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**2015 Day Six - Thursday, 6/25 – St. Mary’s Parish, Portland to Hartford to MACC, Manchester**

We got ready relatively early in the morning as we had to leave Portland by 8:00 am because we would be making two additional small stops before getting to Hartford.

We had a simple breakfast with Fr. Paul. One by one each cyclist or support person came into the kitchen for freshly made coffee, some bagels or cereal.

We gathered outside with the same group of parishioners who hosted us last night, Anna, Jackie, and friends.  We did our usual photo op and got on our way with a lovely send off.  We really appreciated the hospitality of this parish.

Our ride first took us over the Portland Bridge again.  On the other side we briefly stopped to say hello to Claire's nephew at the auto garage on Main Street.  We posed for a photo or two and headed off to Tom's son's farm in thee Wethersfield area. We got there with enough time to relax a bit and for all to check out the animals and take photos.  what is so attractive about pigs?  We did get some fresh eggs though.

We got to the Campfield Library earlier than expected.  No one form End Hunger Ct was there yet but the Library staff let us in. We chatted with the staff, told them why we were there and waited for the Blitz to begin.

End Hunger folks arrived within 15 minutes.  Dawn was our contact and she was friends with Johnnie and Matt so it was a nice reunion as well.  They all had on cool orange tee shirts and they would be handing them out to the 40 or so volunteers from the neighborhood who would be conducting the blitz.  Each volunteer was assigned one of 10 zones.  Each zone was determined by the poverty level in the respective schools in the area.  The actual blitz was not going to start until closer to 12:00 noon but we had a chance to interact with all the End Hunger folks as well as some of the volunteers and a few of the state representatives that showed up.  too bad there was no press there for what we thought was an important event.

Free Summer meals for children 18 years and younger.  Call 211 or text or go on the End Hunger website for the location closest to get those meals.

We handed out so many of the little business size cards while on our ride.  We kind of wished we could end our ride here and help with the blitz on our bikes.  That would have been cool.  but we had to be in Manchester and at MACC by 1:00.

So I gathered up the troops and we headed off to Manchester.  As I checked my watch, I realized we would most likely be a little late.  But then I wondered what kind of finale would we have this year.  Our Finales seem to always be challenge for getting attention.  Never really a lot of publicity even though we hammer it home with our Press Release.

and like a couple of years ago when the Affordable Care act passed on the same day as our Finale, we got the good news that the Supreme Court upheld the subsidy part of the Act and it would keep 8 million people from losing their HealthCare that they obtained through the ACA.

As we cycled along Sliver Lane, Claire seemed to really slow down. she was struggling and we weren't on any hills. We checked out her bike and sure enough she had a flat tire.  Our only one.  but, we were running behind and we really didn't have time to fix it so she jumped in the car and packed her bike.  Pam and I were now very far behind the rest of the team.  They did not realize Claire had a flat and we were not there.  Pam had started out to catch up a few minutes earlier than I did.  She is a real trooper.  She cycled her butt off to try and catch up.  It was hard.  I found it difficult as well.  I finally caught up to Pam but we were still behind the group.  I given them the word to keep cycling at a more moderate pace so that we could catch up but we found it hard because of the lights and the heat of the day.

They waited for us as they got close to Main Street in Manchester.  It was now closer to 1:30 than 1:00.

It was nice to see Bob there waiting for us and also Maureen popped over as well as Kelly and her kids.  they were our only attendees other than Mayor Jay Moran. Were we disappointed, Yes we were.  But we carried on.

We had pizza for lunch and then we began the Finale.  John Ryan spoke first.  He talked about our mission but did highlight the accomplishment of MACC over these past 40 years.  And, he mentioned our disappointment that the Shelter was closing on July 1.  He handled the situation with dignity and class.

Then Jay Moran spoke.  He too complemented MACC and its staff. He also complemented BTC as well and awarded us a nice citation for our accomplishments.  That was totally unexpected and so cool.

Jay told a little story which we all thought was perfect.

the story was about King Willy.  King Willy was a homeless individual in Chicago.  He was sort of the designated leader of the homeless community there. Everyday he would stand on a certain street corner holding up a sign that read "Change".

Pretty simple.  People would pass him by everyday. Finally a well dressed gentleman stopped and said he passed King willy everyday and did nothing but this day he felt compelled to stop and offer King Willy some change.  King willy took the change and handed it back to the man.  Why said the man.  King Willy said, "I don't want your change, I want you to change!"

That's what we all have to do, change our hearts. We have too live Matthew 25.  We have to be our brothers and sisters keepers. Who's your neighbor?

Then Beth Stafford, Executive Director,  spoke about MACC and the closing of the Shelter.  She did her best to explain the reasoning behind it but we all kind of felt let down concerning this issue. Not much we could do about that today.

Lastly the Executive Chef, Ben Dubow, spoke about his mission and how they serve good, wholesome fodd and treat each guest in the soup kitchen with the dignity they deserve.  He has turned this soup kitchen into a special place and clients enjoy the food and community.

So we ended our six day a little disappointed but it did not spoil the affect of the other parts of this year's ride.  We built community among ourselves especially with five new riders this year, Gary, Matt, Greg, Tim, and Lauren.  They learned, we learned even though we didn't think there was more to learn. The experiences were different this year.  We were touched again but in different ways. I think the first three days in and out of Hartford alone made the ride worth it. We could have ended right then and there and it would have been a successful ride.  The Sparrows Ministry, the Church by the Pond, South Park Inn, Veterans Crossing, Arbor Park, Stop & Shop, Columbus House. Wow!  I am sure we will be revisiting a few of these places again next year if not sooner.

Pedal on!  PEDAL  On!

Done by Lou