

# THE CARING PLACE

*Another Season of Caring in Our Community*

## MEET JAMES & MAUREEN

"Every street in Georgetown has my hoof print," Maureen said with a nostalgic sparkle in her eye. As a teenager, she rode her horse all over town, including what is now Dos Salsas. That location was once the local Dairy Queen. She'd ride up on her horse and get a coke, ice cream, or hamburger, depending on how much money was in her pocket. Riding around the town was how Maureen met her husband, James. James lived on a farm in Granger. His family was Czechoslovakian. James' mom said to him, "Have you seen that girl that rides all the time in the park?" James said his mom then said, "Stay away from her, please." James and Maureen giggled at this little fib, and he said, "No, no, I'm kidding." But that is how this sweet couple met as teenagers; James finally decided to talk to that girl on her horse. The day I interviewed James and Maureen marked their 51st wedding anniversary.

James and Maureen have a loving family life in Georgetown. After James left the military, he was a teacher in Austin for a while, and the couple had two boys. James shared that Maureen stayed home to take care of the boys, but his intelligent, independent wife quickly reminded him that she owned the Greyhouse Bus Company and Western Union off 7th street for 20 years. Once again, these two were laughing that James didn't mention the big job Maureen had. James chuckled and said, "Oh no, I remembered. I thought we just hadn't gotten to that part of our life yet."

Maureen retired in 2006 because of Chronic Pain Syndrome in her feet. Since then, she experienced so much trauma to her feet from broken bones that, as she says, "the nerves just go haywire." Maureen is expecting a pain pump soon to help. Maureen and James lived a quiet life in Georgetown until January 2021. James drove a bus for Hutto ISD and ran a small landscaping company with no plans to retire, but work halted when James caught COVID. He was taken to the hospital and put on a ventilator in February. James stayed in the hospital for a month, where he had a stroke in the optic nerves of his eye. He is now legally blind.

After this big blow, Maureen and James decided they needed some help and came to The Caring Place. When I asked Maureen what The Caring Place has done for them, Maureen raised her hands and asked, "What have they not done for us?" Maureen listed some of the assistance that changed their lives, "They helped us get through our finances, helped James get hearing aids, helped James get glasses. I got



*James and Maureen are thankful for each other and The Caring Place.*

special shoes for my feet. We just didn't know where to turn. We had never needed help before." It was their Case Manager, Xinia, who knew how to navigate resources. Things were not always easy, but Xinia opened doors to resources they didn't know existed. Maureen shared, "We just didn't know what we needed. It's many little things. We went from having \$4-5,000 a month or more to just \$1,700." James said that Xinia especially helped them with budgeting. "We never budgeted before because we didn't have to." Maureen added, "Think about your future. Think about retirement. We never thought about it. We just expected to work until we die. We learned it just doesn't work that way." The Caring Place also helped with Maureen and James' electric bills for a couple of months so that they could reach stability and now provides monthly food through the Food Pantry. "Without that, I don't know what we'd do." Additionally, Xinia connected the couple with Texas' Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program which provides utility assistance for qualified individuals. That resource is continuing to provide some relief. Maureen shared, "I am thankful we had enough sense to buy and to pay off our house, so we don't have to worry about that."

According to Xinia, Maureen is a master organizer. She has a file, takes notes, and communicates well with email, so her role in Case Management services was as a partner with Xinia. Maureen, James and Xinia worked together to reach goals that would help in the long term.

# STORY CONTINUED...



Maureen and James shopping together in the Food Pantry.

When asked if she was nervous to reach out to The Caring Place Maureen said, "I was not uncomfortable to reach out because it's overwhelming. When your husband loses his sight and he comes home from the hospital and barely can get to the door...he's never been the same. COVID brought him down. Xinia knew I was overwhelmed. She's like a sister." Maureen continued with tears filling her eyes, "When a person comes in and you are at your lowest point in your life, never asked for help in your life and she was there and she was caring." James interjects, that "she never made us feel low." Maureen said people in our community should not worry about being embarrassed if they need help. "The doors are open here to me, you are always welcome. They are all working together to help here. From Xinia helping with some of our finances to the volunteers helping us shop for our food."

James and Maureen have graduated from the Case Management program. Xinia proudly shared, "They have graduated with honors!" Maureen said, "We are surviving month to month, but we are making it. It's awesome that there are people out there you can turn to when you need this kind of help." She continued, "James and I, we worked hard all of our lives. But we got in a position in our life where we didn't know which way to go. The Caring Place here in Georgetown got us through it, plain and simple."

## THE IMPACT OF A FOOD PANTRY

The following is an excerpt from a blog piece we wrote about one of our neighbors, Sharon. She regularly utilizes our Food Pantry and was asked to share her feelings about the recent improvements in the building.

Sharon remembered visiting The Caring Place Food Pantry before the pandemic. "It was kind of intimidating with the big wall up in the pantry. It felt like you were being institutionalized. Get in line," she stated. Sharon explained the people were lovely, but the atmosphere was not like it was now. The previous Food Pantry layout meant neighbors waited longer to shop. There was often a line because only one household at a time had space to walk through. When describing the Food Pantry now, Sharon looked around the large, open Food Pantry and said, "This feels like I am going to the grocery store. It's bigger aisles. You can see everything, and you can take your time. No one rushes me. It's more comfortable. The fact that I can get my scooter in and around makes a big difference for me." Sharon described many of the reasons The Caring Place made the improvements when our indoor Food Pantry model was closed during the pandemic. Knocking down some walls and expanding the space really made a difference. Sharon never anticipated needing to come to a Food Pantry, but appreciated that she felt very welcome in the bright, open-concept Food Pantry model. "I don't hesitate to come here. I can choose what I want, and it just makes it a lot more pleasant time." She continued, "My heart is easier when I come in the door. I am not embarrassed. I am not ashamed. I am welcome."



Sharon shopping in the Food Pantry with her niece and one of our Volunteers.

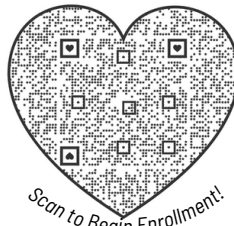
Thinking back to the past again, Sharon shared, "We had four deaths in a 9-month period, then the next month a breast cancer diagnosis, so we used quite a bit of money up that we had saved for this point in my life. Since I am disabled and can't work, I'll never get it back. Places like this make a big difference, and I am sure it does for a lot of people."

To read Sharon's full story or other stories at The Caring Place, visit [caringplacetx.org/blog](http://caringplacetx.org/blog).

# UPDATES

## PROGRAMS & SERVICES

QR codes seem to be all the rage. They can make life a lot easier for businesses when directing customers to new information. The Caring Place uses them from time to time as well. Our latest use is a very important one for neighbors in need. Have you ever wondered how neighbors receive assistance if they don't have access to transportation? Sometimes that is part of the crisis. Or what about low-income earners who work full-time Monday through Friday jobs, but when a small unexpected bill comes up, meeting basic needs suddenly becomes unmanageable? We can now utilize this code to direct neighbors to a secure site to upload their contact information and proof of crisis as they apply for services.



As always, our goal is to better serve neighbors in our community in a welcoming, respectful and caring way. At a time when inflation is on the rise, gas costs fluctuate and we can't predict the next crisis, we are glad this addition will provide more convenient access to our services. Families in crisis can now start the assistance process at any time.

*Maureen embraces Case Manager Xinia Vargas in gratitude for finding a mobility scooter.*

## FOOD PROGRAMS

Food Programs Assistant, Blake Burton sent this picture below when he picked up our freshly wrapped refrigerated truck this year. The truck regularly makes the rounds in Bartlett, Jarrell, and Granger during remote Food Distribution dates. We are so thankful to Central Texas Food Bank for their investment in our community through grants and other resources which allow us to have the equipment we need to serve northern Williamson County. We also think this truck is a great "selfie" opportunity. What do you think?



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022-2023



We are delighted to introduce you to The Caring Place's 2022-2023 Board of Directors.

From top to bottom, left to right: Melissa Renee Valdez, Chuck Collins, Glenn Schwab, Stephen Schlobohm, Dayne M. Carlson; Christopher Stanley, Isaac Lopez (Secretary), Lindsay Harris (At-Large), Patricia Khoury, Van P. Swift (Treasurer), John Sullivan; Hugh Brown (President), Sheron Scurlock, Holly Steger Stevens, Rhonda Wilson (Vice President)

Thank you to outgoing board members Stephen Benold, Harriett Jones, Paul Jordan, Kenneth W. Poteete and Kyra Quenan for their work and leadership on behalf of The Caring Place during their tenure.

# VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION EVENT

## A Family Reunion

On Sunday, October 16th, The Caring Place hosted its first in-person Volunteer Appreciation event since the start of COVID. It was a happy day to see all of our friends together again for this event. We played musical Bingo and awarded volunteers with their 5, 10, 15, 20 and 30-year service pins!



Photography assistance from Mira McGreevey



## Here's what our team helps us accomplish!

### Programs & Services in Numbers:

*Data taken between January and September of 2022.*

- Total (unduplicated) number of individuals receiving rental or mortgage assistance so far this year is 1,182 neighbors. **This is up 43% from last year!**
- Total unduplicated individuals assisted this year is 5,313, of whom 2,974 (56%) are new.
- In July, we began providing gasoline gift cards to help people meet basic needs like Food Pantry or grocery store visits and transportation to work or school. We have assisted 113 families through gasoline assistance.

### Food Programs in Numbers:

*Data taken between January and September of 2022.*

- 14,634 visits were made to the Food Pantry or remote distributions in Jarrell, Bartlett or Granger.
- We have distributed 681,838 pounds of food through The Caring Place Food Pantry and remote distribution.
- The total value of food distributed is \$1,718,232.

# 'TIS THE SEASON FOR GIVING

## Little Blue Barrel - What's Your Impact?

Since 2020, The Caring Place has exclusively relied on your generous monetary donations to fill our Food Pantry. The pandemic taught us to be efficient and resourceful with our time, space and funds. Taking monetary donations in lieu of various donated shelf stable foods has allowed us to give out more food than ever and store it in such a way that we can be prepared for the unexpected. While the change may be foreign to our community which loves to rally around a Food Drive, it's been the right call during this time. As we have all learned in the last few years, things can change on a dime. When life changes, it's important that we too, can change in order to best meet the needs of our community.



Would you like to make an impact without the fuss of our old heavy barrels of cans? Check out a "Little Blue Barrel" and collect donations at your church, school, business or civic group. Holiday giving just got lighter, while also more impactful! Call Rita at 512-943-0702 or visit [caringplacetx.org/bluebarrel](http://caringplacetx.org/bluebarrel) for more info.

This is what it looks like when we buy \$10 worth of corn from Central Texas Food Bank.



This is what it looks like when **YOU** buy \$10 worth of corn from the grocery store.



Your monetary gifts make such a huge impact! Look at this!

## The Gift of Time

Your time is precious. That's why we don't take it lightly when we ask you to consider volunteering. Before COVID-19 hit, we had over 400 active volunteers. Now, we have just over 250. The work we do requires your hearts and hands in order to fully run our organization.

If you are interested in a long-term volunteer position helping us fulfill our mission, please contact Human Resources Manager, Jim Tillman at [jtillman@caringplacetx.org](mailto:jtillman@caringplacetx.org) or 512-943-0743.

Learn more at [caringplacetx.org/volunteer](http://caringplacetx.org/volunteer).



Imagine your face in this group of friendly staff and volunteers in the next year!

## Amplify 2023 Begins in January!

Amplify has become The Caring Place's biggest fundraiser of the year. How? Through our supportive Board of Directors and amazing sponsors. Corporate and individual sponsors are stepping up to provide valuable matching donations for our Amplify campaign. If you'd like to be one of our critical matching sponsors, please contact Rita at [rturner@caringplace.org](mailto:rturner@caringplace.org). Learn more at [caringplacetx.org/sponsor](http://caringplacetx.org/sponsor).



**Amplify**  
GEORGETOWN

To the rest of our community, we need you, too! Every dollar counts when we begin the official campaign. Be on the look out for ways to Amplify in January!



Jill and Rita rally our community every year for Amplify. We hope you join the fun in 2023!

# MAKE HOLIDAY SHOPPING & DONATING MEANINGFUL

## Fill the Stores!

Your generous item donations keep our thrift stores filled!

You can donate gently used or new items  
Monday - Saturday  
12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. in our  
2000 Railroad Avenue drive through.

By filling our stores, you directly support programs and services which help neighbors in need.

Learn more at  
[caringplacetx.org/donatemystuff](http://caringplacetx.org/donatemystuff)

Our two thrift stores in Georgetown offer a wonderful holiday shopping experience. It will be a season to remember with décor and unique gifts from The Caring Place thrift stores.

When you shop at The Caring Place, your purchases support our mission. We call that "Shopping for Good."



**The Shops at The Caring Place**  
2000 Railroad Avenue | 512-943-0700  
Open Mon-Sat, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.



**Second Helping**  
3700 Williams Drive | 512-987-2998  
Open Tues-Sat, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.




Learn more at [caringplacetx.org/shop](http://caringplacetx.org/shop)

The mission of The Caring Place is to provide for the basic human needs of all people in our community in a welcoming, respectful and caring way.



*"James and I, we worked hard all of our lives. But we got in a position in our life where we didn't know which way to go. The Caring Place here in Georgetown got us through it, plain and simple." -Maureen*



Programs & Services  
 Mon-Fri, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
 2001 Railroad Avenue, Georgetown

Food Pantry  
 Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
 2000 Railroad Avenue, Georgetown

The Shops at The Caring Place  
 Thrift Store, Mon-Sat, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
 2000 Railroad Avenue, Georgetown

Second Helping  
 Thrift Store, Tues-Sat, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
 3700 Williams Drive, Georgetown  
 512-987-2998

Item Donations  
 Mon-Sat, 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.  
 2000 Railroad Avenue drive through, Georgetown  
 512-943-0700  
[caringplacetx.org](http://caringplacetx.org)



**The Caring Place**  
 Helping neighbors in need since 1985  
 PO Box 1215  
 Georgetown, TX 78627-1215