

# Joseph's House, providing shelter and comfort

By John Klein

On a particularly cold winter night last January, "John" arrived at our door around midnight. He was wet with snow, nearly frozen and broken in spirit. Although the café had reached capacity, we welcomed John in, provided some soup, got him a blanket and found room for him with our other guests.

As St. Joseph cared for his foster son, Jesus, so many years ago, we strive to follow that example of quiet, gentle concern. And as Jesus himself identified with the "least among us," we at Joseph's House are dedicated to caring for God's Presence in our midst.

John left the café around 7 a.m. almost as silently as he arrived, but not before he affirmed the goodness of our staff. John remarked that he had never before been treated with such compassion and tenderness. We didn't end homelessness for John that night, but through the café, God's spirit of love touched the heart of one of his children.

Joseph's House Café opened its doors Nov. 1, 2011, and we'll remain open until April 30, 2012. Seven nights a week between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m., we offer hospitality to 45 women and men experiencing homelessness in Camden.

In addition to a simple meal and some hot coffee, we provide our guests with connections to social service providers who can assist them

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with more permanent solutions to their circumstances.

There is space in the café for conversation, cards and board games, reading and resting. And most importantly, the café staff is present to our guests, offering hospitality, fellowship and hope. With the generous support of our benefactors we have been able to operate the café at a cost per person, per night of only \$14 — a modest cost for so much good.

We are poised to open a second site this winter in response to the nightly demand we have experienced. It is so very appropriate that we make these preparations during Advent, a time of preparing our homes and our hearts for the celebration of Christmas and the wonderful mystery of Emmanuel, God with us. But as a non-profit entirely funded by private donations and foundation gifts, our biggest challenge is raising funds. Our prayer is that people will help us in preparing our home, our second café, for the coming of our guests this Christmas season. We need to find room for those most in need this



Joseph's House of Camden is a non-profit dedicated to caring for the homeless. In the first year, 45 homeless women and men have sought shelter there, seven nights a week.

winter.

*John Klein is executive director of Joseph's House*

*Editor's note:* Joseph's House is located at 20 Church Street, Camden. To learn more go to [www.josephshouseofcamden.org](http://www.josephshouseofcamden.org).

Donations, payable to 'Joseph's House of Camden,' can be sent to the attention of John