



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
March 28, 2011

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Detroit, MICH- Crossroads of Michigan is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year which translates to 40 years of memories, 40 years of stories, and 40 years in the city of Detroit helping the poor, homeless, and forgotten. Crossroads' mission is to support the community at large by providing emergency assistance, advocacy, and counseling to anyone in need. Its doors opened in November, 1971. Founded by The Reverend James A. McLaren of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, the first location on Woodward Avenue offered short term solutions, such as food and clothing and made sure to service the long term needs of its clients, including help with unemployment, drug-abuse, legal problems, and mental and physical abuse.

Crossroads quickly grew, moving to a new location with the addition of the Sunday Soup Kitchen in the year 1975. The house on East Forest brought more opportunities for Crossroads, and more excitement for all of its volunteers who still talk about the haywire soup pot or cooking in the extremely limited kitchen to serve meals to more than 75 people every Sunday. In March of 1982 work began on Crossroads East location on Jefferson Ave., a building that is still serving the community. With the help of volunteers, the East office opened June 13, 1982. Then came the addition of a Job Office in '84, Founder Father McLaren retiring in '93, the opening of what is now Crossroads' Main Office in '07, Lifeskills and the Summer Lunch Program in '10; as the number of clients grew so did Crossroads.

Phyllis Osler of Grosse Pointe, a volunteer for more than 20 years, recalls many fond memories of her time at Crossroads East. One of her favorites involves a young man, we'll call him Bob, who had been coming to the East side office for food. Although Bob came in regularly he had yet to make an appointment with a counselor. Noticing this, Zisa Snider, director of the East side office, pulled Bob aside for a talk. She quickly discovered that the mentally disabled young man had taken a bus from Texas to see his brother, who lived in Windsor. When Bob finally reached the border, he was denied access into Canada because he was lacking the identification to cross. Bob was staying in an abandoned house in the area and surviving on the food he was receiving from Crossroads. Zisa made some phone calls and found that the young man lived with his sister in Texas and, without her knowledge, had taken a bus up to Michigan hoping to see his brother in Canada. Bob's sister, who had been worried sick, was relieved to hear that her brother was safe. Crossroads helped Bob make the long trip back down to Texas and he was finally reunited with his family. "Crossroads gives great meaning to my life..." says Osler, "Crossroads could live without me, but I couldn't live without Crossroads."



Today, Crossroads has two locations in Detroit and serves nearly 11,500 clients annually throughout the city and metro Detroit. Mary McLaren Honsel, executive director since 2001 and the daughter of Father McLaren, along with a small paid staff, and over 100 volunteers keeps the doors open at Crossroads seven days a week. The values that started the non-profit still remain; "Love and go where love demands!" For more information about Crossroads of Michigan or to learn about volunteer opportunities, call 313-831-2787.

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