



# THE NEWS

"Serving Hungry and Homeless Long Islanders"

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## INN This Issue:

**Media War on Hunger and Poverty**  
PAGE 2

**Thanks & Giving**  
PAGE 3

**Constant Companion**  
PAGE 4

**Charitable Giving**  
PAGE 5

**Wish List**  
PAGE 5

## A Mother's Tribute to Her Son

By Angie Ruhry (Mary Brennan INN Volunteer)

*Written in memory of her son, Peter*

*Who lost his battle with addiction to a drug overdose*

**A**t the time Peter passed, I had been volunteering at the Mary Brennan INN, Long Island's largest soup kitchen, located in Hempstead. I had requested that in lieu of flowers people donate either to The INN or to Mr. Holland's Opus since music was such a large part of who Peter was. The money we collected enabled us to sponsor a meal for the guests in memory of Peter. I had started volunteering at The INN because I knew that if Peter didn't beat his disease of addiction he too may one day end up eating at a soup kitchen and I would want someone to serve him with a smile and dignity. I had not grown up around the disease and needed to educate myself once Peter was affected. I attended Al-Anon for the past four years which saved my life. Prompted and encouraged by that passionate mission, I would like to share with you the words I read at the meal we served in Peter's memory on June 8th at the Mary Brennan INN:

"Your meal today is being served in memory of my son Peter who passed away at the age of 23, two weeks before Christmas. After a four year struggle with the terrible disease of drug addiction, he died of a drug overdose. The disease is terrible. It's one where parents think, 'if only my child had a "socially acceptable disease" like cancer at



*At the meal sponsored in Peter Ruhry's memory, family and friends paused for a photo.*

least there'd be no shame connected to it." It's a disease where you need to use tough love in order to give your child the hope of surviving.' It's a disease where most people see the victims as weak, spoiled, selfish, too social or having no will power. The fact is that true addiction is a compulsion to use, where one drink is too many and a thousand is not enough; where the alcoholic or addict uses in isolation; where the consequences, even the risk of death, are not a deterrent; where it takes true strength and courage to take the first step and ask for help and when in recovery they will pay it forward and help others. In this disease, a mistake or relapse can cost your life. We need to separate the terrible disease from the people affected by

*(continue on page 6)*

# The Media War on Hunger and Poverty

As we head toward the holiday season, the issues of hunger and homelessness receive a more prominent place in our newspapers and on television news programs. The current economy and statistics are staggering when you realize that 168,000 Long Islanders (6.1%) live below the federal poverty line. This poverty line means that those below that “line” earn less than \$22,100 per year for a family of four. These same figures, taken nationwide, make our region not eligible for federal or even state funding, as it is above the 15.1% national average.

Imagine providing for a family of four on \$22,100 here on Long Island where the costs of basic household expenses are 40% higher than the national average. Accounting for those increased costs adds an additional 60,000 more Long Islanders living below the federal poverty line. It becomes even more difficult to bear for working families who often spend 40-50% of their income or higher on housing. Each day our volunteers and staff members marvel at how resourceful the guests of The INN are and how they are able to survive such challenges with so little resources. The vast majority of those who rely on us for support live above the federal poverty line, but are unable to

stretch those dollars they make to provide food, shelter and clothing among the countless bills they face.

The INN is often asked – how are you dealing with feeding so many more guests? In just the past three years, guests in our soup kitchens have increased from 225,000 to 400,000. There are also thousands who are working and simply rely on us as a food pantry for groceries to ensure that their families have food. There are thousands who need clothing and other donated items in order to survive. We accomplish all of this by asking donors to give, and to give as generously as possible. We ask volunteers to dedicate more time and try to stretch every dollar to ensure that everyone who seeks our help receives what they need. All of this places The INN in a very challenging predicament.

The INN has always relied on charitable support. Supporters continue to be extraordinarily generous. At the same time The INN’s soup kitchens will not be receiving funding from the Federal Emergency Food and Shelter Program funding in Suffolk County and Nassau County has announced additional cuts in reimbursement for guests housed in The INN’s Emergency Shelters. The INN is launching its first ever annual campaign to raise an additional \$2 million in direct charitable support. If successful The INN will be able to maintain its current level of service to their guests.

The INN is fortunate that the members of the media have been responsibly bringing attention to our mission. While it may not sell newspapers or gather higher ratings, we are hopeful that it will help create awareness and

comfort for all who are seeking support. It

is never easy to rely on strangers for assistance. At The INN we respond with such help in a manner designed to preserve each guest’s dignity and respect. We are indeed hopeful that this increased media attention will assist in bringing attention to our mission and tell the story

that there are those who are willing to share their resources with their neighbors who need assistance.



# A Day of Thanks and Giving

Thanksgiving has always been regarded as America's favorite holiday. It is a time to give thanks for all that we have. Most often people reflect fondly over a special meal enjoyed with close family and friends. When you were a child in school you likely dressed in traditional pilgrim hats and others in feathers representing Native Americans as you learned of the origin of this annual celebration, which brought different cultures together to celebrate the accomplishment of surviving difficult times.

The INN, as an organization, is symbolic of a modern day thanksgiving as we go about our daily business. Originally named the Interfaith Nutrition Network, The INN's guests, volunteers and supporters come from all faiths, but share a common faith in humanity. Thanksgiving happens every day at The INN, when we assist each other through difficult times. It has been a blessing that, for the past six years, The INN has hosted an annual Day of Thanks and Giving. We would like you and your family to join us. Just this single meal, fellowship and a chance to tour the largest soup kitchen on Long Island might enrich your family as you prepare for Thanksgiving.

At this year's Day of Thanks and Giving, we are also able to recognize three extraordinary groups who have played a wonderful role in support of The INN in unique and special ways. The Garden City Community Church,



*Families enjoy casual meal as they join others in support of The INN at the Day of Thanks and Giving.*

Maria Regina R.C. Church and Temple Beth El of Great Neck are each being recognized for the many ways these faith communities have worked with the common goal to support The INN with specific efforts to assist in serving hungry and homeless Long Islanders.

On Sunday, November 13, 2011 from 1:30-3:00 PM, you are invited to join in this traditional Thanksgiving Feast with all the trimmings, expertly prepared and donated by Ben's Kosher Deli. As a result of donations from Ben's, desserts by Diane's Restaurant and Bakery and RTS Print Services, 100% of your contribution to this event helps The INN provide for the needs of the guests we serve. A contribution of \$125 per family, \$50 per adult or \$25 per student makes this an affordable meal. This is the only meal which is served at the Mary Brennan INN soup kitchen where a fee is charged. It provides a unique opportunity for your family to dine and learn more about The INN's mission and efforts.

Reservations are required for this event and arrangements can be made by calling Nora White at (516) 486-8506 ext. 108. Please bring your family to join others as we share and work together to strengthen our community here on Long Island. Attendees are also invited to bring traditional thanksgiving food items to assist The INN prepare to help all those in need of Thanksgiving meals. Last year over 5,000 families in need were given their Thanksgiving meals by the generosity of their neighbors who supported The INN's drives.



*Ronnie and Cindy Dragoon and Todd Silverstein of Ben's Kosher Deli provides delicious fare annually.*

# Constant Companion

By Dave Golbert

Occasionally I go a day without eating. Sometimes it's in observance of a religious holiday. Sometimes it's in preparation for a medical test. The idea of deliberately foregoing food for 24 hours is something I understand intellectually. It's my body that seems appalled at the notion.

I'm fine when I first wake up that morning. I shower and shave as always. I walk past the kitchen as if it holds nothing of interest for me—when in fact it shouts, “Breakfast.”

By ten or eleven o'clock, I hear my stomach growl, “What's going on here?” The emptiness echoes within me, like a wail reverberating off the walls of an endless hallway. By noon, the hunger has finally realized that there is no food on the way. My body has resigned itself to doing without. I believe that I could go forever without eating. I've found that place where food has no importance.

Yet, even as I congratulate myself on having such self-control, I remember that there are many outside the walls of my home for whom hunger is a constant companion. For whom, a full plate of hot, nutritious food is more mirage than reality.

Every week, I see hungry men, women, and children, in line with their trays, waiting for food at The

INN's soup kitchen. They can smell the soup in its large kettle; they can see the steam rising from the carrots and peas; they hear the cheese

melting on the macaroni. For those who wait for food, each meal is an answer to a prayer they've said so many times before that they're no longer aware that they're praying.

Each year, on the day I give up food, I pray that those whose lives are marked by “doing without” will have their prayers answered. If you've had some blessings in your life, please join me in supporting the work of The INN, which provides food for hungry stomachs and hope for hungry hearts.

Your contribution—in whatever amount you can afford—has the power to answer the prayers of those for whom “doing without” is an all too familiar way of life.

“As we nourish others, so will we be nourished.”



*Members of the India Association of Long Island prepare for Diwali by sponsoring a meal at the Mary Brennan INN*

# Charitable Gift Annuity

If you are inspired by The INN's cause and want to support our mission, while at the same time securing for yourself and/or a loved one a fixed source of income that will last for the rest of that lifetime, then you should consider a contribution to The INN in the form of a charitable gift annuity. A charitable gift annuity is a simple contract through which a donor and/or his or her beneficiary is provided with a stream of fixed payments for the duration of his or her life in exchange for a one time gift. These payments are fixed from the outset—they will neither increase nor decrease, ever, no matter what happens to interest rates or to the stock market—and The INN is contractually obligated to follow through on them.

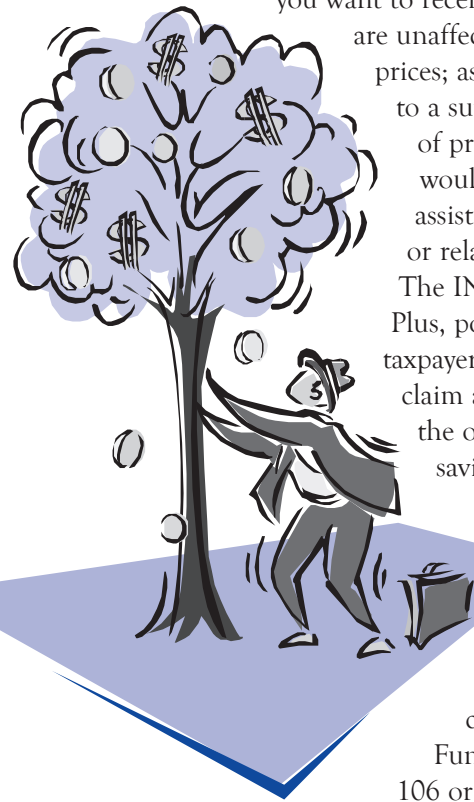
The process is really pretty simple: The person who contributes an asset for the annuity is called the 'donor,' and the person who receives the payments is the 'annuitant,' or 'beneficiary.' The payment period is measured either by one annuitant's life (who in most cases is the donor), or by the lives of two joint annuitants (usually, but not always, husband and wife). The maximum number of annuitants is two; the payments can be made to them jointly or successively.

The size of the payments will depend on the value of the contribution, the number of annuitants, and the age(s) of the annuitant(s).

There are many personal benefits to making a gift annuity: if you want to receive reliable fixed payments which

are unaffected by interest rates or stock prices; assure a continuation of payments to a surviving spouse without the delay of probate proceedings; or if you would simply like to provide financial assistance to an elderly parent, sibling or relative, then making a gift annuity to The INN might be in your best interest. Plus, portions of the gift are tax-deductible: taxpayers who itemize deductions can claim a charitable deduction for some of the original gift, resulting in significant savings on end-of-year income taxes.

For more information on the various ways you can contribute, or to arrange for a confidential discussion regarding charitable gift annuities to The INN, please contact Joe Barry, Director of Fundraising, at (516) 486-8506 ext. 106 or email at [jbarry@the-inn.org](mailto:jbarry@the-inn.org).



## Our Wish List

*The INN is in need of:*

- Canned meats (tuna, turkey, chicken, ham), canned soup, canned pasta sauce (please, no glass)
- Non perishable vegetables, fruit, Chef Boyardee-type products
- Hygiene products – soap, shampoo, toothpaste, etc. (travel sizes preferred for all items)
- Disposable diapers (all sizes), baby lotion, wipes and baby powders
- **New** underwear and socks
- Gently used towels, washcloths, blankets and bed linens
- Turkey and fixing bag donations
- Winter coats, hats, scarves and gloves
- New unwrapped toys

Please bring your donations to the Mary Brennan INN, located at 100 Madison Avenue in the village of Hempstead, Monday to Friday, 9 am–11 am, 2 pm–4 pm. For directions please call (516) 486-8506 ext 114. Thank you.

## A Mother's Tribute cont. from pg 1

the disease. We always have been and always will be proud of the man Peter was and respect the hard life he lived and his struggles to overcome those situations. Peter, like so many others suffering from this disease, was a caring, sensitive, funny, loving person who always gave whatever change he had in his pocket to the person on the street with a cup in his hand, even though he didn't have much money because he was supporting himself.

Peter taught me so much. He taught me:

- That it takes true courage and strength to ask for help. He recognized he had a problem that he couldn't get rid of on his own.
- He taught me about gratitude...there is always someone worse off than you and there is always something to be grateful for.
- He taught me about forgiveness...forgiveness is really more for you to obtain serenity and besides, who doesn't need to be forgiven for something?
- He taught me to not be judgmental. I never thought I was someone who judged others, but it's part of being human and I've really been making an effort to work on not judging others.
- He taught me that every day is a gift.
- He taught me about hope.
- And lastly, he taught me about helping others and that by giving you receive.

Because I saw Peter giving his donations to those on the street and doing all his little acts of kindness to those in need, and hearing about his service in the 12 step program and also because he told me about so many angels who helped him during his four years battling this disease, I decided a year and a half ago to volunteer here hoping to make a difference in your lives. When Peter passed away, the wonderful, caring staff and volunteers here gave my family and me much love, comfort and support...by giving you receive.

Please know that when I prepare or serve your meals I treat it as if I were preparing or serving meals for my family and friends and especially that I see you all as great people who could be my son. Peter loved his family and friends first and foremost and many of them are here today to serve you. A close second was his love of music and a couple of his friends are here and will play for you today. His next love was his love of food-both cooking and eating it. So when Peter passed away we asked family and friends not to send flowers but instead to donate either here to The INN or to Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation that provides music programs and instruments to those in need. Peter would be so very happy to know he played a part in serving you your meal today, so please enjoy your meal!"



twitter

**The INN is on facebook and Twitter.**

**To become a fan and receive updates on The INN's activities and announcements please go to**

**[www.facebook.com/theinnli](http://www.facebook.com/theinnli) or [twitter.com/the\\_inn](http://twitter.com/the_inn).**

### SOUP KITCHENS

Bethany Hospitality INN - Central Islip  
Bread & More INN - Riverhead  
Mary Brennan INN - Hempstead  
Community INN - Patchogue  
Emanuel Trinity INN - Patchogue  
Freeport INN - Freeport  
Having Friends INN - Sayville  
INN Friendship - East Patchogue  
Invited INN - Rocky Point  
Long Beach Food and Friendship INN  
Mercy INN - Wyandanch  
Neighbors INN - Patchogue  
North Fork Community Supper INN - Greenport  
North Shore INN - Glen Cove  
St. Paul's Community INN - Patchogue  
Shepherd's INN - Lake Ronkonkoma  
Thee Gather INN - Lake Grove  
Thee Island INN - Middle Island  
Welcome INN - Port Jefferson

### SHELTERS

Donald E. Axinn INN  
Edna Moran INN  
Rosa Parks INN

### PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES

Alana Grace INN Administrative Center  
Catherine Martin INN Veterans Housing Program  
Catherine O'Neill INN  
Clarice Silk INN  
Crisis Housing Project  
Delta Funding INN  
Dr. Victor G. and Rejane Herman INN  
Homelessness Prevention  
Jane's INN  
Long-Term Housing  
Mary Moore INN  
Palmer INN



*"Serving Hungry and Homeless Long Islanders"*

211 Fulton Avenue Hempstead, NY 11550  
(516) 486-8506 • [www.the-inn.org](http://www.the-inn.org)

*The INN has established a policy regarding all guests. To protect their privacy, no guest is to be photographed while using the services at The INN.*