

MANNA MATTERS



FEBRUARY 2021

SPOTLIGHT ON: DORETHA MINOR

by Victoria York

The first time I met Doretha Minor in 2013, I was struck by her smile and positivism. A certified nutrition educator, she was preparing to teach a nutritional cooking class for Manna Cafe's clients (as part of the Operation Pomegranate program). At the time, she was just one of several people who offered their expertise by teaching these sessions, but she quickly became our clients' favorite instructor. So it was no surprise when, a couple years later, she became Manna's sole instructor. Finally, in May of 2020, Kenny asked her to come on board full-time as Program & Volunteer Coordinator. "I said yes because I already loved Operation Pomegranate," she explains. She now also does demonstrations for Change for Change (Manna's year-long diabetes prevention program).

"Our clients love learning."

Part of Doretha's new job means working closely with volunteers. Because she was hired during COVID-19 (which severely reduced the number of volunteers), she's been "working the 'lean years,'" she says.



"I hope there are some 'fat years' coming. We've had a hard time. Of course I understand that people don't want to be around other people, but we still have so many clients needing help. Volunteers are what make this place work."

What's Doretha's favorite part of the job? "Operation Pomegranate and Change for Change," she answers immediately. "But another favorite is Basic Adulting (hour-long life skills classes). I have a huge amount of freedom regarding what classes to offer: meal planning, time management, car maintenance—our clients *love* learning. I feel blessed every day. I've always loved working, and I feel accomplished no matter where I work—but here at Manna I get to see the hand of God move in people's lives almost every day. If I don't see it on a certain day, I blame myself because I know it's happening! I'm right where I'm supposed to be."

Photographer: Gabriela Barboza

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THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

In December of 2020, Manna Cafe director Kenny York spent two weeks as a homeless man in a quest to find a solution to the homelessness crisis in Clarksville. He challenged both government and church by asking, "Do you care? Prove it." As a result, many of you are now asking, "How can we help? What can we do?" Kenny offered this answer:

"This is about starting a conversation — or conversations — to make change, to get a shelter or a tent city. We have to start the conversation, and it has to be more than just me. It has to be community leaders, willing to

come together, sit down around a table and say, 'OK, we need to address this instead of ignoring the problem and hoping it'll go away.' It takes a body of folks to figure out the solution. There are so many rules and regulations that unless someone is versed in all that, they're not going to know the answers. But if we come together and figure out what we can and can't do, then zoning can be changed and laws can be changed. All I can be right now is a noisemaker, but there are others in our community who have the skills and the seats of office who can make those changes and decisions and get the right answers."

Kenny pauses to collect his thoughts, then continues, "During three different conversations [with homeless individuals] I've been told, 'I



was living outside without a tent or anything; I finally got a tent and provisions, but only a week later someone destroyed my camp, cut up my tent, and destroyed my property." In other words, there are homeless people who are acquiring what they need to survive but within a few days it's being destroyed because, technically, they're trespassing ... yet they have nowhere else to go.

"It gets scary-cold out here."

Kenny adds, "It gets scary-cold out here. Even for me — pretending to be homeless for a couple of weeks — it's miserable. The homeless get wet, and they get hypothermia, and we justify it by



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- \$300 per month funds a community meal (approx. 150 hot plates).
- \$100 per month provides 50 people with a hot, nutritious meal.
- \$55 provides a motel room for one night for an individual or family during inclement weather (\$275 = a full week).
- \$35 per month funds a 60-pound box of food for a local person or family.

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give online at MannaCafeMinistries.com/donate.
Manna Cafe is a 501(c)3 organization; all gifts are tax deductible.



saying, 'They were probably drunk and passed out,' but there are a lot of sober people living in tents. There's a big percentage of homeless people who are women and children, and sometimes they have to stay in places that aren't safe."

Nevertheless, the responsibility to find a solution also rests on the Christian community. "I'm not just talking about government," says Kenny, "I'm talking about church leaders as well. In a conversation I had with a friend of mine who works the streets as well, we were talking about the fact that there are 300 and some-odd churches in Clarksville. If each church were to 'adopt' one [homeless] person and do what it takes to get them off the streets, whether that means getting them into rehab, helping them find a job, helping them find a place to live — set them up for success — even if 50 percent were a success story, that would be 150 people off our streets. Just think of the difference that would make. And if we did it once, we could do it again and again until there wouldn't have to be a shelter because the church would be taking care of its own and making sure people get a fresh start."

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LUNCH WITH LINCOLN, DINNER WITH DAD

Recently we asked our emergency warming center guests and volunteers, "If you could share a meal with anyone at all, living or dead, who would it be?" Here are their answers:

"Edgar Allen Poe, because I love all his writings."



ASHLEY, 39

"Miss Claudette (Manna's case worker), because she's the nicest lady I know."



MICHAEL, 63

"One of our forefathers, like George Washington. I'd like to know what made him tick."



TROY, 58

"Abe Lincoln: I want to know what kind of courage it took to go against everyone else to do the right thing."



JEFF, 48

"My mother, because she was the perfect human being."



CHARLES, 74

"My dad, because I miss everything about him."



BUNNY, 46

MISSION STATEMENT

Manna Cafe Ministries serves people in need in Clarksville/Montgomery County through a soup kitchen on wheels, food box distribution, and other vital resources. Propelled chiefly by volunteers, Manna Cafe strives to restore hope, dignity, self-reliance, community, and the love of God through Jesus Christ.



Photographer: Gabriela Barboza

THANK YOU!

PUBLIX SUPER MARKETS CHARITIES

**for
\$3,500**

Funds were granted for hunger relief operations—specifically, purchasing food, food service supplies, and vehicle fuel/maintenance.

NASHVILLE PREDATORS FOUNDATION

**for
\$5,000**

Funds provided more than 1,200 hot, nutritious meals to food-insecure community members. This donation also helped sustain Manna's mission by providing for operational expenses, a funding category that's difficult to secure through grants.

CLARKSVILLE RUNNING CLUB

**for
Blanket, coat, and food donations as well as a generous cash donation.**

Each year, CRC hosts Pass the Turkey, a 5K fun run that takes place on Thanksgiving morning.



CLARKSVILLE, TN for continuing support and love.

We truly wish we could thank every company, organization, and individual who sacrificed time and/or funds, but space won't allow it. Please know that we are so thankful for your willingness to support our mission and our community! During this unprecedented time of uncertainty, our gratitude goes even deeper.

