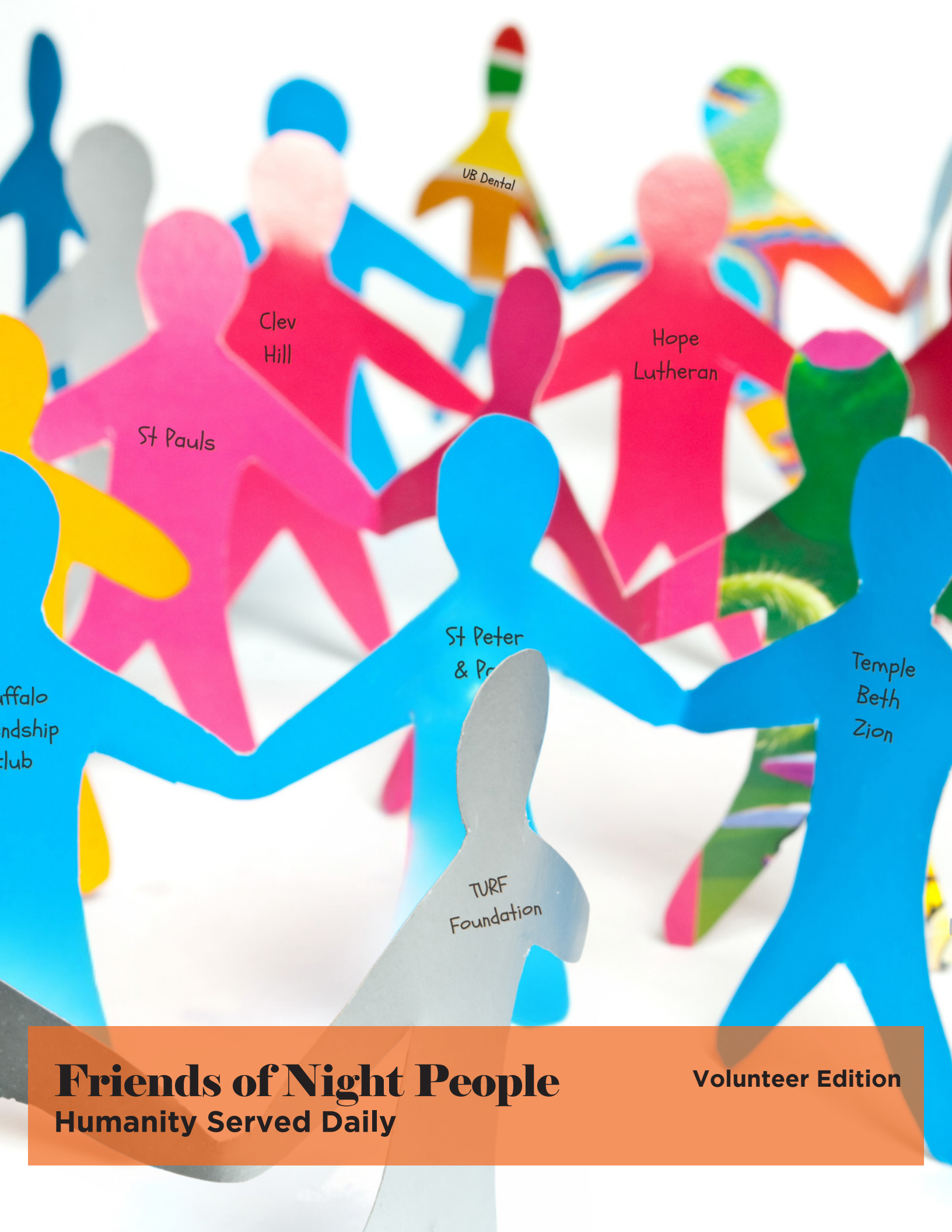

Friends of Night People

Humanity Served Daily

Volunteer Edition

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Did you know?

We have over 6700 volunteer opportunities available each year! We serve every day of the year and that takes a lot of help! Visit www.friendsofnightpeople.com to find out how to get involved.

A Message From Our Executive Director

The plight of individuals who struggle to meet their basic needs is seen daily at Friends of Night People. Our mission, the board's, staff's, and my own, is to lessen the effects of homelessness and poverty others experience. This year, please get more involved and help us make a difference and a greater impact in our community.

There are many reasons we choose to help others in need. It may stem from a personal experience, our values, or the difficulties we may have witnessed of a family member or friend.

The ability to help someone brings feelings of joy and compassion. It may bring understanding and forgiveness. At FONP, you can help others in need and realize that it helps you too. While some volunteers donate goods and funds directly, others volunteer their time at Friends of Night People, or host collection drives that raise awareness about homelessness and food insecurity.

Whatever your reason, and whatever you may be able to do, start today! Make 2025, a year you and I can do more to help others. Together, we helped over 259 individuals in April, and served 5,698 meals at 394 Hudson Street.

Help FONP serve delicious hot meals, distribute clothing and hygiene products, and most importantly, help improve someone's life today.

Thank you,

Joseph S. Heary

Joseph S. Heary

Scan to Volunteer

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Hunger, Hope, and a Hug: Moments That Matter at FONP

They start lining up long before the doors open. Some have been there all night, still sleeping on the sidewalk, covered in a sugar dusting of snow. It's winter in Buffalo, and everyone in line is doing what they can to stay warm.

I walk this gauntlet of the city's forgotten and disenfranchised. We exchange well wishes: "good morning" and "thank you," with a smile. I want to be cheerful, telling them, "We'll be opening in a few minutes." But internally, I am at war with conflicting emotions that seek to take possession of my soul.

American humorist and philosopher Will Rogers said, "The ten richest men on the planet can buy the whole world and there are more than ten million that can't buy enough to eat."

When the doors open, the night people file in, respectful, staying in queue, no cutting the line. Hunger and homelessness are the one-two gut punch that literally can send anyone to the pavement, or under a highway overpass, seeking shelter. We take our positions: one chef, two cooks, four servers, and several support staff. All here to give comfort and a brief reprieve from winter. With "Friends of Night People," comfort takes many forms. The first is disguised as breakfast and coffee.

Greeting and feeding is one of the simplest gestures of human kindness. Nutritious food becomes a blessing to a lonely and troubled individual. Every face has a story. They all appear "weathered," the lines of their pain crisscrossing every brow. Street-wise, they know how to survive, but seldom do they prevail.

Then Avery and her mom show up. Avery is three years old and lives in that same world but is not of it. I don't know where they sleep, but I do know they are homeless, hungry, and food insecure. FONP serves everyone twice a day.

Avery is three feet tall. She is standing next to me, hugging everyone who stops for coffee. I'm filling empty cups, she is filling empty souls. No eye contact is made. There is a tray blocking the giver of grace from the receiver. But that

doesn't matter. She is offering a gift of caring and kindness that somehow remains elusive and enigmatic to the rest of us living in this highly polarized country. Avery doesn't know anything about that. She, like most children under the age of five, live in the ever present, and she begins showing everyone there just how important and powerful this ever present moment can be!

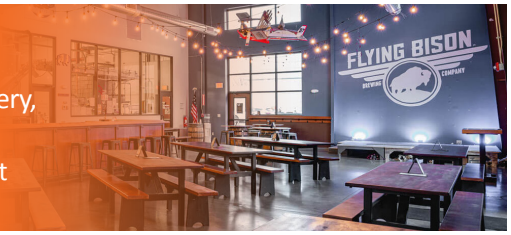
FONP serves guests twice a day, breakfast and dinner. At 10:50 the morning call goes out, "finish up, we are closing in ten minutes." Avery walks back to her table and finishes her breakfast. Her mom asks me for a small box for her few toys. They bundle up and head toward a one-way door with a crash bar. I call out, "Avery!" She turns, and I wink. She laughs as the door slams hard behind them.

Paul Kielich is a writer. His essays have appeared in Eremos Magazine. He lives in West Falls, New York.

SAVE THE DATE
15th Annual Party For The People

Wednesday, September 17th
Featuring the Fredtown Stompers
5:30 to 8:30 pm at Flying Bison Brewery,
840 Seneca St, Buffalo, NY 14210.

This 15th Annual event to raise support for our community feeding programs.



Feel Better, Live Better: The Power of Giving Back

Did you know that volunteering is good for your mental and physical health? Studies show that people who regularly volunteer report lower instances of heart disease, anxiety and loneliness.

In 2023, the US Surgeon General and the W.H.O. declared that loneliness had become an epidemic affecting nearly 50% of adults. The effect of loneliness is equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes daily and increasing anxiety and depression.

Volunteering helps to combat loneliness and improve heart and mental health. According to a University of British Columbia study, volunteering helps us form meaningful social connections and a sense of purpose.

Each year, there are 6500 volunteer shifts available at Friends of Night People. A longtime volunteer Marianne said, “The friendships I’ve made there are very important and special to me.”

To sign up to volunteer, visit **www.volunteer.friendsofnightpeople.com**

More Than a Job: Joslyn Briggins Finds Purpose at FONP

Joslyn Briggins has dedicated over a decade of her life to helping others. Currently, a case manager at FONP, Joslyn brings a wealth of compassion, experience, and resilience to her role. These qualities were shaped by her professional journey and personal life.

“Helping those in need is more than a job to me, it’s a part of my purpose,” Joslyn says. Before joining FONP eight months ago, she worked at a women’s homeless shelter, supporting some of society’s most vulnerable individuals. “What surprises me most is how deeply this place touches people,” she says. “The meals we serve aren’t just food—they’re comfort, hope, and sometimes even the reason someone keeps going.” From ID services to mail support and laundry access, the case management team at FONP is restoring stability and dignity in countless lives.

Joslyn credits her grandmother for instilling her passion for service, and her son for inspiration. “She always told me to be kind and help those in need. That advice is part of everything I do,” she reflects.

How Jeri and Volunteers Bring Dignity and Warmth to FONP

When I arrive on Saturday morning, the boutique is in disarray. The weekend volunteers and I work hard to make sure clothing is separated and like items are grouped together. I try to make sure I have everything the guests might ask for — boxer briefs, nail polish, socks, blankets, sheets, towels, shampoo, conditioner, lotion, deodorant.

My name is Jeri Jaeger, and I have been volunteering at Friends of Night People in the Nightingale Boutique since October 2023. I learned about FONP decades ago when my church, Amherst Presbyterian, regularly collected funds and donations. I have made close friends with not only the staff but also many of the guests. I always wear a nametag, 'Jeri, Volunteer', so many of our guests call me by name, which warms my heart.

I usually come in at 11:30 AM and work to make the boutique as accessible and attractive as possible to show respect for our guests. Once 5:00 arrives, I work at the Nightengale Boutique until 7:00, handing out items to our guests. I pass out shopping bags to everyone for their clothing and food items. I have so much fun with our guests that the last two hours seem to fly by.

To anyone thinking about volunteering at FONP, I say 'go for it', wholeheartedly. The rewards of supporting our guests and interacting with them are manifold. In the evening, when I drive home from FONP, I go over both the joys and sorrows I experienced that night and am thankful that I have had the opportunity to contribute to our guests and this important organization.

St Peter & Paul RC: A 40-Year Tradition

Starting in the early 1980s, volunteers from Saints Peter & Paul Church in Hamburg have come together every month to prepare and serve hot meals at FONP.

"It takes a parish," Lynne Forsberg, longtime volunteer, shared. Every month, members of the church take part in this effort. Some donate ingredients, others prepare food, and a team of volunteers serves the meals. The volunteers bring clothing and toiletries donated by other members of the church to pass out to guests.

"A warm meal and a smile bring out the best in people," one volunteer said. "There are so many thank-yous for the little we do."

After a night of volunteering, we leave feeling grateful. "When the last dinner is served and the lights are turned off, I feel proud," said a volunteer. "It's a small thing, but it means a lot."

Thinking about getting involved? Visit **www.volunteer.friendsofnightpeople.com**. FONP welcomes everyone. Families, friends, and anyone can join in the effort. Serving others doesn't take a big act—just a big heart. And, at Saints Peter & Paul, they have done this steadfastly for over 40 years.

WNY Gives Back

Systems Personnel

Bond, Schoeneck and King

Buffalo State

Clevehill

Enterprise

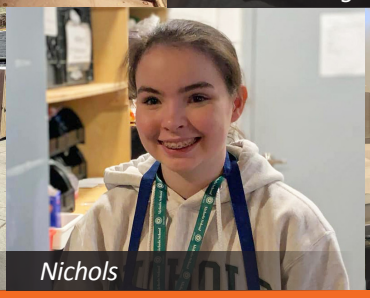
Homeless Alliance of WNY

Howard University

Kenmore Village Improvement Society

Lippes Mathias LLP

New Enterprise


Nichols

St Francis

USEDC

Have a group interested in volunteering?

Call us at: 716-884-5375 ext. 202

Do you want a special edition FONP T-shirt?

As the temperature rises, so does the number of guests we serve. FONP can serve as many as 250 meals in just two hours! Summer is also the time of year when we need extra volunteers daily to serve breakfast and dinner. This summer, the first 20 new volunteers who dedicate 15 volunteer hours during a meal period will receive a snazzy FONP t-shirt, courtesy of BullShirts. Visit **www.volunteer.friendsofnightpeople.com** to sign up.