

**2019 BTC Journals**

**Day Two - West Hartford to Hartford to Plainville to West Hartford**

We began gathering at breakfast around 7:15 to a wonderful warm buffest breakfast layout at Holy Family, scrambled eggs, sausage, potatoes, mixed fruit, yogurt, cereal, etc. Absolutely wonderful as usual. Thank you again Fr. Terry!

We all chatted up yesterday and thought about the upcoming day while our support folks made sandwiches for our lunch later in the day.

We were joined by Tom Sacerdote’s son, Tim and Tom’s wife, Mary Lynn, and Dana, Kelly’s daughter. We lost Braeden, Sue and John Ryan. We were all anxious to begin the new day’s journey. We gathered around after breakfast, made sure all tires were pumped and Cue Sheets handed out and said a nice sendoff prayer.

The ride into Hartford was pleasant as the weather was perfect. We again eventually found ourselves on Park Street heading for South Park Inn shelter.

We arrived at our designated time. Most of the team went in for a tour from James who wanted to cop and was using his experience with the homeless to learn how to “handle” situations he would mostly likely experience in the field as a cop. He was educating himself as he was educating us. They had a great education experience. Wendy and I stayed outside and interacted with some of the guests coming and going. Most of those we talked with were vets. Sad that these guys had to “live” in a shelter after serving our country. They shared their grievances. Like their Social Security was not enough to get them through the month. Some received Food Stamps too but the amount is tempered by their Social Security. They could not make ends meet. Al, Brian, Bill, William, Oscar. All faces I would remember.

Brian could not stand for long or walk steady because of his trauma. Bill was trying to get to Windsor where his car was located after it was possessed by the police due to a small infraction he committed. He had no way of getting his car. He needed to be in Windsor this day and pay over $400 to get his car. If not today the cost would only increase. He was really anxious and worried he couldn’t get there. We told him to check the bus schedule out as he might be able to get to Windsor that way. He said he would but concerned if he had to walk any great distance. He had some disability that prevented him from being on his feet to long.

William opened up about the conditions inside South Park but was reluctant to be too critical. He thought the team would see one side but not the true picture. He said it would be a lot different if we were dressed like he was. I asked him if he was concerned about his “stuff” being taken or stolen. He said what “stuff”. “I have nothing”. Luckily, he received medical attention and got his meds and that kept him stabilized. It is so hard to imagine living homeless. We are so blessed. It is amazing how little real complaining those we talk to do. They rely on the support they get form the services provided by places similar to South Park. They know things could be better. But they hang in there with each other for support as well.

When we introduce ourselves and shake hands you can see in their faces how much they appreciate being treated as someone, with respect and with dignity. I would hug them all if I could or they would let me.

The mission of South Park Inn….to help homeless people improve their lives by providing temporary and long-term housing and supportive services. And they advocate for solutions to homelessness.

South Park Inn is here to serve people lacking the means and wherewithal to provide for themselves the most basic of human needs: a safe place to live.

Their emergency shelter, veterans’ programs, respite, and supportive housing provide personalized support to each of the men, women and children that enter our doors. South Park Inn, in collaboration with other providers and resources, helps individuals and families as they overcome challenges and successfully find housing solutions appropriate to their needs.

The shelter welcomes individuals from all walks of life and has space to accommodate up to 85 men, women, and children every night. We remain open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, never closing our doors.

Individuals can stay as long as it takes to achieve housing success. Their case management staff is available to all guests to assist in identifying the benefits, supports and opportunities that will lead to their own, long term housing solutions.

Thanks to the generosity of community partners, South Park Inn offers many onsite services, including daily meals, personal hygiene supplies, laundry facilities, and bus passes for transportation. A health clinic for physical, dental, dermatology, and behavioral health screenings, as well as budgeting, employment, substance use support groups, and health education presentations are available for those that are interested. When individuals are ready to move into their own housing, they offer assistance with household items and furniture.

So, when the team emerged from their education process there, we all began to get on our bikes to head over to our next destination. As I left, I again shook the hands of those guys I had engaged. I mentioned that I was lucky because of the grace of God not to be in a situation like they found themselves and Oscar said “that is because you are blessed”. I teared up for a second as his comment hit home. That was my word of the day from last night and would probably be the word of the day tonight.

We headed over to the YWCA shelter off of Broad Street.

When we arrived, we were greeted by Cathy Zeiner, Chief Strategy and Operations Officer, who came in on a Sunday just to be there for us, to educate us on what services the YWCA provides to its guests.

Their mission is to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity to all.

They promote change at a systemic level and through improved lives for individuals and families in their community. Increasingly, the paramount theme is for every woman to achieve economic security.

YWCA pursues its mission through advocacy, programs and services. YWCA serves the greater Hartford area with vital programs, including:

* [early learning and school-age childcare](http://ywcahartfordorg.presencehost.net/what_we_do/childcare/)
* [emergency and permanent supportive housing](http://ywcahartfordorg.presencehost.net/what_we_do/housing.html)
* [youth leadership development](http://ywcahartfordorg.presencehost.net/what_we_do/ywlc.html)
* [racial justice awareness](http://ywcahartfordorg.presencehost.net/what_we_do/stand.html)
* [financial literacy education](http://ywcahartfordorg.presencehost.net/what_we_do/money-conference/)
* [economic stability for women and families](http://ywcahartfordorg.presencehost.net/what_we_do/ywcw.html)

Serving nearly 2,000 people annually, they are helping women and girls bridge the educational, career and financial gaps to prepare them for life-long stability and economic security -- and they will continue to do so by creating opportunities one woman at a time.

The YWCA has provided:

* Childcare for over 800children through the Early Learning & Childcare Centers and YW Kidslink programs.
* 156 young women with leadership skills through YWLC (Young Women’s Leadership Core)
* 332 free tax returns through VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)
* 30 women with support needed to balance school, work, and family
* 263 women with financial education
* Safe and supportive housing for 141 individuals

We left the YWCA energized and began our ride to Plainville. Patrick had prepared the Cue Sheet for this day. It became a very frustrating experience for him as we seemed to get off the Cue Sheet more than we expected. It happens.

Although this kind of thing happens, I could see Patrick was very upset with this experience. We worked through it. When we eventually got to Our Lady of Mercy parish Patrick’s frustration was quite evident. But we all got there safely and he calmly helped set up the presentation.

Shortly after our arrival I got a call from Claire and she joined us for dinner and the presentation. She would leave and meet us in Hartford the next evening. Life just seemed to get in her way and affect the days she would ride with us.

We enjoyed our meal. There were a good number of attendees. Cathy Galvin was our host with Fr. Ray. They greeted us warmly and introduced the team before the presentation.

All went well and we had a strong presentation. Engaging and most people stayed for a good amount of time after e were done and asked many questions and we had a lot of dialogue. Very unusual of late but definitely worth the extra time.

During my story of Matthew I mentioned how I was again made aware as if Jesus was knocking me on the head by “seeing” the two individuals on the streets pushing their basket carts full of empty bottles and cans.

I have to mention that the Plainville water was extra good. It might have just been me but it was so delicious and refreshing. Drank a lot of water this night. I though about the homeless who probably do not have access to good tasting water like I had that night.

A gentleman who came to the presentation late asked a deep question about those who might “gimmick” or take advantage of the system. We engaged the question and explained that it was a stereotypical question. He seemed okay with our answer and was quiet for the rest of the presentation.

After we were through with all the questions and answers and discussion, he came up to me and wanted to talk privately. He shared his story with me. He said he had and was experiencing everything we talked about in our presentation and that he was living in his car. He wanted to show me his car to “prove” he was not scamming me. I told him I would check it out after we were done. He apparently had just been divorced, kicked out of his house, his wife had some drug issues, he had been driving a Cadillac just two weeks earlier, and was quite a successful singer with his own Facebook page. He had no money. No fuel for his car. He had a “gig” in Memphis is 7 weeks but no way to really get there without money. His next Social Security check would not come for another two weeks. I don’t carry much money with me when I ride but I did have a couple of bucks which I offered him. He was reluctant to take it as he kept saying he was not looking for money from me. We didn’t know each other, etc. Yet, I felt that the Holy Spirit put him there for a reason. He was extremely grateful. Anyway, who am I to judge. I mentioned this situation to Chris and she also gave me some money to give to this homeless man. I held it in my pocket for a while. After the photos which he took part in and was to put on his Facebook page I went over to look at his car. Sure, enough there was a sheet and pillow on his back seat. The car was a beat up junk that he said he was lucky to get. I did not ask him where he got it. He opened the trunk. Inside, a sleeping bag, a bag filled with underwear, a pair of dress shoes, laundry detergent. And a box of papers he was able to salvage from his house before being kicked out. My heart filled and I reached into my pocket for the money there and handed it to him. He teared up. Said he had to pay me back. I said not necessary but he was insistent. I told if he wanted to give back to me when he got on his feet he could and I gave him my address. We will see if this comes full circle. I did check out his Facebook page. He was into Elvis and I saw he had been interviewed on Better Connecticut with Scott Haney so he was successful before this happened to him.

I am trusting in the Holy Spirit even when some of the folks from the church thought I may be falling for a scam. I do not think so.

We said good night to Claire. Would see her tomorrow morning in Hartford and we backed up the bikes and headed to Holy Family for the evening.

After showering, we headed for the gathering room and the Word of the Day.

**Day Two’s Word of the Day:**

Tom S Grateful

Tim S Hope

Johnnie F Encouraged

Claudia Motivated/Mindful

Terry Dignity

Lauren Unite

Patrick Moved

Stephanie Vicarious

Joan Discombobulated

Tom B Copasetic

Wendy Patience

Chris Vulnerable/Vulnerability

Mary B Persistency

Lou Blessed