

# via pacis

—The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

July, 2009

www.desmoinescatholicworker.org

Volume 33, No. 2

## And We Keep Working...

*Catholic Workers learn the struggles of those we serve.*



Volunteers host a monthly cook-out during the summer.



by Tracy Robson

Spending time with the “least of these” really gives you a new perspective on your life. I’ve lived at the Catholic Worker for a little more than six months, and I’m still trying to get a hold of how this sort of life really goes. Maybe I’ll never get a hold of it. Maybe no one really understands his or her life, or really understands what makes us happy, sad, stressed, or fearful. And if you think you understand life, chances are you understand it less than the rest of us.

I’ve had the blessing of spending hours upon hours with those of the under-class. I’m constantly surprised at the blessing that this brings to my life. I often get stressed or discouraged during my centering time with God or while spending time with my friends outside of the Worker, but my day always gets right back on track when I have the opportunity to participate in the gospel of hospitality that

takes place at Dingman House. This really is the place where the mission of Jesus is acted out, and it’s really hard to understand its beauty or magic until you join.

I initially joined the Des Moines Catholic Worker after spending more than two years volunteering on a weekly basis doing hospitality at the drop-in center. It’s where my heart is. How do I know this is what I’m supposed to be doing? I miss doing hospitality when I don’t do it for a while. I’d rather be here when we’re open than anywhere else doing anything else with anyone else. This is my family. And I care about the lives of those around me just like I care about my biological family. Their stories affect me. Their stories change me. Their stories make me realize the pain and hurt and misunderstanding in our world. So I’d like to share one of those stories with you, the reader, with hopes that you’ll gain an understanding of the struggles of those in the under classes.

### ADDICTION

In enters a woman, aged mid-twenties, with shoulder-

length black hair and fair skin. She’s wearing a black t-shirt and ripped jeans. She’s so slim you can see the pack of cigarettes peeking out of her back pocket. I ask for her name, and after looking at me quizzically for a few moments, replies under her breath, “Courtney.” She refuses to look me in the eye, and doesn’t quite seem to know where she is as she struggles to reach for the kitchen counter to steady herself.

I offer to lead her into the dining area to have a seat, and I bring her a cup of coffee, which she doesn’t touch the rest of the afternoon. I come to learn that coffee is far too weak a drug to have any affect on her system. Courtney and I talk for only a few moments, in which I find out that she lives only a few miles from the house and came today because a friend told her she could get some cheap cigarettes in the area. She leaves the house to have one. I follow her outside, and we continue to talk, her in a hushed voice without eye contact and me with intentional listening skills and an open mind.

Courtney smokes at least

two packs of cigarettes a day, and I’ve learned that she gets the money from selling marijuana on the streets. She’s held down short jobs from time to time, and also dabbles in tattoo art for some side cash. Now, to me, the non-smoker, light-drinker, non-drug-user, sheltered farm girl, smoking two packs a day seems like a sizeable problem. However, once again, smoking two packs a day is the least of Courtney’s worries.

Courtney’s parents were married until she was nine, which would give the impression of a rather happy household. However, Courtney’s mom was addicted to heroine and meth when Courtney was born, and she passed those addictions along to her child. In addition, Courtney’s father was a raging alcoholic, and while he’s still, surprisingly, in Courtney’s life, her idea of a healthy relationship with him is when she asks him for money and he gives it to her.

Courtney’s parents abused her sexually and physically, which indubitably results in emotional abuse. She used to prostitute herself out. She used to be a pimp. She witnessed drug and alcohol abuse at a young age, so when she started using at the age of twelve, she’d finally found something stable in her life. And since the age of twelve, which now has been over fifteen years, the only steady thing in Courtney’s life is that she’s able to get her hands on heroine, use it, and pass out for the remainder of the day. It’s an escape from the life she leads. It’s the support system she never had, and may never find. And when I ask her why she doesn’t just give it up, the core reason is that she’s afraid. It’s like breaking up with a spouse of fifteen years. They’re the support system

*“...if you think you understand life, chances are you understand it less than the rest of us.”*

you’ve relied on for fifteen years, and so is her drug abuse.

And Courtney’s struggle with addition is really no different than the struggle that many of us have any day of the week. When we feel down, we reach out to others. When she feels down, she reaches out to drugs. They’ve never let her down, unlike many of the people in her life.

So, I then ask Courtney why she doesn’t just get into a treatment center. Many people struggle with addictions, and these centers are created to help people just like her. She replies that she’s been in and out of treatment centers for fifteen years. And since there’s only a couple of treatment centers in Des Moines, they all know her, and they all know that she’s failed treatment too many times to count.

Consequently, they’re hesitant to take up space in an already crowded facility with someone who’s wasted resources many times in the past, and only promises to do the same again.

She’s like the boy who cried wolf—her saying, “But I

*Continued on page 11*

**via pacis**

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Unless noted (or we goof), all photos and art are produced by the Des Moines Catholic Worker community.

**The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community**

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, is a response to the Gospel call to compassionate action as summarized by the Catholic Worker tradition. We are committed to a simple, nonviolent lifestyle as we live and work among the poor. We directly serve others by opening the Dingman House as a drop-in center for those in need of food, clothing, toiletries, use of a phone, toilet, a shower or just a cup of coffee and conversation. We also engage in activities that advocate social justice.

**Becoming a Des Moines Catholic Worker**

We are always open to considering new community members. For information about joining our mission, contact any community member or visit our web site.

**Mailing Address**

PO Box 4551  
Des Moines IA 50305

**Bishop Dingman House (Hospitality)**

1310 7th St.  
Des Moines, IA 50314  
515-243-0765  
Worker Residents: Frank Cordaro, Ed Bloomer, David Goodner, Tracy Robson

**Phil Berrigan House (Social Justice Center)**

713 Indiana Ave.  
Des Moines, IA 50314  
515-282-4781 (DMCW business phone.)  
Worker Residents: Frank Cordaro and Mona Shaw

**Msgr. Ligutti House (Worker Residence)**

1301 8th St.  
Des Moines, IA 50314  
515-288-4326  
Residents: Renee Espeland, Frankie Hughes, Reetzi Hughes, Norman Searah

**Lazarus House (Guest Residence)**

1317 8th St.  
Des Moines, IA 50314  
Guest Residents: Carla Dawson, Josh Dawson, Jordan Dawson

**Weekly Lectionary Bible Study**

Mondays, 7pm. Berrigan House  
Call to confirm.

**Weekly Mass or Prayer Service**

Fridays, 7:30pm, Dingman House  
All are welcome!

**The Chiapas Project**

Chiapas, Mexico  
Richard Flamer  
flamerrichard@hotmail.com



*As for ourselves, we must be meek,  
bear injustice, malice, and rash judg-  
ment. We must turn the other cheek,  
give up our cloak, go a second mile.*

-Dorothy Day

# The Passing of Two Good Friends

*We lost two good friends this past quarter. Gerald "Old Man Jerry" Dermody, who had lived with us for many years died April 18, 2009. Only weeks later, Ervin, "Irvy" Schroeder was still living with us when he passed away on June 1. Former Des Moines Catholic Worker Wendy Vasquez wrote the following reflection about Irvy.*

by Wendy Vasquez

Irvy was sick, and anyone could see it. The dishes were piling up in the sink, and this man, who for 20 years had every morning risen at 5:00 a.m., put on the coffee, and

cleaned the kitchen, was in bed. Days had passed since Irvy had mopped the kitchen or done the community laundry, but when Carla Dawson would ask him if he wanted to go to the VA, he would retort, "I'm fine!"

Finally, the day after Carla's big birthday/graduation celebration, Irvy

agreed to go to the hospital. They immediately saw how sick he was, and told Carla he probably had multiple cancers. The next day, the diagnosis was confirmed, and Irvy was transferred to the nursing home across from Mercy Hospital and entered Hospice care. Less than two weeks later, he died.

Irvy must have already known he was dying. Still, he didn't seem a bit surprised or even angry. For those of us who were able to do it, it was an honor to spend time with him, offering to do simple things like hold a glass of juice or adjust a pillow under his horrendously swollen feet. At first Irvy wanted none of it and insisted on doing everything himself, even when his hands were too weak to even hold a straw. Gradually he seemed to relax and be glad of the support. Carla spent the last couple of nights with him and was there when he died.

Irvy, or Ervin Schroeder came to the Worker more than twenty years ago and lived at Lazarus House throughout the entire childhood of Carla's sons. A quiet, solitary presence in their lives, nonetheless he

loved them dearly and watched out for them all the time.

To Carla he was a dear friend, a brother, who didn't demand anything and was always there to support and fill in with her family. Irvy lived by canning and early-morning scavenging, returning to his basement home where he spent most of his time, except for when he was out or taking care of his housekeeping or laundry responsibilities, or passing through in his silent watchful way.

Anyone with Irvy in his final days had to admire his stalwart calmness and patience as he waited for the end. His nurses supported him and brought him anything he might need while letting him decide what he did or did not want. That whole experience left all of us hoping to go that way, and gave all of us a love for those nurses and for Hospice. Let's all say a prayer of peace and thanksgiving for Irvy, and the people who loved him.



Jerry

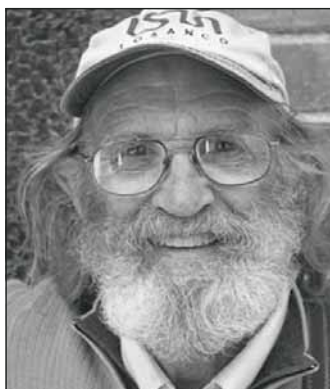
## Father Lawrence Rosebaugh, ¡Presente!

Father Lawrence Rosebaugh, a well-known peace activist originally from Wisconsin, was shot and killed in a car robbery on May 18, 2009, in the mountains of northern Guatemala, where he had been working with poor indigenous tribal peoples since 1993.

Fr. Rosebaugh was born in Appleton, Wisconsin, on May 16, 1935. On Aug. 15, 1957, he took his first vows as an OMI (Oblate of Mary Immaculate). He was ordained to the priesthood on March 30, 1963. After teaching high-school in Duluth and Chicago, he went to Milwaukee in 1968. There he became a member of Casa Maria, a hospitality house which gives shelter to homeless families and women.

Fr. Larry was a well-known anti-war protester. He is best known for his actions as part of the "Milwaukee 14." In 1968 he and thirteen others seized draft records, poured blood on them, and burned them with homemade napalm, as well as scaling the twelve-foot fence at the Pantex

nuclear weapons assembly plant in Amarillo, Texas. He served two- and one-year sentences for these offenses, respectively.



Fr. Larry Rosebaugh (photo courtesy of nonviolentcow.org)

In 1977, Fr. Larry went to Recife, Brazil. There he lived on the streets with the poor and was wrongfully arrested by police who accused him of stealing the vegetable cart used to collect food. He was jailed in unspeakable conditions and was brutalized by inmate thugs. His fellow Oblates in the Recife mission finally located his whereabouts, and obtained his release through the intervention of Dom Helder Camara, the

saintly Archbishop of Recife. Then friends arranged an interview to tell his story to First Lady, Roslyn Carter, who was visiting Brazil at the time.

In another action, following the death of Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador in 1980, Fr. Larry joined Maryknoll Missionary Fr. Roy Bourgeois and peace activist Linda Ventimiglia near the CIA's School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia, when he scaled a tree and broadcasted the last recorded words of martyred Archbishop Romero, beseeching Salvadoran soldiers to lay down their weapons and stop killing their brothers. The trio was arrested but eventually released.

In 1993 Fr. Larry was assigned to the Oblate mission serving indigenous tribal people in the mountains of northern Guatemala. He will be sorely missed by the activist and peace population. Lawrence Rosebaugh, ¡Presente!



A vigil for those who suffer and die because they are denied healthcare is held Tuesdays in front of Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield in downtown Des Moines.

# The Iowa Healthcare Action

The Des Moines Catholic Worker announces The Iowa Healthcare Action that takes place July 25-27, 2009, in Des Moines, Iowa. The event is part of the "Insurance Profits Make Us Sick" Campaign that began in March.

The event brings Dr. Margaret Flowers as its keynote speaker on Sunday, July 26, 7:30 p.m. at Highland Park Presbyterian Church in Des Moines. Dr. Flowers, a Baltimore-area pediatrician is co-chair the Maryland chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program. Flowers was arrested May 5, 2009, when she tried to persuade the Senate Finance Committee to include Single-Payer in Healthcare Reform considerations. Her actions led to her ultimately testifying as an expert witness on Single-Payer at a Senate roundtable forum on June 11.

The three-day event will culminate in a Rally at 1:00 p.m. in Nollen Plaza in downtown Des Moines followed by a direct-action at Wellmark Blue Cross Blue

Shield Headquarters on Sixth Avenue and Locust Street. Anyone coming from out of town and needing housing, contact the DMCW for hospitality. Anyone considering risking arrest on Monday must attend the Monday morning Action Planning and Training session at the Berrigan House.

For more details go to: our website or phone 515-282-4781.



Dr. Margaret Flowers  
Photo courtesy of National Economic and Social Rights Initiative.

## Chiapas Needs 20 Eddies

The Chiapas Project has started a new fundraising effort, called the "Twenty Eddies" Campaign. The Chiapas Project is a sister community to the Des Moines



Eddie Bloomer

Catholic Worker and located near San Cristóbal de las Casas in rural Chiapas, Mexico. They run a clinic, do farming and construction in the neighborhood, and provide services to immigrants crossing the southern border of Mexico. The Chiapas Project relies on donations to do these Works of Mercy in one of

the poorest areas of Mexico.

Richard Flamer of the Chiapas Project was discussing fundraising with Mona Shaw of the DMCW, and she replied that making ends meet at the Project would be possible if, "...you just had twenty Eddies."

Mona was referring to Des Moines Catholic Worker Eddie Bloomer, who, on a small income gives \$50 to the Chiapas Project each month.

In that spirit, the Chiapas Project has launched the "Twenty Eddies" Campaign, to raise sufficient funds to continue their work in Mexico. They are asking those who can to donate \$50 a month for a year. The gifts

will go toward rent, paying farm workers, transportation, food and medicine.

Make checks payable to "The Chiapas Project" and mail them to:

The Chiapas Project  
c/o Holy Family Catholic Church  
1715 Icard Street  
Omaha, NE 68102



## Norman's Whereabouts

by Norman Searah

Hello there! I'm having a friend of mine write about his past and present. He is a Native American Indian like my friend Tuna Satjas was. (I never knew that he was Indian until his father went back to his tribe in New England.) I'm not good with last names, but his first name is Howard and I thank him. Thank you, Howard.

Ha. My name is Howard Crow Eagle, and I am an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. I came from the Reservation in 1993 just after the floods. Since then I have been very busy doing many things for our Native people.

I am President of our Native Community, Central Iowa Circle of First Nations, with about twelve different Tribes representing their Nations. I reintroduced the Native American Prayer stick or Prayer feather meetings across Iowa dealing with substance abuse issues that are unique to Native people helping them to get back to their Native Spirituality. I have served with three of our past Governors, Harold Hughes, Robert D. Ray, and Terry Branstad. It was an honor to have served with them on Native issues across the state. I currently work with the State Archaeologist and the Indian advisory council to protect our ancestral bur-

ial grounds. I have helped set up several conservation areas, such as Neal Smith. Kuehn County's Prairie Awakening, which takes place the second weekend in September, will be our eleventh annual gathering, an event that brings Native dance, song, drum beat, and art back to a pristine prairie with Tribes from across our country and Canada.

I help bring Native traditional values to native youth who are currently living in Woodward at the Academy. I have worked with homeless youth for 16 years now and I'm very proud to be a part of a great organization, Iowa Homeless Youth Centers. See you at Reggie's

Sleepout this year! I also assisted your very own Norman when he wanted to take school supplies to the Lakota Nation. We even paid a visit to KILI Radio station in South Dakota. It was a very memorable trip that I still think of fondly.

Well, this is just a little bit about me and I am very honored that you would consider me for a place in your newsletter.

Pilamiya (thank you).

Your brother in arms,  
Howard Crow Eagle



Norman fell and broke his foot in early June and will be in rehabilitation in a nursing home until September. Send him greetings at:

Norman Searah  
c/o Des Moines Catholic Worker  
PO Box 4551  
Des Moines, IA 50305

# Catholic Workers Demand Answers from Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield

DES MOINES—On the afternoon of Friday, June 19, 2009, Des Moines Catholic Workers and friends delivered a letter to John Forsyth, Chair and Chief Executive Officer of Wellmark, Inc., demanding transparency and accountability for the profits gained and the decisions made regarding the healthcare needs of the Iowans Wellmark, Inc. serves.

The cover letter read in part:

*"We are writing you on behalf of the people of the state of Iowa because all Iowans are profoundly affected by decisions made by your corporation."*

*"First and foremost, we are affected by healthcare treatment payment decisions you make for us and our families through your approval or denial of claims, or for coverage regarding our health care. Negative decisions on your part not only have the*

*power to economically devastate our families, but can cause permanent suffering and cost life itself.'*

*"Second, a significant portion of your revenues are paid by tax dollars. We understand that as much as 40% of the premiums you collect are paid by public employers. When the public makes such a significant investment in a private corporation, particularly an investment so directly related to the quality of life and survival of the public, the public has a right to know how this investment is being administered."*

*"Third, your policy holders, millions, who, by law, are co-owners of your corporation, must have the right to know all the policy and financial dealings of their own corporation and in this prerogative have a clear governing voice in policies and decisions made regarding it."*



Catholic Workers and others deliver a letter to an administrative assistant to John Forsyth at Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield headquarters.

*"It is our moral responsibility therefore, as involved residents of Iowa, including previous and current policy holders, to examine and evaluate the competence of your stewardship over such a large and pervasive public trust."*

Attached to the cover letter was a three-page "Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield Public Stewardship Report" requesting information divided into two sections of general corporate information and information about specific offi-

cers and board members within the corporation. Each section includes a detailed list of the information sought.

The letter gave Forsyth and Wellmark, Inc. until July 20, 2009, to respond.

## Witness against Torture Leads to 62 Arrests at Whitehouse

WASHINGTON D.C.-About 200 activists rallied in Washington, D.C. on April 30, 2009, to demand that the Obama Administration conduct an inquiry into the use of torture in United States detention facilities and to close the detention and torture facility located at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Iowans included among the activists were Des Moines Catholic Worker Tracy Robson, Elton Davis of Des Moines, and Chris Gaunt, Grinnell.

The rally ended the "100 Days Campaign to Close Guantánamo and End Torture." Initiated by Witness Against Torture, the Cam-

paign began on Obama's first day in office in front of the White House and ended there 100 days later. During the 100 days, members of Witness Against Torture and others held constant vigil in orange jumpsuits and black hoods, reminding the administration of the 239 men still held in Guantanamo prison.

On April 30, a solemn procession of 150 in jumpsuits and hoods walked from the Capitol to the White House. Sixty-two members of the procession stopped and stood at the gates of the White House holding a sign that read "Justice Delayed is Justice Denied." Stenciled on their

uniforms were the names of detainees that have been cleared for release but are still detained at the prison.

Des Moines Catholic Worker Tracy Robson and others read the names of detainees over a loud-speaker nearby.

The 62 who stopped at the gate were arrested and issued citations for violating permit regulations that require people to keep moving during pickets or rallies while in front of the White House. Among those arrested were Iowans Chris Gaunt and Elton Davis.

Congress has refused to fund closing Guantanamo, and the detention center remains open.



Activists hold banner in front of the White House. Photo courtesy of 100 Days Campaign.

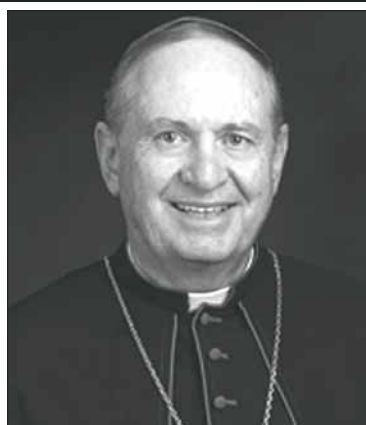
## 14 Arrested at Creech AFB



CREECH AFB—Fourteen peace activists, including Des Moines Catholic Worker, Renee Espeland, were arrested on April 9, 2009, at Creech Air Force Base in Indian Springs, Nevada. The arrests occurred during a ten-day vigil at the gates to Creech, which is home to members of the Air Force who "pilot" the Predator and Reaper drones used in the Afghanistan-Pakistan war.

Those arrested at Creech Base included: John Dear, S.J. (New Mexico); Kathy Kelly (Voices for Creative

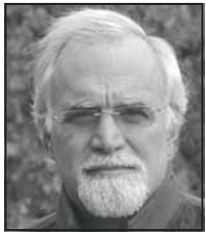
Nonviolence, Chicago); Louie Vitale, O.F.M. (Oakland); Renee Espeland (Des Moines Catholic Worker); Steve Kelly, S.J. (California - Pacific Life Community); Judy Homanich (Binghamton, NY); Jerry Zawada, O.F.M. (Arizona); Mariah Klusmire (New Mexico); Dennis Duvall (Arizona); Elizabeth Pappalardo (Illinois); Brian Terrell (Strangers & Guests Catholic Worker Farm, Iowa); Eve Tetaz (Washington, D.C.); Brad Lyttle (Illinois); and Sr. Megan Rice, (Nevada Desert Experience).



## Bishop to Visit Des Moines Catholic Worker

Bishop Richard E. Pates will share dinner with our community and guests at 6:00 p.m. then celebrate mass in the Dingman House of the Des Moines Catholic Worker on Friday, August 21, 2009, at 7:30 p.m. Bishop Pates was named the ninth bishop of Des Moines Diocese this past April. All are welcome.

# “Insurance Profits Make Us Sick” Campaign Opens New Resistance Front



by Frank  
Cordaro

One thing we can say about the historical Jesus was that he was a great healer. All four Gospels are filled with stories and accounts of Jesus healing people of physical illnesses. We also know Jesus was much more than a physical healer. Almost every time the Gospels record a particular story of healing by Jesus, the physical healing is never an end in and of itself, the story always points to a greater end—whether it be a deeper faith for those involved or a challenge to the larger society to be more just and loving (especially the ruling and governing authorities).

This pattern of curing a physical illness that leads to challenging the ruling class is artfully done in the ninth chapter of John's Gospel, when Jesus gives sight to a man born blind. John's telling of the story exposes the greater blindness of the Pharisees and what God is calling them to see in Jesus.

Jesus' healing powers both cured people of individual illnesses and called the larger human society to be whole and holy, in loving balance and in just harmony with each other and with all of God's creation.

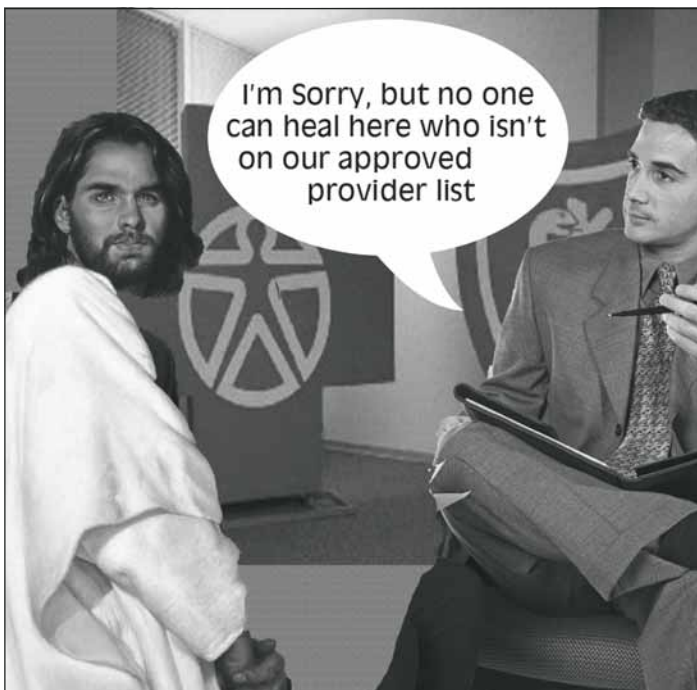
Jesus left to his disciples the continued task of healing the sick and making whole the world in which the sick are healed. This Gospel directive to heal presents a particular challenge to us today. When we look to the sick people we've known, we are hard pressed to find a guest or community member who does not have a personal story to tell of a sick friend or family member who has experienced poor or inadequate health care treatment. Many of these stories ended in tragic results. There is nothing unique about these stories; they are universally experienced by most Americans. Each story represents a suffering human being for whom good health was denied due to a lack of adequate health care. As Catholic Workers wanting to follow the Gospel directive to heal, we can't help but ask what we can do to help make

right the healthcare system that refuses to treat the sick in our midst. Additionally we can ask, "From the perspective of Catholic Social Teachings, is our healthcare system truly serving the common good?"

There is little argument these days, even in Washington, D.C., that our healthcare system is broken, and it is getting worse and worse by the day. If we critique this system from its capitalist base, which basically means follow the money line, health insurance companies sit at the top of the pyramid of what is wrong with our health-

care system. Our good friend and former Milwaukee Catholic Worker Don and Roberta Thurston-Timmerman laid out the case well in the June, 2009, issue of their e-mail newsletter, *The Sparrow Sings*:

in terms of childhood deaths, life expectancy and preventable deaths. Our current private health insurance system is the most costly, wasteful, complicated, corrupt and bureaucratic in the world. The function of health insurance companies is to make money, not to provide adequate health care for their clients. Almost 30% of private insurance companies' health care money is spent on administration and billing, exorbitant CEO pay, advertising, lobbying and campaign contributions. The number of health care administrative personnel has grown by 25 times in



care system. Our good friend and former Milwaukee Catholic Worker Don and Roberta Thurston-Timmerman laid out the case well in the June, 2009, issue of their e-mail newsletter, *The Sparrow Sings*:

"The U.S. is the only industrialized country in the world without universal healthcare. In spite of this, the average American spends \$7900 per year on health care which is twice as much as citizens of other industrialized countries. As many as 46 million Americans have no health care insurance at all. ...The U.S. is one of the signers of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which declares that health care is the RIGHT, not the PRIVILEGE, of every person in the world. ...It is estimated that as many as 18,000 Americans die every year from preventable illnesses because they do not get to a doctor when they should. The U.S. ranks 37th in the world in terms of health system performance, and according to the World Health Organization we are far behind many other countries

the last three years over the number of doctors. From 2003 to 2007, the profit of the nation's major health insurance companies has increased by 170%, and the CEO pay for the top 7 health insurance companies now averages \$14.2 million."

Admittedly the health insurance companies are not the only ones making unjustifiable profits in our healthcare system. The hospitals, doctors and pharmaceutical companies are equally at fault and their greedy ways need to be addressed. However, there is an important distinction here in that hospitals, doctors and pharmaceutical companies provide some aspect of health care services while all the health insurance companies do is manage the money Americans spend to pay for healthcare, for the singular goal of making a ungodly profit.

And, the way health insurance companies make their profits is by selling their insurance to the wealthy and the healthy, leaving the poor and the

sick to fend for them selves or to be passed off to state and national government programs. While making their ill-gotten profits, the health insurance companies give cover to the embedded greed in the system from which the hospitals, doctors and pharmaceutical companies feed. We will not be able to address the greed of the hospitals, doctors and pharmaceutical companies until we remove the health care insurance companies from their "profit off the sick" scam.

Toward this end, the Des Moines Catholic Worker began our "Insurance Profits Make Us Sick" Campaign. We announced our campaign in the last issue of via pacis. Phase One of the campaign are the weekly vigils we hold at the Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield headquarters in downtown Des Moines every Tuesday. We picked Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield because we are personalists and to engage this struggle properly, the names of the responsible people and their companies taking these ill-gotten profits need to be exposed. The Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Insurance Corporation is the largest health insurance seller in Iowa and its headquarters is based in Des Moines.

From our "Insurance Profits Make Us Sick" link on our web page. "The Blue Cross/Blue Shield name has been linked to several scams and scandals in recent years; and their arbitrary denial of payment has caused innumerable deaths. Originally non-profit, the company became a for-profit mutual in the mid-1990s, eliminating the public's ability to know how they spend the premiums they collect. We do know they spend millions on marketing and capital ventures to increase their income which often goes to their other for-profit subsidiaries. Estimates are that as much as 40% out of every dollar they take in from customer premiums goes to things other than healthcare, such as 20 million offered to the University of Iowa for a naming opportunity, a PAC that gives about \$200,000 a year to candidates, and 200 million for a luxury building in downtown Des Moines that is scheduled to be completed next year. Perquisites and salaries for Wellmark CEOs are exorbitantly

*"We need to change the system. We need to overthrow, not the government, as the authorities are always accusing the Communists "of conspiring to teach to do," but this rotten decadent, putrid, industrial capitalist system which breeds such suffering in the whited sepulcher of New York..."*

*-Dorothy Day,  
September, 1956*

high. While providing increasingly wealthy lifestyles for its officers, Wellmark continues to increase premiums while cutting services for its customers, regardless of the expense to human life."

Phase Two of the campaign took place on June 19, 2009, when members of the Des Moines Catholic Worker community and our summer interns delivered a letter to John Forsyth, CEO of Wellmark Inc. demanding transparency and accountability for the profits gained and the decisions made for the healthcare needs of the lowans they serve. The letter was handed to an administrative assistant to Mr. Forsyth in the lobby of the Wellmark Headquarters, and an identical letter was sent to Mr. Forsyth by certified mail that same day. In the letter Des Moines Catholic Workers gave Mr. Forsyth and Wellmark Inc. until July 20, 2009, to respond.

Phase Three of the campaign calls for nonviolent direct action to persuade Mr. Forsyth and the Wellmark Co. to be transparent about the profits they have gained and the decisions they have made affecting the healthcare needs of the lowans they serve.

*Continued on page 11*

# From College to Community

*a fresher look at life*



by Mallory  
Heggen



and  
Veronica  
Stafford

**A**fter a summer of sweating and serving at the Des Moines Catholic Worker, we have learned a lot about ourselves, but more importantly we have learned about community. Through the actions and words of our fellow Catholic Workers and through the actions and words of Jesus, we have transformed our previous ideas of community into an image of fellowship and true equality with each of our brothers and sisters.

For Veronica, community had always been focused on school. She knew that she wanted to attend the University of Notre Dame, and with a clear goal forefront in her mind, she passed sunset to sundown in the hallways of North Polk High School. Her classmates, teammates, friends, and mentors transformed into pillars of support. She felt like she was engulfed by her actions—each essay and speech leaked into tennis matches and choir concerts. She had everything that she thought she needed in a neat and tidy compound of classrooms and chalkboards.

In Mallory's experience, family had been her main source of community. As a young girl, her family moved around Iowa and hardly stayed in one place. Friends were constantly changing and her consistent support came from her parents and two brothers. They ate together, played together, worked together, sang together, and could count on one another for anything and everything.

Yet, this summer we discovered that we were lacking. At first it was verified by the actions of the community members at the Worker. Catholic Workers constantly gave more of themselves than we have ever previously witnessed. In a unique way, our new community became like classmates and family—they challenged us but also offered a sanctuary. The

Catholic Workers were never fickle like high school students struggling for positions of power. They also did not expect or accept any external gratitude; their reward was already internally contained. The actions of the Catholic Workers demonstrated that a community is always willing to share.

*As we spend  
our summer  
here at the  
Des Moines  
Catholic  
Worker, we are  
slowly learning  
that community  
is more than  
school or  
family.*

In our readings from the Catholic Worker, this point was reiterated. In Catholic Social Teaching the common good is described as "good that comes into existence in a community of solidarity among active, equal agents". Thus, when everyone works together and takes responsibility for the whole, we experience the purest form of good. Also in the "Aims and Means of the Catholic Worker" personalism is described as a "move away from a self-centered individualism toward the good of the other". Catholic Workers embrace their neighbor, knowing that finding the good in others will in turn extract the good within themselves. As we absorbed these new topics, it occurred to us that community is about a network of support. Our community sheltered us and cared for us in a way that we had never experienced. Within the group we have a variety of ages, backgrounds, styles, and habits, yet together we are willing to live a life of unity.

For even more clarity, we turned to Jesus. Jesus was constantly surrounded by his followers. Although he may have wanted a mo-

ment of solitude, he always greeted his friends with compassion and generosity. In the gospel of Luke, Jesus is engulfed by crowds who wish to hear his message. But rather than send them into the countryside to fend for themselves, Jesus divides the miniscule five loaves and two fish in order to satisfy the five thousand gathered. Jesus fed his community not only with food but also with faith and love. At the Worker, we witness this miracle every day. The Des Moines Catholic Workers give of their already kind natures in order to provide meals to the guests. Just like Jesus, their actions demonstrate their commitment to improving the community.

In his words, Jesus also demonstrates how to treat each other. Those who were admitted to Heaven had made gifts of themselves. Jesus says, "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." (Matthew 25:35-36). Jesus preached that we need to care for the needs of others in order to contribute to a "society marked by the fullness of love, compassion, and peace", just as is stated in Catholic Social Teaching.

As we spend our summer here at the Des Moines Catholic Worker, we are slowly learning that community is more than school or family. Instead, community extends to include everyone that we come into contact with. If we truly follow the actions and words of Jesus, and with the love overflowing from our hearts, offer our home, our time, our talents to others, the community becomes larger as it begins to feel closer to each of us individually. For then hopefully we, who are one body in Christ, will truly become individually members of one another (Romans 12:5).

*Mallory Heggen, from Simpson College, and Veronica Stafford, from Notre Dame, are two students living this summer with the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community.*

# Health Insurance Whistle-Blower Knows Where the Bodies Are Buried



Wendell Potter

by Amy Goodman

**W**endell Potter is the health insurance industry's worst nightmare. He's a whistle-blower. Potter, the former chief spokesperson for insurance giant CIGNA, recently testified before Congress, "I saw how they confuse their customers and dump the sick—all so they can satisfy their Wall Street investors."

Potter was deeply involved in CIGNA and industry-wide strategies for maintaining their profitable grip on U.S. health care. He told me: "The thing they fear most is a single-payer plan. They fear even the public insurance option being proposed; they'll pull out all the stops they can to defeat that to try to scare people into thinking that embracing a public health insurance option would lead down the slippery slope toward socialism ... putting a government bureaucrat between you and your doctor. They've used those talking points for years, and they've always worked."

In 2007, CIGNA denied a California teenager, Natalie Sarkisyan, coverage for a liver transplant. Her family went to the media. The California Nurses Association joined in. Under mounting pressure, CIGNA finally granted coverage for the procedure. But it was too late. Two hours later, Natalie died.

While visiting family in Tennessee, Potter stopped at a "medical expedition" in Wise, Va. People drove hours for free care from temporary clinics set up in animal stalls at the local fairground. Potter told me that weeks later, flying on a CIGNA corporate jet with

the CEO: "I realized that someone's premiums were helping me to travel that way ... paying for my lunch on gold-trimmed china. I thought about those men and women I had seen in Wise County ... not having any idea [how] insurance executives lived." He decided he couldn't be an industry PR hack anymore.

Insurance executives and their Wall Street investors are addicted to massive profits and double-digit annual rate increases. To squeeze more profit, Potter says, if a person makes a major claim for coverage, the insurer will often scrutinize the person's original application, looking for any error that would allow it to cancel the policy. Likewise, if a small company's employees make too many claims, the insurer, Potter says, "very likely will jack up the rates so much that your employer has no alternative but to leave you and your co-workers without insurance."

This week, as the House and Senate introduce their health care bills, Potter warns, "One thing to remember is that the health insurance industry has been anticipating this debate on health care for many years ... they've been positioning themselves to get very close to influential members of Congress in both parties." Montana Sen. Max Baucus chairs the Senate Finance Committee, key for health care reform. Potter went on, "[T]he insurance industry, the pharmaceutical industry and others in health care have donated ... millions of dollars to his campaigns over the past few years. But aside

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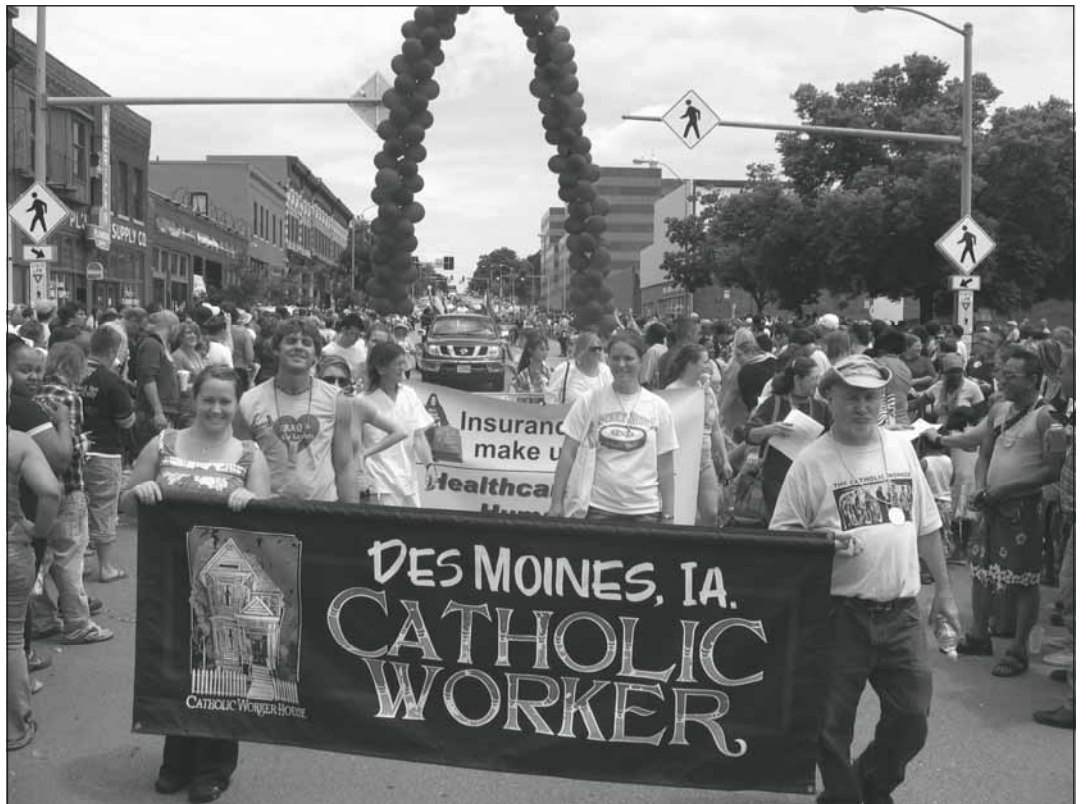
# 2009 Summer Internship and Formation Retreat

## T e xyÄxvâ|ÉÇ <

by Joan Wages

Choosing a way of living  
Against the momentum  
Is an every day choice,  
An every moment choice  
Just when I think I am living more intentionally,  
I become comfortable in that way  
Only to wake and see myself back in the mire  
Now, as many times before in my life, I am asking,  
How do I get out of the mire, how to I get to a place where I can  
see more clearly?  
And maybe most importantly,  
How do I keep it clear, how do I keep moving toward the vision?  
Immersion in the Catholic Worker life for ten days  
Brought me out of the mire and into a space of clear vision.  
Doing works of mercy and acts for social justice, were suste-  
nance for my soul.  
No wonder my vision had become so clouded.  
How could I see God,  
if I was not participating (at a personal sacrifice) in the realm of  
God?  
Being immersed in the Catholic Worker community,  
helped me to more fully understand the power of communal  
living,  
of living in the body of Christ.  
No wonder I was having difficulty maintaining a clear vision,  
I was still living the lie that "I can do it by myself,"  
I had convinced myself that I just needed more faith, more  
study, more knowledge.  
Now I realize that I will always have weaknesses, just like the  
disciples.  
If I want to keep a clear vision, I need the support and help of  
others.  
The Catholic Worker movement is about building a society in  
which it is easier to be good.  
To that I say, Amen!  
During Mass on the last day of the internship,  
About 14 of us were celebrating around Betsy and Brian's din-  
ing room table  
The last song was "How can I keep from singing."  
For me it was "How can I keep from crying,"  
The beauty of the Catholic Worker life had become evident and  
I was overwhelmed.  
"My life goes on in endless song  
Above earths lamentations,  
I hear the real, though far-off hymn  
That hails a new creation."  
Although I am certain that life lived in a Catholic Worker com-  
munity is in many ways and at many times difficult, painful,  
and tiring, my immersion experience tells me that it is none-  
theless a most beautiful, fulfilling and meaningful way of  
living.

Joan Wages, mother and  
peace-seeker from Floyd,  
Virginia, was an intern in this  
year's retreat.



Marching in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Parade, June 14, 2009.

The Des Moines Catholic Worker held its second annual internship and formation retreat June 12-21. Participants included six interns, our community members, faithful volunteers, and two students living here this summer.

The group participated in all of the daily activities of the community, as well as special events specifically programmed for the retreat.

Study materials included the Catholic Worker Aims and Means, a document laying out the main tenets of the Catholic Worker movement and social justice classes. Topics in-

cluded "History of the Des Moines Catholic Worker," led by Frank Cordaro and Ed Bloomer, "Action Planning," by Renee Espeland and Mona Shaw, "Life as a Young Adult in Community" from community member Tracy Robson and summer residents Veronica Stafford and Mallory Heggen.

On Saturday, June 13, the group participated in a non-violence training, facilitated by Bonnie Urfer from Nuke Watch. On Sunday, June 14, the group marched in the Gay Pride Parade in downtown Des Moines to support the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

The group also participated in two ongoing vigils: a Healthcare for All Vigil on Tuesday and an Anti-War Vigil on Thursday.

Evening events were open to the public and included, "The American Healthcare Crisis," led by Mona Shaw, a presentation on Gaza by guest Sr. Martha Larsen from the Michigan Peace Team, and local activist Karla gave a talk about her recent trip to Iran.

On the final night, retreatants celebrated at a Summer Solstice Party at the Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm in Maloy, Iowa.

The Summer Internship and Formation Retreat on the steps of the Dingman House

Front row, left to right:  
Megan Culbertson, Joan Wages (holding Squeak),  
Jorie Landers, Frank Cordaro

Second row: Tracy Robson,  
Veronica Stafford, Mallory Heggen

Third row: Renee Espeland,  
Mike Solomon

Standing: Rev. Kevin Maksym, Sr. Ann McMananon, Ed Bloomer,  
Mohamed Elkhandagawi,  
Mona Shaw, and David Goodner



# Musical Chairs and the Epistemology of War

by Mona Shaw

Her tight, gray curls would bounce when Miss Hunger, our kindergarten teacher snapped away another chair.

"You're not even trying, Becky," she told a small, timid girl in our class.

"I thought it was nicer to share," Becky whispered.

"This is the musical chairs game," Miss Hunger replied with strained patience, "You win the game if you sit in a chair before someone else takes it."

"But, Miss Hunger," Becky said, perplexed that Miss Hunger didn't see the obvious, "we have plenty of chairs."

Not to be outdone by a five-year-old's naiveté, Miss Hunger smiled, "We have plenty today, but one day there may not be enough chairs, and you need to learn how to compete for a chair when that time comes."

Becky was still confused and asked, "But, then, shouldn't we be learning how to make chairs?"

Moral contradictions learned in childhood are rarely resolved and normalize a routine of situational ethics that leave us chronically qualifying if not rationalizing these contradictions.

We say that sharing is a virtue, but "success" is measured by our ability to hoard or acquire. Lying is wrong when we're lied to, but becomes prudence if it keeps us in a job or otherwise seems to protect us. Secrets are called backbiting when we've been hurt

by them, but are discretion when they serve our personal interests.

Knowledge, when we seek it, is not so much about wanting to know, but about wanting to pass a test for "success," a test written and graded by those we perceive to have power over that "success." Students don't really enroll in college to learn—you can learn with a library card—but to earn a credential toward higher privilege or

*In a war economy, every NASDAQ exchange is an act of war, and every financial CEO is a war general.*

status. "Knowledge" is a commodity, routinely reduced to parlor games (figuratively and literally, e.g. Trivial Pursuit) in which we position ourselves as lords over those who have less of it.

Inevitably these rationalizations form information itself and create a structure of knowledge comprised of what we believe of what we've been told, and, in turn, we teach or pass on "knowledge" that isn't necessarily, or even usually, what we believe.

Because this is the case,

how we know what we know (or epistemology), is more informative about us, and therefore more important than what we know.

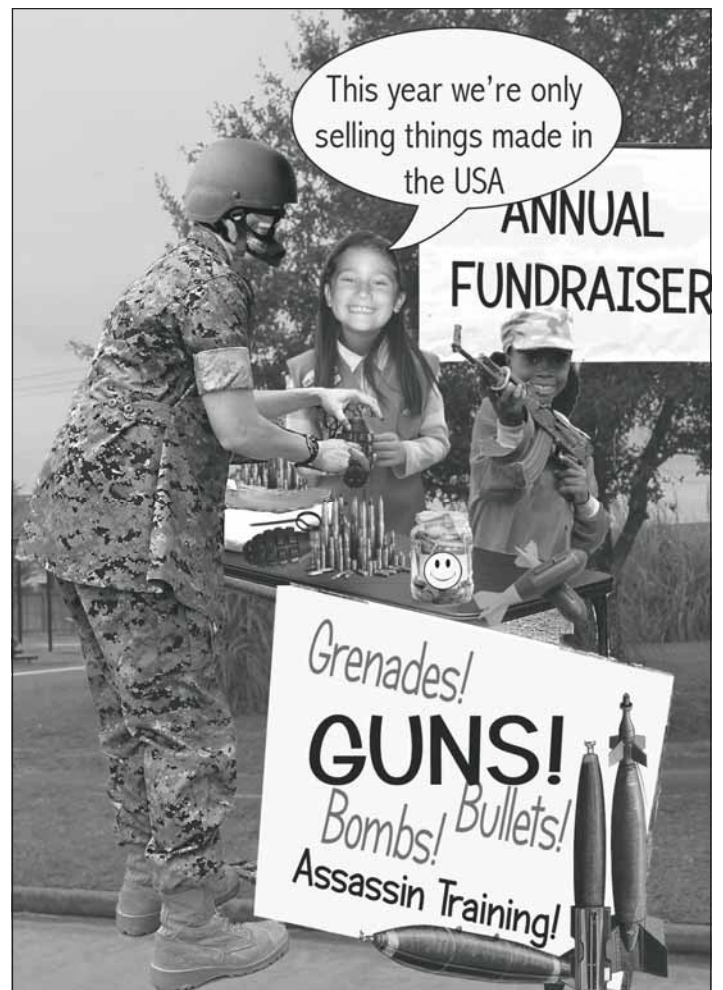
Accredited history textbooks do not contain facts and events, but are selected interpretations of facts and events written by the victors of war. Had England won the U.S. Revolutionary War, our scholarly characterizations of the British monarchy, or even monarchy itself, would read very differently. Had Spain conquered England during the European colonization of North America, elementary school students would engage in pageants about St. Augustine in Florida, rather than about Plymouth Rock or Jamestown. Had U.S. history not almost exclusively featured the lives and deeds of less than half its population (white, land-owning men), we would read a very different history indeed.

Significant details of battles won and lost, and the actions of the "heroes" involved are routinely obscured or eliminated altogether to the extent they cannot be exhumed by even the most sedulous scholars. Howard Zinn did the world a great service when he rescued much of our evaded history in his text, *A People's History of the United States*. However, Zinn is quick to concede that even in this effort, "There is no such thing as a pure fact, innocent of interpretation. Behind every fact presented to the world—by a teacher, a writer, anyone—is a judgment."

Moreover historical "facts," particularly the details of U.S. wars are endlessly revised—revisions that sometimes challenge proscribed thought as in Robert McNamara's *Fog of War* confessions regarding Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Vietnam, and sometimes reinforce the victor's right to power, as in Dick Cheney's *Kings of The Hill: How Nine Powerful Men Changed The Course Of American History*.

Given that our knowledge of the details of wars is partial and selective at best (and often intentionally misleading); our understanding of what war is can be no more enlightened or true.

In corporate controlled media "if it bleeds it leads" and in the canon of the empire "war is gore." War de-



fined as gore and weaponry is a contrivance by the authors of war that intends to obscure the horror of war. The sanitization of recent wars through corporate and governmental censorship of photo and video journalism of battles and casualties is a clear attempt to prevent public opposition to war that was provoked by disturbing coverage during previous wars. (If there is no gore; there is no war.) Not so clear, is the cover-up of other acts of war in which the gore is less apparent and military weaponry is not required. (There is no war, because there is no gore.) The covert (not to mention patriarchal) restriction of acts of war to gore and weaponry certainly supports the perpetuation of war by dulling stimuli for resistance.

Other acts of war are hidden on shredded paper under the desks of corporate executives whose wealth depends on war. The relationship between war and profit lead some to suggest we are currently indulging in Military Keynesianism, a national economic policy in which the government apportions out-sized spending to the military in an effort to stimulate economic growth. When, actually, Military Keynesianism resides in the good old days or is a phase we passed through in the mid-1990s and then became an unmitigated war economy.

Canadian author on the economics of war, Philippe Le Billon defines "war econ-

omy" as "a system of producing, mobilizing and allocating resources to sustain violence." The reality of the U.S. functioning under a war economy is not only evinced by the supremacy of the military industrial complex predicted by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1961. The military industrial complex now is the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the U.S.

The deliberate procession to a war economy was entrenched in the 1980s and 90s by Presidents Reagan (busting unions) and Clinton (NAFTA, GATT and the WTO) when manufacturing jobs were driven out of the country. Given that the GDP measures output generated through production by labor and property which is physically located within the confines of a country, if we set aside the provision of services used in daily living such as education, health care, and auto repair, we generate only two national products: war and capital.

Weapons and war are now our major (and essentially only) exports. Consumer goods are almost entirely manufactured outside the U.S. While investments in these goods profit the investors, they do little to grow the domestic economy (i.e. create jobs). Jobs are now dependent on venture capital (proven by the fact that floundering banks and financial institutions require chronic bailouts in



Renee Espeland and Mona Shaw at a Healthcare Symposium in March. Photo by Max Knauer

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The 22 arrested at the Courthouse before their arraignment.

## 22 Arrested in Xe/Blackwater Action

GALENA, IL—Twenty-two were arrested for trespassing on April 27, 2009, at the Xe (formerly named Blackwater) Training facility in Stockton, Illinois. The action followed the Midwest Catholic Workers Resistance Retreat held at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Stockton. The Retreat included an address by Jeremy Scahill, author of *Blackwater: the Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*. Blackwater/Xe has been persistently developing a training facility in rural Illinois and gained lucrative contracts worth billions to perform border security in the Southwest and is presently operating in Iraq and Afghanistan under the re-branded name Xe.

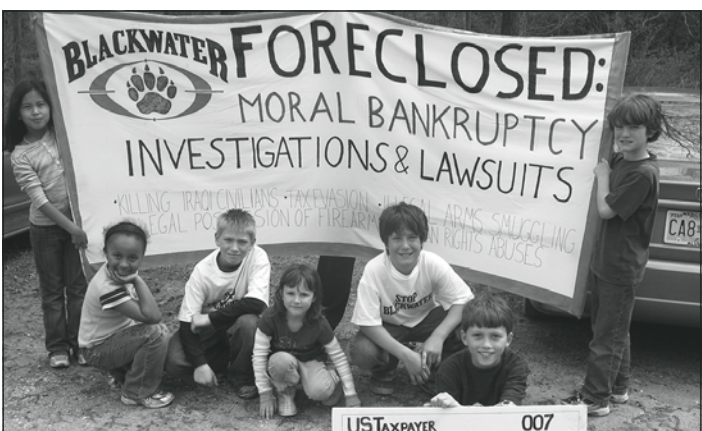
Those arrested had crossed onto Blackwater property in an attempt to serve the facility with an eviction notice for "moral bankruptcy." The defendants were arraigned in Jo Daviess County Court, Galena, IL, June 24. Seventeen pleaded guilty to Class B Misdemeanor Criminal Trespass and were sentenced to six months unsupervised probation and fines and court costs totaling \$250, half of what the State's Attorney had recommended. All were represented by Chicago attorney Edward L. Osowski.

These seventeen are: Eric Anglada, 29, New Hope Catholic Worker Farm; La Motte, IA, Ed Bloomer, 62, Des Moines Catholic Worker; Kenny Bishop, 24,

Champaign Catholic Worker; Frank Cordaro, 58, Des Moines Catholic Worker; Tyler Chen, 24, Champaign Catholic Worker; Elton Davis, 47, Des Moines IA; Chris Gaunt, 52, Grinnell, IA; Carolyn Griffeth, 36, St Louis Catholic Worker; Benjamin Johnson, 25, Dubuque Catholic Worker; Chrissy Kirchhoefer, 31, St Louis Catholic Worker; Mike Leutgeb Munson, 26, Rockford MN; Mary Moody, 44, New Hope Catholic Worker Farm, La Motte, IA; Laurel Nobilette, 22, Champaign Catholic Worker; Nick Pickrell, 27, Kansas City Catholic Worker; Mona Shaw, 58, Des Moines Catholic Worker; Chris Watson, 22, Champaign Catholic Worker; and Fred Turk, 71, Rock Falls, IL.

Four defendants asked for a bench trial and entered pleas of not guilty. They are Roberta, 65, and Don, 67, Thurstin-Timmerman of Park Falls WI, (former Milwaukee CWers), Lee Jankowski, 50, itinerate CW home repair person, and Becky Lambert, 25, from the Winona, MN, Catholic Worker. Their trial is scheduled for September 4, and will be represented by Osowski.

Michael Walli, 60, from the Duluth MN, CW, pleaded not guilty but requested a jury trial and asked for a court-appointed attorney, since Osowski was not available for a jury trial. The judge postponed accepting Walli's plea until an attorney was appointed.



## Euro Catholic Worker Gathering

by Christiane Danowski

This year's annual European Catholic Worker Gathering took place April 29 to May 3 in Duermen, Germany.

Folks from Catholic Worker Houses in Amsterdam (Netherlands), Hamburg and Dortmund (Germany) and London/Oxford (Great Britain) came to meet old and new friends. But this year something was different.

Since we started our annual European Catholic Worker Gathering efficiency in planning and coordinating our gatherings hasn't been our strong suit. This year everything was different, and we finally created Sugar Creek was in the middle of Europe.

Unfortunately the British, who coordinated the schedule, couldn't make it to the gathering because of family and work reasons. That left us without a "headmaster." However, fate worked its way, and we had Sugar Creek spirit in which people just stepped in and facilitated the first evening of getting to know each other and forming affinity groups. Well, to be honest (after all we are still Europeans and we were still in Germany), we still had a set schedule for the rest of the gathering.

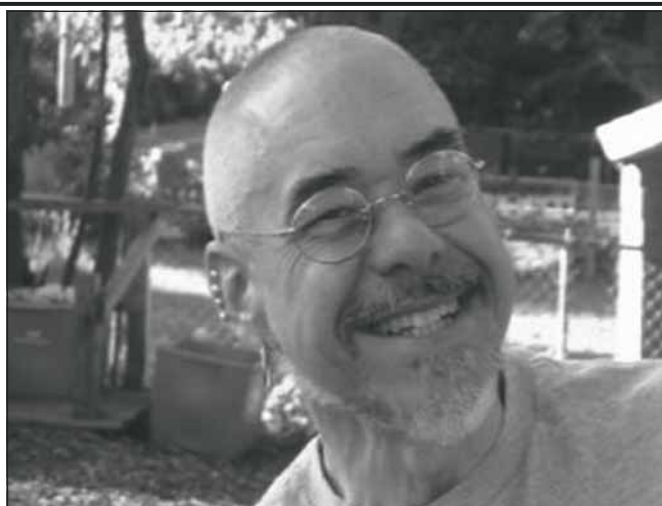
Our guest speaker Steve Jacobs from Columbia, Missouri, Catholic Worker shared his music and stories of resistance. After the gathering he (with the help of his "tour manager" Bernd) Steve toured Ger-

many giving nine talks and concerts in six cities. Thank you, Steve for your wonderful music and inspiration!

It was the fourth time we met at this beautiful spot called "Haus am See" (house at the lake) located in a nature reserve. Again this place offered lots of adventures for kids and grown ups alike: swimming, canoeing, hauling wood for the bonfires, playing soccer and more.

We've begun a Euro Catholic Worker website at [www.eurocatholicworker.org](http://www.eurocatholicworker.org) where you can find a list of all the communities, soup kitchens and houses connected to the Catholic Worker.

Christiane Danowski is a Catholic Worker from Dortmund, Germany.



Richard Cleaver

### Catholic Worker School Gives Workshop on Heterosexism

Richard Cleaver and Des Moines Catholic Worker Mona Shaw led a workshop titled, "Understanding Heterosexism from a Faith-Based Perspective," May 30-31, at the Catholic Worker School in LaMotte, Iowa.

Richard Cleaver is a former member of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community and the author of *Know My Name: A Gay Liberation Theology*. Cleaver has a long history with the Catholic Worker movement including living in the New York Catholic Worker with Dorothy Day.

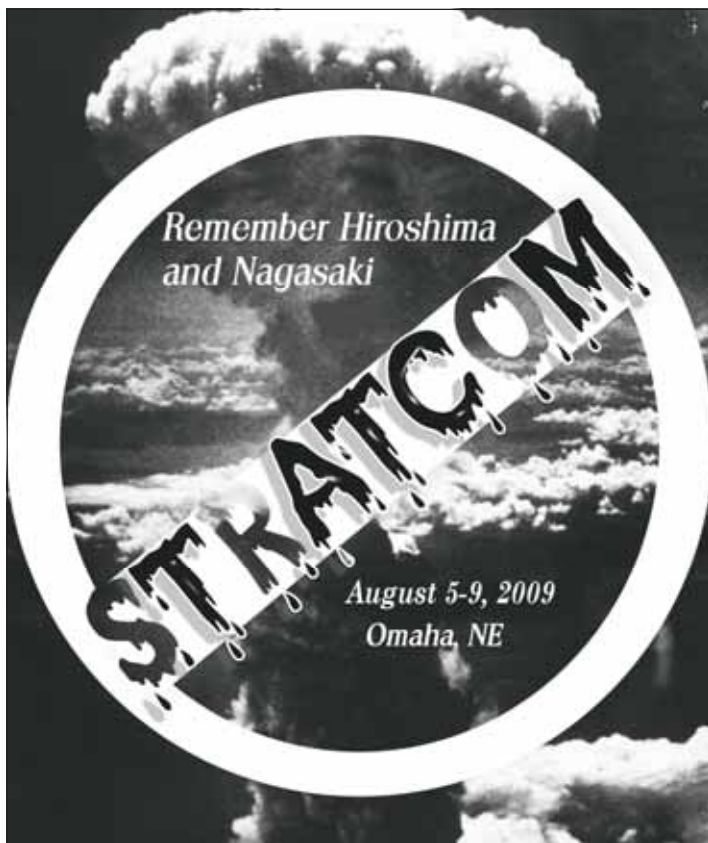
The Catholic Worker School is a project of New Hope Catholic Worker Farm in rural LaMotte and offers classes and workshops throughout the year. For information, call 563-584-9300.



## PROTEST

**STRACOM's annual Space Weapons and Arms Bazaar November 2-4, 2009, at the Qwest Convention Center in Omaha, Nebraska.**

*More details soon.*



Nebraskans for Peace and the Des Moines and Omaha Catholic Worker communities will host their annual "shake and bake" vigil at the gate of Offutt Air Force Base, in Bellevue, NE, home of the Strategic Nuclear (STRATCOM,) and the US Military Space Commands.

The program includes study, prayer, and penance in observance of the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, on August 6 and 9, 1945.

Overnight hospitality is available upon request starting Wednesday evening. Expect floor space in a church basement and bring your own bed roll. Anyone needing a bed or any other special accommodations please contact Jerry Ebner (see contact information below).

For more information contact:

Jerry Ebner  
cwomaha@gmail.com  
402-502-5887

Frank Cordaro  
515 282-4781  
frank.cordaro@gmail.com

### Schedule for the vigil and evening programs

#### Wednesday, August 5

Evening – Vigilers arrive.

#### Thursday, August 6

8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Vigil at Offutt /STRATCOM, the Kenny Gate

6 p.m. - Mass and Potluck at Omaha Catholic Worker

#### Friday, August 7

8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Vigil at Offutt / STRATCOM, the Kenny Gate

7 p.m. - "STRATCOM: the Next Generation in War-fighting" a talk by Tim Rinne, director, Nebraskans for Peace

#### Saturday, August 8

8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Vigil at Offutt / STRATCOM, the Kenny Gate

7 p.m. Movie, *The Original Child Bomb*

#### Sunday, August 9

8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Closing ceremony and prayer and possible line crossing.



Left-to-right: Ed Bloomer, Rev. Chet Guinn, Frank Cordaro, Renee Espeland, Brian Terrell, Elton Davis, and Sherry Hutchison were arrested in Harkin's office February 25.

## Seven Found Guilty and Fined for Sen. Tom Harkin Office Occupation

DES MOINES, IA—An Iowa judge fined six peace and social justice activists \$10 following a trial on Thursday, June 11, 2009, in Des Moines, Iowa. In U.S. District Court, Southern Court of Iowa, Magistrate Judge Celeste F. Bremer accepted guilty pleas from Ed Bloomer, 61, Frank Cordaro, 58, Renee Espeland, 47, Chester Guinn, 80, and Brian Terrell, 52, for "failure to comply with directions of a federal police officer." Defendant, Elton Davis, 47, was found guilty by Judge Bremer, after pleading "No Contest" to the same charge.

All six, along with a seventh person, Sherry Hutchison, 90, were arrested February 25, 2009, for "interference of official acts." (Hutchison had pleaded guilty to the original charge and paid her fine earlier.) All seven were Des Moines, Iowa, residents, except Brian Terrell, from Maloy, Iowa.

Upon arriving for trial, federal prosecutor, John Courter told the six were told their original charge of "interference with official acts" was dropped for lack of evidence, and then officers issued the new charge "failure to comply" charge to which pleas were later issued.

In February, about 20 people held vigil in Harkin's office for most of an afternoon to draw attention to war atrocities in the Gaza region and to urge Senator Harkin "to use his position and influence to demand an investigation of the embargo and occupation of Gaza and especially of the illegal use of U.S.-supplied

weapons against civilians there."

The group had compared Sen. Harkin's historic exposé of Tiger Cages, inhumane prisoner detention cells used by U.S. forces during the Vietnam War, to the Gaza Crisis. Declaring that "all of Gaza is a tiger cage", they asked for Harkin to show the same conscience and courage on behalf of the people of Palestine.

At 6:00 p.m., when Harkin's State Director, Dianne Liepa, announced the office was closing, seven were arrested after they refused to leave.

After stating their pleas, each defendant was permitted to speak to the court. Ed Bloomer spoke first and explained that he could not leave the office when so ordered because he "could not give up on hope that Senator Harkin would come through and stand up for those suffering in Palestine the way he stood up for those who suffered in the tiger cages." Rev. Chet Guinn reiterated the same hope and defended this hope as a reasonable one by alluding to what he saw as Harkin's "long history of being a champion of social justice."

Frank Cordaro and Brian Terrell both spoke of doing a relative comparison between the "crimes" the activists had committed and the war crimes committed in Gaza.

"We were originally accused of "disrupting good order," Brian Terrell said, "but if 'good order' keeps aid and food out of a war torn region like Gaza, then

'good order' needs to be disrupted or fractured."

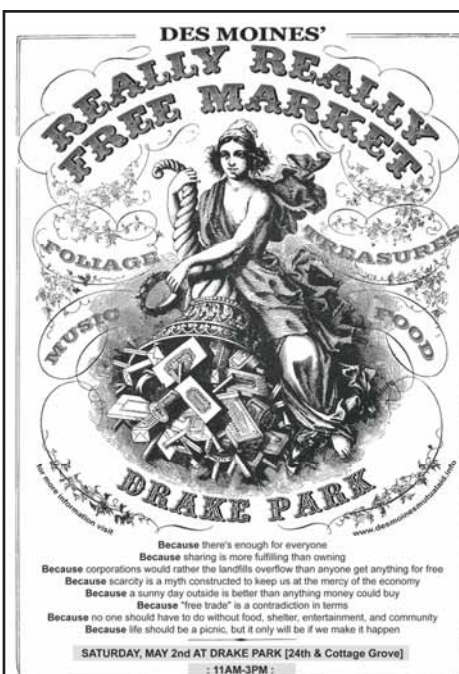
"The 'real' crimes weren't the ones that happened in Sen. Harkin's office," Frank Cordaro later added, "the real crimes are elected officials capitulating to AIPAC power and money over the suffering of the poor and oppressed."

Elton Davis spoke of the "proxy" that Senator Harkin employed when the elected official made policy decisions and said "I am personally responsible for doing what I can to make sure that proxy is used responsibly."

Renee Espeland explained that their actions taking place on Ash Wednesday was no accident.

"Ash Wednesday," Espeland said, "is a day of repentance. I was not there to blame, but to confess my own complicity in these war atrocities and to begin my repentance of them. I was there to take responsibility for altering the public narrative of these atrocities. The public narrative is skewed to benefit those who benefit from war. Our elected officials are in a position to take the truthful narrative to the people but are often controlled by profiteering of war that buys their silence. I chose to have a higher expectation of Senator Harkin than this. I chose to believe in him more than this."

In sentencing fines well-below the \$125, suggested minimum fine, Judge Bremer told the defendants, "I appreciate the strength of your convictions."



### The Young Adult Activists Group

meets Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m. at the Des Moines Catholic Worker Berrigan House.

The group has engaged in many activities including a Really, Really Free Market on May 2, 2009.

For more information, contact Tracy Robson, tracy.robson@gmail.

## Whistle Blower Knows Where Bodies Are Buried

*Continued from page 6*

from money, it's relationships that count ... the insurance industry has hired scores and scores of lobbyists, many of whom have worked for members of Congress, and some who are former members of Congress."

The insurance industry and other health care interests are lobbying hard against a government-sponsored, nonprofit, public health insurance option, and are spending, accord-

ing to *The Washington Post*, up to \$1.4 million per day to sway Congress and public opinion.

Don't be fooled. Profit-driven insurance claim denials actually kill people, and Wendell Potter knows where the bodies are buried. His whistle-blowing may be just what's needed to dump what's sick in our health care system.

*Amy Goodman is the host of "Democracy Now!"*

## Insurance Profits Make Us Sick Campaign

*Continued from page 5*

We feel as strongly about this domestic social injustice as we do about the great crimes of Empire that our government commits though its international war making and our Global Corporations commit through their exploitation of the peoples and resource of the world. We hear a call to use the same means of nonviolent direct action in this healthcare struggle as we have in our past peace and justice making efforts.

We see our nonviolent resistance in all these areas

as all part of the same "despoiling the principalities and the powers" that St. Paul writes of in Colossians 2:15 and that all Christians are duty bound to enter into with Jesus. We call on our supporters and friends to wish us well in this new endeavor to speak truth to the powers that be, prayer for our efforts and ask those who can to join us in following Jesus' directive to heal the sick and make whole the world in which the sick can be healed.

## The Epistemology of War

*Continued from page 8*

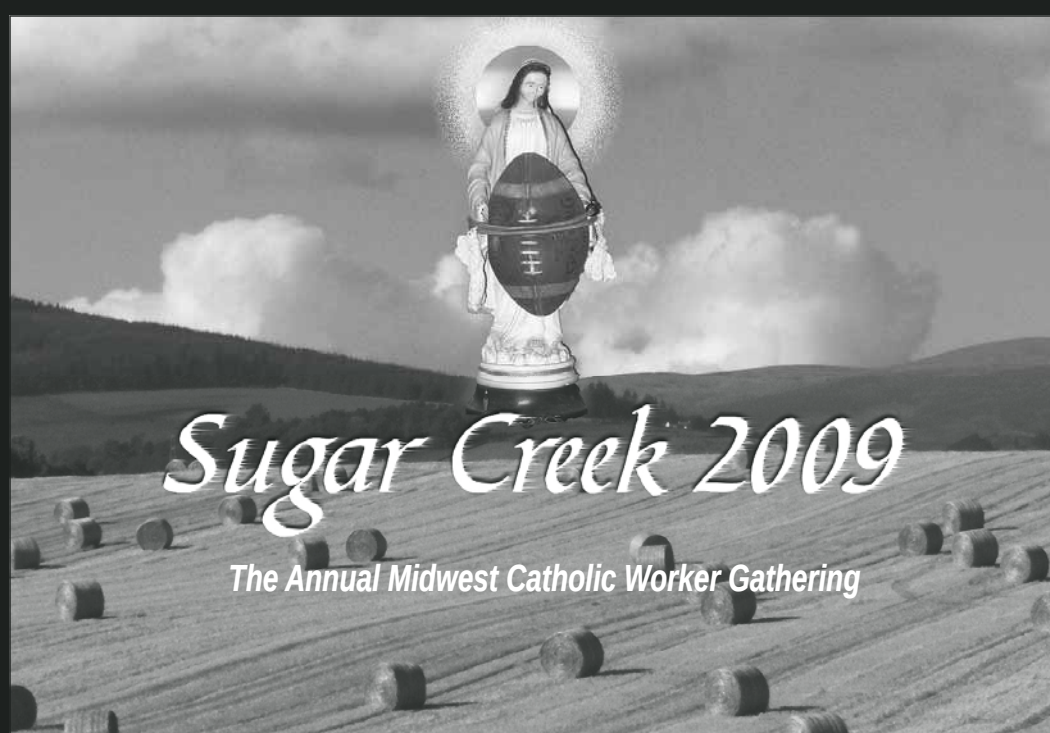
order for our economy to survive), and venture capital is dependent on war. War, the production of military training and weapons, the military industrial complex, the privatization of war, the control of international territories of capital investments, et al, are the only viable leverage the U.S. can wield to retain profitability in the global economy. In a war economy, the economy is not simply stimulated by war; the survival of the economy requires war.

In a war economy, every NASDAQ exchange is an act of war, and every financial CEO is a war general. The current war economy is so insidiously entrenched and partnered with greed so pathological that the collapse of Wall Street may not merely be inevitable, but required and, yes, even desirable in order for human life to ever cease being sacrificed for human greed.

If we are to end war, as well as confronting military sites, we must pressure and abolish the institutions that profit from war. The health insurance industry is a good place to start.

There is no equivocation in stating that healthcare denial is an act of war. This is true on prima facie evidence and not only because of the industry's symbiotic relationship with the military. (Health Net, a major health insurance corporation, is the seventh highest-paid defense contractor.) Denial of health care treatment by health insurance corporations leads to at least 20,000 deaths each year. (Some estimate these annual deaths number as high as 100,000.) So, healthcare apartheid and genocide account for an astronomical portion of the casualties of war.

If we are to accept Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assertion, "Peace is not the absence of conflict, it is the presence of justice," we cannot pretend there is a distinction between a justice issue and a war issue. We can either capitulate to the lies of the Empire that such distinctions are meaningful, or we can study war no more. We can study peace through our witness to all war profiteers (i.e. all venture capitalists) that we're on to them. We can teach others how to build more chairs.



The annual Midwest Catholic Worker gathering in Sugar Creek, Iowa, will be September 18-20. The Des Moines Catholic Worker and Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm are hosting this year's event.

For more information, contact

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## And We Keep Working...

*Continued from page 1*

really want to change this time!," means nothing to a residential treatment facility that's seen her come through their doors multiple times and leave through the same doors several days later because of contraband drugs snuck through inside socks.

I'm at a loss with Courtney. She's finally found a healthy support system that isn't an illegal drug. Me. But what do I do with it? Try to empower her to change? Try to get her into a treatment facility? Just be supportive while she continues her habit? I pray. And I wait for an answer.

### WRAPPED UP

From time to time I have the blessing of running into our guests outside of our daily hospitality hours. I love going downtown and enjoying the big-city feel of Des Moines, but it's always nice to run into someone you know downtown and to remember that Des Moines isn't really big or scary, it's small and homey.

I ran into one of our few female guests, Angela, a few weeks back while strolling near the library downtown. She was sitting on a park bench, looking distressed, and I asked if I could join her and chat for a while.

In situations such as these, it's very easy for those of us who live to serve the poor to offer advice to those we serve. However, it's much more helpful to offer a listening ear and a welcoming heart. So, I held my tongue as Angela expressed her sincere distress that she may have an STI (sexually trans-

mitted infection). She wanted to be tested immediately, but, it being a Sunday, knew that she wouldn't be able to go anywhere until Monday. I simply told her, "Well, just don't have sex until you get tested."

"It's not that easy," she said, with downcast eyes.

"Why?"

After a few moments' pause, during which Angela makes me swear I'll never tell anyone what she's about the tell me, she spills that she's recently gotten herself wrapped up in an escort service. It's good work that pays well, but an STI could ruin it for her. And getting out would be impossible. If she left and the authorities found out about the service, she'd be the first suspect as to who'd leaked information, and it could be potentially very dangerous for her.

After she told me about her current situation, I understood much better why she was so distressed about a possible case of herpes. Yes, if it were me I'd be worried, but it wouldn't be the only thing on my mind. With her, it's almost a life or death situation. And definitely a job-losing situation if she tests positive for herpes.

Angela knows that where she is, is not where she wants to be. But right now, what can she do? She needs the money to pay the bills, and she can't leave or she'd be considered suspect. She constantly has inner turmoil because she knows she shouldn't be doing what she's doing, but she's in so far she can't get out.

Angela wants to go to culinary school. She wants to go to California and make a way for herself. She wants to get away from this life. But she knows that if she runs, she'll be found. And that could be even more dangerous than inadvertently giving herpes to a rich, white business man who uses her escort service.

I've thought about Angela a lot lately. She's a smart girl who made one bad choice that can't be fixed easily. I haven't seen her lately, and I pray that she's OK, and that she's finding a way to get out of her mess.

### WHAT NOW?

I've come to learn that spending time with the least of these really helps one to consider a complexity of life that isn't easily apparent. The system pushes these people down, instead of bringing them up as it's intended to do. Courtney desperately wants to become clean, but the system knows her and refuses to help. Angela needs to make a way, and no system can help her out of the mess she's inadvertently gotten herself into. It makes people do things they don't want to do, just to get by. And while our house of hospitality doesn't fix the situation, we pray that it would at least make the lives of those around us a little more bearable. And, as we try to share the love of Jesus in the form of a cup of coffee, a listening ear, and a nonjudgmental heart, we do our best to live out the gospel one story at a time.

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*The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community*

July, 2009

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Volume 33, No. 2

How you can help...

| <b>Prayers and Love</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Food</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Health and Hygiene</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Household Supplies</b>                                                                                   | <b>Clothing and Bedding</b>                                                                         | <b>Volunteers</b>                                                                                                         | <b>Cash Donations</b>                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Without your prayers and goodwill, nothing happens.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Cereal<br>Coffee<br>Fruit<br>Vegetables<br>Beans<br>Meat and Fish<br>Soups and Stews<br>Sugar and artificial sweetener<br>Coffee Creamer<br>Juices<br>Milk<br>Cheese<br>Butter or Margarine<br>Eggs<br>Salt and pepper<br>Salad dressing and condiments | Tylenol<br>Ibuprofen<br>Multiple Vitamins<br>Ointment<br>Disinfectants<br>Band-Aids<br>Feminine Hygiene Items<br>Disposable Razors<br>Shaving Cream<br>Shampoo and Conditioner<br>Lotion<br>Deodorant<br>Toothbrushes<br>Toothpaste<br>Toilet Paper | Bleach<br>Laundry Detergent<br>Dish Soap<br>Murphy's Oil Soap<br>Pinesol<br>Toilet Cleaners<br>Paper Towels | Underwear<br>T-shirts<br>Towels<br>Blankets<br>Sheets<br>Pillows<br>Socks<br>Sweatshirts<br>Hoodies | Individuals and work crews for hospitality (serving food, clean-up), cleaning and general inside and outside maintenance. | Cash donations are essential to pay taxes, utilities, repair and maintenance bills and to purchase supplies. |
| <div><div><b>House Repairs</b><br/>With four old houses, there are plenty of projects large and small. We invite do-it-yourselfers--individuals or groups--with skills in carpentry, plumbing, painting, electrical, etc. to come in, look over our housing needs, and choose a project. Bring your own tools if possible.</div><div><b>Major Foundation Repair</b><br/>Ligutti House will need major foundation repair completed this summer. Any help in labor or donations to help defray this expense will be very gratefully received.</div></div> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                             |                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                              |
| <div>Peace and justice books and videos are always welcome donations for the Berrigan House Library.</div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                             |                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                              |

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