

THE HOUSE TH



Pictured (left to right): Mary Elizabeth Laracy McCabe '96, '99, Matthew Laracy, Mibrak Gebelull, a staff member who resides at Magnificat Home with her son, Yoseph, and Lauren Policastro Sullivan '98.

When you step into Magnificat Home in Jersey City, the first thing you notice is the genuine warmth and fellowship that infuses every corner of the nonprofit home for low-income women. Board members greet one another with hugs. Neighbors often drop by for Saturday Mass. Everywhere they turn, residents of the cozy home feel loved and respected.

It's no surprise that there's a Saint Peter's College connection here. Founded last September, Magnificat Home counts among its board members several graduates, while current Saint Peter's

students volunteer their time there as part of the College's commitment to foster a responsibility to become men and women for others.

"We opened our doors on September 1, 2009, so this is just the beginning," said Residence Director Matthew Laracy, who lives at the boarding home located in the former Our Lady of Sorrows Convent at 119 Clerk Street. "So far, the home has gotten great support."

Much of that support has come from Laracy's daughter, Mary Elizabeth Laracy McCabe '96, '99, and niece, Lauren Policastro Sullivan '98, who are members

of the home's governing board, as well as Sullivan's husband, John T. Sullivan '97, who serves as its legal counsel.

Laracy, a native of Orange, settled in Jersey City while his wife, Mary Lynn Laracy '72, who also volunteers at Magnificat Home, was an undergraduate student at Saint Peter's. Over the years, he became increasingly aware of the dismal living conditions of many boarding houses in nearby Essex County. "The system is overburdened," he remarked. "It's very difficult to provide a decent home and services for people; you wind up with large numbers of residents crammed into

MEN AND WOMEN FOR OTHERS

AT FAITH BUILT

inadequate facilities. So my family and friends and I had this idea: Why don't we open a nonprofit boarding home?"

Today, Magnificat Home offers a permanent residence for up to 12 low-income single women ages 18 and over. Residents pay \$950 a month for single rooms, three meals a day and assistance with medication; the home also accepts Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability (SSD) as full payment for individuals with no other income.

"The home is warm, clean and welcoming. The idea that women in need will be able to live here is very comforting."

McCabe and Sullivan both said their time at Saint Peter's reinforced their desire to give back to the community. "Men and Women for Others' is part of the Saint Peter's identity," Sullivan explained. "My husband and I were founding members of the Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity. Saint Peter's provided me with many opportunities to foster my inclination toward service."

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The process of developing and running a boarding house can be demanding, but very worthwhile, according to Laracy. "Compliance issues and long-term financial viability are our challenges," he explained. "The residents face special difficulties, and the income we receive from them will not be enough to meet our expenses. To survive, we may need to tap into grants."

Members of the community, however, have provided Magnificat Home with "a tremendous amount of encouragement. When people hear about what we're doing, they want to contribute their time and money."

McCabe described Magnificat Home as a big undertaking that is also a blessing. "Everyone deserves to have a decent home where they are treated with respect and love," she said. "And that is what Magnificat Home is all about."

Sullivan agreed. "Walking into the house and having a really comfortable, homey feeling is rewarding," she said.

Added McCabe: "My involvement in campus ministry and student government was an important part of my education. Saint Peter's is a place where people care about each other and that has always stayed with me. Our Catholic faith tells us to serve others." She and her husband, Brian McCabe '97, are grateful that their children will grow up volunteering at Magnificat Home. "We hope this is laying a foundation for service to others," she explained.

Current Saint Peter's student, Katie Oliver '13, is pleased to continue the Jesuit tradition of service to the community through the College's Loyola Volunteers program. "I believe volunteering is a necessity," she remarked. "As part of a community, we should always be willing to give back." Oliver, a communication major, spends about 30 hours per semester at the home, where she helps with meal preparation and light housework. "I'm also there for residents to confide in," she



Magnificat Home



Katie Oliver '13

added. "My time at the home has given me greater appreciation for what I have. I'm also grateful that this home is open to women in the community."

McCabe pointed out that a number of other members from the Saint Peter's community have donated their time, money and possessions to Magnificat Home, and Laracy emphasized that it has not been an "in-the-family" project: "We've gotten great support from friends and local residents."

"If I didn't have faith in God, I couldn't do this. The stress would be too much," Laracy admitted. "Anybody is welcome in Magnificat Home, but we are motivated by the sense that this is God's work. That's at the heart of what we are doing here." 