

At 87, Sr. Ann still 'runs to serve the poor'

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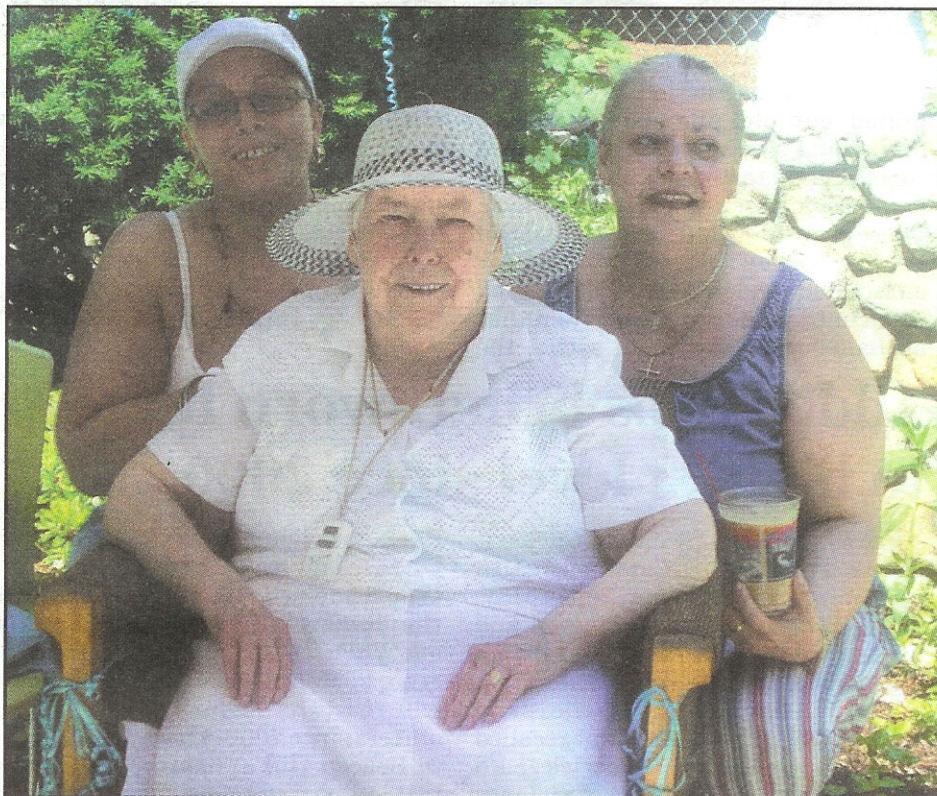
One of the first family shelters in Massachusetts, Dudley Street's Project Hope, has been supporting children and families in need for over 25 years. Last week, one of the organization's key leaders was honored for her quarter-century of service to Dorchester's neediest people.

On June 26, a "farewell" ceremony was held in honor of 87-year-old Sister Ann Hayes, who will be ending her daily work schedule after 24 years at Project HOPE's Uphams Corner home.

"She is the most amazing person," said Rosa Almanzar, director of the shelter program. "Sister Ann puts her whole heart into helping people and treats everyone with dignity and respect."

Sister Ann was one of the nuns involved in the very beginning when the Little Sisters of the Assumption opened their doors to homeless women and children on Magnolia Street. Embodying the spirit and generosity of Project Hope - Sister Ann worked daily directing the food pantry- she has been committed to improving the

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Sister Ann Hayes, center, is pictured with Joanne Callis, a staff member of Project Hope who assisted Sr. Ann in running the food pantry and Michelle Boisclair, a volunteer from the community who also assisted with the food pantry. Photo by Martine Louis

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lives of men, women, and children who would otherwise be living in basements, garages, and cars.

"She has made a direct impact on the people in our community," said Elizabeth Zarrella, Director of Development

and External Affairs.

"Sister Ann has made a difference in the lives of everyone who was lucky enough to know her. Our

neighbors know that she cared for them and prayed for them. The women in our shelter felt it too."

Zarrella says that a former client recently came back to visit Project Hope to share the successes in her life with Sister Ann.

"She said she would never forget walking into the shelter for the first time, afraid of what it would be like, and the first person she saw was Sister Ann, who looked at her and said 'Welcome, woman of strength. You can relax, you're home now,'" Zarrella says.

Though Project Hope's Food Pantry will be

closing, Sister Ann will still live in the community and continue to be a presence at this non-profit organization. She will now be the House Grandmother at the shelter—continuing to welcome families, talk to the young mothers and interact with their children.

"Sr. Ann is full of love and caring for everyone she encounters," said Zarrella. "She truly loves the families she has served. She knows all of the hundreds of families we have worked with by name, including their children and grandchildren."

Sister Ann will continue to assist Project

Hope in their commitment to addressing the emergency food needs of the hundreds of families they serve each year.

"Our strategic direction involves working intensively with fewer families, making us less able to be a drop-in neighborhood site for food, but being more of a resource for those families we work with comprehensively," said Zarrella. "Sometimes the families literally have nothing left to feed their children until they get their next check. For our many neighbors who have benefited from our food pantry for all of these years, we will help each and every one of them get connected

to another local food pantry through Project Bread's Food Source Hotline."

"I will always be devoted to helping those in need," said Sister Ann. "My love is for the spirit of the Little Women of the Assumption. The beauty of being with these families for years—watching them grow from babies to creating their own families. Knowing them well and watching their lives change. I love them. My mission is and always will be 'show me the poor and I will run to them.'"

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