



UNITY ACRES
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April 2004

March 3, 2004 marked the 35th anniversary of the foundation of Unity Acres by Father Raymond McVey. In honor of this milestone in the history of our community, Bob Belge, long-time friend of the Acres and currently a member of our Board of Directors, has kindly offered the following reflection on the early days of Unity Acres....

In the Beginning -- Bob Belge

A little over 35 years ago, Father Ray McVey helped establish Unity Kitchen on North Salina Street in Syracuse, a night shelter for street people . Father Richard Keough was in charge and together with Bob Russell did much of the day to day work. It became obvious to them and another priest, Father Frank Woolever, that the men needed a respite from the streets of the city. To this end they took possession of a house on Chester Street, later moving to Huron Street in Syracuse. They lived with several of the men who formerly were staying at Unity Kitchen. The simple rules applied: "no fighting, no drinking". However, the temptations of the city streets proved too close. There was an abandoned tuberculosis sanitarium just outside of Pulaski, New York. Arrangements were made to take possession of this facility at a very minimal cost. A group of people offered to support Father Ray in this effort . Since this promised to be undertaken, members of the support group approached it with trepidation. However, Father McVey, being a man of great faith approached the endeavor with his usual "no problem" attitude that God would provide. In April, 1969, Father McVey left Syracuse with a handful of men to take over and move in. This was before the property was legally transferred to Father McVey. Quickly, state troopers appeared and evicted them. After much hustling, Bud and Judy

Adams were contacted. They had just built a summer cottage on Millsite Lake in Jefferson county and they were willing to let Father and the men stay until the Acres property was legally transferred to Father McVey. Sleeping on mattresses on the floor, they stayed there for a few weeks. It must have been tough living because it gets pretty cold up there in April.

After the former sanitarium property was transferred to Father, he and the men moved to what is now Unity Acres between Richland and Orwell. A major support person, Kate Stanton, soon joined them. Carol Berrigan and Rosemary Heaney organized "food team captains", giving them a list of staple items that were needed. The captains in turn contacted members of their teams with the lists. The food was then brought to the captains who took it to St. Lucy's parish house, there to be collected and transported to Unity Acres. Many different teams had the responsibility of collecting food once a month. This method of supplying the Acres with food lasted for a few years. Later, the Star building was built to house the kitchen and cafeteria. Thereafter, providing meals for the men took on a more normal pattern.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of DAVID BETANCOURT, a former resident of Unity Acres. Dave first came to Unity Acres in the early 1970s, and used to stay here for short periods on and off through the mid-90s. Dave spent his last years at the Sunrise Nursing Home in Oswego; he kept in touch with the Acres by way of Father Jones' visits to the Oswego nursing homes. Dave died on April 17th, and his funeral mass was held at our Sacred Heart Chapel on April 21. He will be buried at Saint Martin de Porres cemetery later this spring. David, Rest in Peace.

FARM REPORT



Rickie and Al

Holy Cow!

We've had a very busy and productive winter into spring season. We are very proud 'parents' of 4 new calves, all bulls. 'Al' was born on December 12, 2003, 'Rickie' was born on March 22, 2004, 'Spike' on April 5, and 'Mark' on April 15. We were especially blessed to witness the birth of Mark.

It was very interesting to note that while 'April' (Mark's mother) was in labor, she took a break from it to eat her dinner and then went back to the business of bringing her calf into the world. (So much for the theory that cows won't eat when in labor!)

So our herd is growing and all the calves are enjoying frolicking in the spring sunshine. Much credit is due to the several men who have been responsible for the care of the cattle over the past, and especially to Mark Baker. The evident good health and happiness is a credit to him and his good and dedicated efforts. Thanks, Mark!

April 2004 -- 35th Anniversary Prayer

Sing joyfully to the LORD; serve the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful song.

Know that the LORD is God; he made us, his we are;
his people, the flock he tends.

The LORD is good; his kindness endures forever;
and his faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 100, from the Mass of Good Shepherd Sunday

God of love, we come before you with joyful song on this 35th anniversary year of Unity Acres. We come with thanksgiving for the wonders you have done at Unity Acres through so many who have served you with gladness.

We give thanks that you have made us -- residents, volunteers, benefactors -- your people, the sheep of your flock.

We praise you for the beauty of our Unity Acres land. The fields, the stream, the garden, the woods, all sing joyfully to you.

We give thanks that, from the beginning until now, your kindness has endured. Your faithfulness is indeed to all generations at Unity Acres.

And as we give you thanks and praise, we pray to you to for the time ahead. We pray you continue to call us by name, guide us, protect us and enliven us. May we hear your voice and follow you, for we ARE your people, the sheep of your flock! ALLELUIA!

--- Fr. Robert Jones