



# Unity Acres

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March 14, 2021

Dear Friends of Unity Acres,

We sincerely hope you, our friends and benefactors, are beginning to recover from the tremendous amount of change in 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19.

For those of you who have lost loved ones, we ask God for consolation for you and your families. For those who personally had to battle the COVID-19 diagnosis, we ask for healing. We pray that each and every one of our friends is doing well.

It is now more than one year since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. At first it was rather daunting for us, and we wondered how we would cope. With the support and advice of the Oswego County Department of Health, we quickly settled into following the guidelines of the CDC: the men began wearing masks, limiting 'off-campus' trips, practicing social distancing and frequent hand-washing. We had hand-cleaning stations installed in each of the bathrooms; these sanitizers are stocked with an anti-microbial foaming agent. All the men were issued their own individual sanitizers as well. Public areas in the buildings are sprayed every other evening with a liquid disinfectant.

Our dining room and food service practices were rearranged. Clear plexiglass shields were installed at the serving counters between the kitchen and the dining room. Many medical appointments are now conducted via telephone.

These new practices which began last March and April are still being maintained, and I am happy to report that one year later we have not had a single case of COVID, no colds, no flu, no illnesses. However, it was a great relief when the public health nurses arrived on February 19<sup>th</sup> to administer the first round of vaccinations to all the men and the staff, plus a few neighbors. We anticipate the second round of injections on March 19<sup>th</sup>. Our thanks go out to the Oswego County Nursing Services.

Christmas came and went rather quietly, but very nice, I think. Thanks to all who remembered us with your cards and greetings, prayers, gifts and donations.

March 3<sup>rd</sup> marked the 52<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of Father McVey's arrival in Orwell, and taking up residence in the old TB San with five very trusting men. This year, because of the lock-down, the staff and residents planned a quiet observation of the day: a small gathering in the chapel, and a special meal at the supper hour.

It's hard to imagine the hardships and troubles Father McVey had to face compared to our lives today. In the first years, the living was hard and food sometimes scarce. But from reports, the men dealt with it with very few complaints.

I am sure Father McVey and Kate would be astonished today if they could just visit our warm buildings and well-stocked pantry and freezers. We have so much for which to be thankful. Along with each man having a warm private room, they are offered three full meals a day. Our food bills are greatly reduced this year thanks to the outpouring of donations from many groups and individuals: Saint Elizabeth Seton Parish in B'ville sent up a huge food donation on January 24<sup>th</sup> – their annual food drive for the Acres. Frank Begani and the Knights of Columbus held a food drive for us in cooperation with the Catholic Churches in Oswego and delivered three pick-up trucks full of groceries on February 26<sup>th</sup> – also a lot of laundry detergent. Gary King and his wife Ellen head up efforts in cooperation with members of the Agape Fellowship Church in Lafargeville; they arrive once or twice a month with one or two pick-ups full of bread and other food products.

The United Methodist Churches in Pulaski and Sandy Creek host monthly food giveaways, and we regularly get a phone call at the end of the food distributions to 'glean' from the leftovers: usually dairy, and nicely packed boxes of fresh fruits and vegetables.

During the summer we got calls to come to the distribution sites at the Pulaski High School and at the Sandy Creek Fairgrounds for milk-give-aways.

Our thanks also to Bob B who often dropped by to check out our pantry shelves and supply whatever was lacking, and to the folks from the Mexico Food Pantry who stop by every Friday night,



Our Well-Stocked Pantry



and to the folks from Grindstone Farms who stop by frequently!

Last week, Dan Krupke contributed can goods (mostly # 10 cans) and frozen good enough to fill our new grocery van twice, and then some! Thank-you, Dan.

Thanks also to neighbors and friends, who just stop by to deliver milk, baked goods, fresh vegetables and so on.

And to Paul Drescher who has been keeping us supplied with coffee for many years. And to members of several church congregations who remembered our men during the cold weather and brought warm caps, knit hats (tuques), warm gloves and socks. Thanks to all of you!



Our New Ventilation Hood/ANSUL Unit

During this last year of the COVID pandemic, despite delays and setbacks, we managed to see to completion a few badly needed projects. We are especially pleased that a complete exhaust and ANSUL system has been installed in our kitchen. We had had a non-operating ventilation unit already installed, which we couldn't get repaired, and moreover which was undersized for the current arrangement of our oven, grill and deep-fryer. The new system operates exactly as we had anticipated. The ANSUL is an automatic fire suppression system, which delivers water and fire suppressant chemical should there ever be an uncontrolled fire in the kitchen. We are glad to have this fine addition to our food service area. Many thanks to John Sharkey for making all the arrangements for this installation.

Surprisingly, the winter is passing fairly quickly, and rather uneventfully (in respect of the weather). We have had plenty of snow, but not more than we are accustomed to getting, and even that has been rapidly melting during the last few warm and sunny days. We are looking forward to the coming of spring—Daylight Savings Time started today—the first day of spring, the return of the Canada Geese, and the crocuses pushing their way out of the soil and into the sunshine.

The Lenten Season is now drawing to a close as Easter is approaching. We wish to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you a Happy and Holy Easter. In gratitude we pray that God will abundantly bless you and your loved ones.

Loretta Dickhout