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St. Michael’s Woodshop

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St. Michael's Woodshop

Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"There is a very special ministry that serves teenagers living in the City of Rochester. It is located in the heart of Rochester in the sub-basement of the old Bausch and Lomb building at 691 St. Paul St. It is called St. Michael's Woodshop."
There is a very special ministry that serves teenagers living in the City of Rochester. It is located in the heart of Rochester in the sub-basement of the old Bausch and Lomb building at 691 St. Paul St. It is called St. Michael’s Woodshop.

You may have previously heard of this ministry since it was established in the basement of a convent of the Sisters of Mercy on Joseph Ave. in 1967. It flourished for forty years, in many different locations, under the direction of Sr. Pat Flynn. When she left the ministry in 2007 due to ill health she was followed by Sr. Virginia Taylor until 2012. At that time the Sisters had no one else to direct the ministry nor had the financial resources to keep it going.

At that time I was working in urban ministry for the Catholic Diocese of Rochester. The Leadership of the Rochester Sisters of Mercy approached me and asked me if I “wanted it”, the “it” meaning the Woodshop. Who could say “no” to six thousand square feet of lumber, saws, and framing equipment?

An advisory board was put together and a new director, James Smith, was selected to oversee the ministry. James had previously done youth work in the City of Rochester and was very qualified for the position. The Church of the Assumption, in Fairport, NY, accepted the Woodshop as part of its corporation and on August 5, 2013 St. Michael’s Woodshop reopened and accepted nine new students. The Board had agreed to pay the students a stipend as a way of luring them away from the drug trade on the streets, a stipend that also serves as a good tool to teach the students about budgeting and saving. In the beginning we were only able to take nine students as we didn’t have sufficient funds to offer the stipend to more participants. Presently
we have twelve students due to a grant and other young people come in and participate simply because they want to be there.

The ministry is now more than a year and a half old and the students are not only learning a trade but also a good work ethic and necessary life skills. They have grown in self-confidence, improved their ability to make good decisions and are learning to care and support one another. It’s exciting to see the students grow in their self-confidence as they take pride in what they make. They become more positive in their outlook towards life and begin to believe that their lives truly have meaning. I wish to share a letter from one of our students recently received:

Dear “The Board”,
I want to thank you all for allowing me to do the summer program here at St. Michael’s Woodshop. Being here has impacted my life in numerous of ways. I’ve learned a lot of things here; things that I never knew girls were capable of doing. I also wanted to thank ya’ll for the money that you have contributed into my life. It has really helped me out big time. It is such a great feeling when you can buy your own things, without asking your parents for money. I’ve learned how to cut wood in straight lines and a curved line as well. I learned how to do a lot of new great things, so now I can help with things around the house – that’s only if it breaks. I am very appreciative that I was chosen out of all the people that was on the list to come here. I feel like this program has changed me for the better. So again, thank you so much for the magnificent change you’ve made in my life and thank you for all of the great opportunities that I had coming here. God bless you.

Sincerely,

Cha’Quasia W.

If you would like to volunteer or just stop by, please call James at the number listed below.

Sister Janet Korn, RSM
P.S. Mike Crupi, from the Rochester Catholic Courier, has done a three minute clip on the Woodshop that, I believe, you will find interesting.  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SO3r-E2RND0 and you can contact the Director, Mr. James Smith, at stmichaelswood@live.com or at 585-413-4450.

A Student Speaks

It's safe for us to talk about everything in the woodshop because we have so much trust and love for each other. It's a very safe environment, where you can just come and be yourself, and not have to worry about anything but St. Michael's Woodshop. It's more than just a place to come every day after school to learn a trade. It's also something that I can carry within myself, because I knew that I'll always have people behind me to back me up and who will always be there for me. I think that we all feel this way. It helps a lot.
St. Michael’s Woodshop is doing an incredible job of teaching a trade and a good work ethic to city youth. This good work needs, not only to continue, but to flourish.

Sr. Janet Korn, RSM

Our most popular products include toys, step stools, and kitchen items.

DID YOU KNOW?

- St. Michael’s Woodshop accepts donations of wood, tools, sandpaper and wood finishing products, as well as financial support.
- We offer framing services for your photos and artwork; we repair wood furniture; and we provide shop-quality workmanship.
- We serve city teens from 14 to 18 years of age.
- Proceeds from some of our Christmas ornaments will benefit a pediatric hospital in Haiti, in association with NPH, U.S.A.
- Last year’s summer woodshop program, SHINE, attracted student volunteers from New Jersey, Texas, Arkansas and Boston.
- We have a Facebook page. Like us on Facebook!