose between spending money on diapers or sanitary pads for herself.

A young father once came asking for baby formula because he couldn't afford both the formula and the MetroCards he needed to get to work. He chose to buy the MetroCards because he needed to support his family, and he had heard The INN helps people ... and could help him with the formula.

A female soup kitchen guest had to ask for an overnight stay at a motel because in the previous week she had started a job, had not yet received her first paycheck, and her listed salary made her ineligible for government assistance.

An elderly man explained to me his social

security income could not cover the rent for his basement apartment (which he shared with four other men), the co-pay on his medications, and the most basic groceries. He chose to eat at The INN so he could pay his rent and co-pays.

These are just a few examples of the unwelcome choices people living in poverty must make each day. Reading this will remind most of us of how fortunate we really are. "There but for the grace of God go I."

One volunteer told me that volunteering at The INN helps him stay focused on what's important. He added his biggest choice of the day was going to be chicken or steak for dinner. He said he sometimes felt he lived in a different world than the guests, side by side with them but a world apart.

When you support The INN, you are giving guests with difficult choices a chance to catch their breath. To know someone is there to help them. Whether it be diapers, baby formula, a night with a roof over their head or a hot meal ... and always in a "dignified and respectful manner". They thank you.

Thank you for making the choice to help us help others.

Love,
Jean

Thanksgiving Week (continued from pg. 1)

I became an instant fan of smoked turkeys.

In our five-minute conversation, I learned Brian was a fascinating fellow. He was a retired welder who fabricated his own smokers from recycled 55-gallon drums. He enjoyed smoking turkeys for his family, his church, and now The INN. Our conversation meandered (like the smoke from a smoker) and we were soon talking about his other career as a musician. In his younger days, he was a blues guitarist and played with musical luminaries such as

Jimi Hendrix and B. B. King. He was eager to share his knowledge of the blues with young students and was somewhat disappointed that none of the local schools had shown any interest.

As a parting gift, Brian offered to make a large metal BBQ pit for The INN — an item that has long been on The INN's wish list. And with that good news Brian and his weathered van slowly made their way home.

“SWEET LOU”

Steps into the Boxing Ring for The INN

Louis “Sweet Lou” Pagonis has been working at Nassau Country Club in Glen Cove for 21 years. He has been a friendly face and part of the catering staff at several INN events there, including the Golf Classic and INNkeepers’ Ball.

Lou is no stranger to charity work and believes it is very important to help those who are less fortunate; it should be no surprise that he decided to participate in the 2023 Long Island “Fight for Charity”. This November 20th event featured businesspeople stepping into the boxing ring to raise funds for their favorite charity. Sweet Lou felt strongly about choosing The INN, “The INN does so much for people in need and it’s so close to home. I was happy to have so many of my friends and family join me in supporting a great charity.”

On fight night, after months of training four to five days a week as well as promotional events, Louis and his opponent, Wayne “The Hitman” Alden, finally met in the ring. Jabs and upper cuts were exchanged and after three well-fought rounds, a decision

was reached. They were both declared winners! Lou raised over \$3,000 for The INN. We are proud to say his efforts were a TKO (total knockout) and he will always be The INN’s champ.



Sweet Lou with two of his fans, Nora White (left) and Dana Lopez

A SPECIAL NOTE OF THANKS from a Guest at The INN

A friend of The INN recently made a donation for a very specific purpose. Sturdy work boots. Hundreds of pairs. These boots were distributed to guests at The INN’s clothing boutique and the residents at the Donald Axinn INN Emergency Shelter. They made an immediate and welcome impact. So much so, that one of the guests wrote the following.

To The INN: I am writing in the hope that you can pass along a personal note of thanks on behalf of myself (and I am sure all the guys join the thankful expression) for the wonderful donation of boots. I’ve seen the guys wearing them. In my case, I wore them on my daily walk today. They are warm and super comfortable. And at this time of year — seeing that they are also waterproof — is a great benefit.

This is a hugely practical gift. Every time I wear them, I’ll be thankful for them. I’m sure the other guys will as well.

In my past life I have donated things and money, but I never gave as much thought to it as I do, now, on the receiving end. Donations like this make such a difference.

Please extend a THANK YOU to the donor who made this special gift possible for the guys here at The INN. When you add up the number of pairs of boots, it’s a lot of money! But equally important, each individual guy’s pair makes a big difference — especially at this time of year. I’ll bet each of us will have a day soon (if not already) when we think, “Man, am I glad I have these great boots.”

Thomas



YOUR SUPPORT MADE THE FOLLOWING POSSIBLE,

THANK YOU!



1,125 TURKEYS
and 1,057 Fixing Bags
given to over 1,000
guests for Thanksgiving

INN EVENTS

New! In-Person Wine Tasting

Thursday, February 8, 6:00 – 8:00 pm
Opus Mediterranean Steakhouse, Jericho

In the heart of winter, warm your hearts at The INN's very first in-person wine tasting. In a beautiful setting, four stations — cheese & fruit, pasta, carving (beef and fish) with side dishes, and dessert — will be accompanied by five wines. The evening will offer the freedom of a cocktail party, the elegance of a stately affair, and the simplicity of a "good time with friends".

For reservation information, please visit the-inn.org/2024wine or call (516) 486-8506, ext. 108.



2024 INNkeepers' Ball

Wednesday, May 8, 6:00 – 8:00 pm
Nassau Country Club, Glen Cove

The INNkeepers' Ball is a 40-year tradition celebrating the people who make The INN possible. All are invited to the 2024 Ball. The date is Wednesday, May 8 and the location is Nassau Country Club in Glen Cove. Being honored this year are Lois Fricke, Operations Director, Long Island Builders Institute and Long Island Home Builders Care, and Joel Sikowitz, musician, attorney, and dedicated INN supporter. The Honorary Chair for 2024 is Peter Florey. The Ball is always a friendly and fun evening, and we hope you will be able to join us.

Sponsorship, Journal and Ticket information is available at the-inn.org/2024ball. For additional information or if you would like to receive an invitation, please call (516) 732-6009.



Lois Fricke

Our Wish List

The INN is in need of:

- Non-perishable food – **no glass, please**
- New hats, gloves and scarves; new or dry-cleaned coats
- Gift Cards (supermarket and Visa) – preferred amounts, \$10, \$25 and \$50
- Diapers/wipes – sizes (3, 4, 5, 6 & pull-ups)
- Auction items for upcoming INN events – restaurant gift certificates, activities, experiences, etc. Please call Nora White at (516) 486-8506, ext. 108
- Toiletry items (family or personal size)

Please bring your donations to the Mary Brennan INN, 100 Madison Avenue, Hempstead, M-F, 9 am – 2 pm, or one Saturday each month at the monthly Food Drive (see website for date). Questions, call (516) 486-8506, ext. 114. Thank you.



"Serving Hungry and Homeless Long Islanders"

211 Fulton Avenue Hempstead, NY 11550
(516) 486-8506 • www.the-inn.org

OUR MISSION

As a not-for-profit, volunteer-based organization, The INN provides a broad variety of essential services to assist those challenged by hunger, homelessness and profound poverty. We partner with those in need in a dignified and respectful manner to help them achieve self-sufficiency.

Follow us on:

