

# Martin's Volunteers' Newsletter

May/June 2005

*In the Spotlight:*

## **The Ahlbach Family: Three Generations of Volunteers**

Among our volunteers at Martin's there are not many who can top the Ahlbachs. We are moving into our third generation of volunteers from this family. The matriarch of the family, Margaret (Peg) Ahlbach was one of our long term supporters back to before we even moved to our new residence on Potrero Ave. She was such an avid supporter that she inspired her twin children, John and Mary, to follow in her footsteps and begin volunteering at Martin's.

John and Mary have been in a unique position to not only offer us a lot of help on our breakfast shifts but also be an inspiration to young people. Mary is in charge of the Religion Department at St. Ignatius College Prep. In this position she has been instrumental in bringing SI students to Martin's to help with the Friday breakfast shift.

Her twin brother, John, currently is the community services director at Riordan High School. He, like Mary, is an enthusiastic supporter of Martin's and has been bringing students from Riordan on Tuesday mornings to help with breakfast. A couple of times last summer, when he didn't have any students, he brought his own children Conor, Christy and Mairead (the third generation of Ahlbachs) to help on Tuesday breakfast. Our guests certainly love being served by these wonderful young people.

Perhaps you are wondering what motivates the Ahlbachs to continue volunteering at Martin's. John will be completing his fourth year as Community Service Director at Riordan and in their most recent newsletter reflected on what were the most memorable moments of this period for him. In his own words, here is what he had to say about volunteering at Martin's:

"The best moments were spent with the juniors who accompanied me on early Tuesday morning trips to serve breakfast at Martin's. I would like to share with you just one of the experiences I had there.

*(continued on back)*

## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

Here are some important dates to remember:

**August 1 - 10:** Martin's will be closed for our summer break on these dates. Our last meal will be Sunday, July 30 and the first one after the break will be breakfast, Thursday, August 11.

**August 1&2:** Volunteer camping trip in San Mateo. For information, contact Charlie.

**September 18:** Annual volunteer potluck and meeting at Martin's.

## **Open Mike**

Martin's next Open Mike will be held Friday, July 22 from 7 to 9 pm. You can share your talents of poetry, song, dance or stories, original or not. Or just come to listen. Coffee, tea and refreshments will be served. For more information, call Charlie at 552-0240.

One of our open mike regulars, Charles Anderson, died on May 8. His contributions will be missed.

## **Third Sunday Volunteers Needed**

Martin's needs experienced volunteers to help on the third Sunday of the month. The full shift is from 7 to 11:30 am. The meal is served from 9 to 10:30 am.

## **Ed Birmingham**

**1926-2005**

On March 23, Ed Birmingham, also known as John Mowers, died in Los Angeles at the Catholic Worker house.

Ed was an itinerant Catholic Worker wanderer, nomad and scholar. He was a great storyteller with a brilliant mind and an amazing memory. He was also a collage artist; some of his work is here at Martin's. We have fond memories of Ed and he will be sorely missed.

*- Charlie*

## **COMMUNITY THRIFT: YOU GIVE, MARTIN'S RECEIVES**

Community Thrift is a store that helps nonprofits in the community by giving back some of the proceeds from the sale of items you donate to them. Martin's receives quarterly checks based on the sale of your donations.

Their address is 623 Valencia Street and they accept donations from 10 am to 5 pm, seven days a week. The loading dock for donations is on Sycamore Alley, parallel to 17th and 18th streets, between Mission and Valencia. Call first to be sure your items are acceptable (861-7483)

When donating items on behalf of Martin's, please refer to Martin de Porres, or to Code 69.

Donations are tax deductible, so ask for a receipt. On it you are asked for an estimate of your donation's tax deduction value, usually 1/3 of the item's value new, or an estimate of the second hand value.

Pack items in boxes or bags. When donating clothes, remove the hangers. Please note that Community Thrift cannot accept personal computers or software. If you are donating furniture, call first to be sure they are accepting larger items. Also, they no longer accept linens or towels.

### **CHECK OUT OUR WEB SITE**

Want to find out more about Martin's? Well then, go to [www.martindeporres.org](http://www.martindeporres.org). Find out about St. Martin, read our newsletters, learn about volunteering - and show it to your friends. Comments or questions? See Jim Haber.

**Martin de Porres House of Hospitality  
225 Potrero Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94103**

**415-552-0240**

**[www.martindeporres.org](http://www.martindeporres.org)**

### **The Ahlbachs (continued)**

The Scriptures are full of stories of people visited by angels. I believe an angel visited me one summer Tuesday morning at Martin's. I was standing out by the gate when a man walked by, his face bruised and bandaged. I guessed he had just left the emergency room at SFGH a few blocks down the street. He looked very confused as he asked me, 'What is this place?'

Surprised that any needy person in that part of the city didn't know about Martin's, I explained that he could get a meal here and feel free to just hang out in the garden. He looked dumbfounded as I walked him to the breakfast line. When he had his place in line, he looked at me and said simply, 'I just have one question: who do I have to thank for this?' It was then I was astonished at his innocence and gratitude; it was I who felt blessed.

As I went in the back to get him a pair of socks for his sock-less feet, I have to admit that my vision was more than a little blurred with emotion. The expression on his face when I surprised him with the socks is something that will always stay with me."

John will no longer be the Community Services Director after the end of this year. He has been re-assigned and will be teaching full time at Riordan next year. However he has assured us that he will continue to be a faithful member of our Tuesday morning breakfast crew. We are so very grateful to the entire Ahlbach family for their continued support of our work at Martin's.

*Contributed by George Biniek*



