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# OPEN TABLE

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## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



As we prepare ourselves for the holiday season, let us be reminded of the true meaning of Christmas. The birth of Jesus was indeed a miracle, and as we bring another year to a close it is important to spend time reflecting on the tiny miracles that have been happening through His grace in our community.

Christmas time is not the only opportunity to give or receive, and gifts come in many forms. Mother Teresa said, "it is Christmas every time you let God love others through you...It is Christmas every time you smile at your brother and offer him your hand." Volunteers of various groups and organizations, like the Open Table Erie, are doing just that: extending a hand to a brother or sister in need in an effort to transform lives, restore hope, and build a strong community in partnership with others.

As I reflect on the past year I am touched by the multitude of community initiatives that have attempted to coordinate efforts to revitalize the Erie community, to create more awareness and education about the struggles people face every day, and the efforts to physically restore buildings and neighborhoods.

The Erie community is strong and fierce leaving no room for fear or defeat no matter what we may face. The response of the community coming together around issues such as trauma, violence in schools, blighted neighborhoods, health and wellness, and the need for economic stability so that individuals have the opportunity for employment and better lives is humbling. The groups of willing citizens and various organizations who support them are dedicated and much appreciated.



When we offer ourselves willingly and freely we not only impact those we serve, but all those who serve with us. This "ripple effect" is allowing one hand to touch several lives in a single effort. Our Table members have experienced this firsthand, and often question, "are we doing enough?" The answer is simple, "you're doing more than you know."

Often times it is difficult to be patient or to see small accomplishments. It is easy to question our efforts especially when done on a smaller scale. However, there is no gift more precious than being in relationship with others. The Open Table model allows volunteers to be in relationship with their Brother or Sister, and with those they serve alongside. Social connectedness is essential to success and self sustainability.

The Open Table Erie is proud to reflect on all the accomplishments since our start in June of 2018. We currently have three Tables trained, which involve 17 volunteers from various faith-based institutions. Two of our Tables, soon to be three, are currently serving two young adults who are aging out of the foster care system in Erie County. We have two licensed congregations and are seeking more who are willing to join our journey of transforming lives out of poverty. We have a Convening Table who is dedicated to expansion efforts and recruitment. The goal for 2019 is to launch ten Tables countywide.

Members of the Convening Table also spoke to an audience of 300+ at the October 5th Annual Prayer Breakfast at the Bayfront Convention Center, which was hosted by the Erie Christian Business Leaders Association. At the Breakfast we announced plans to launch a countywide Resource Assessment to identify individuals who were willing to offer job training or personal skill development to a Brother or Sister being served by a Table. We encourage you to take the short survey if you are interested in volunteering. The survey can be accessed via web at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DZ38P99>

## A Gift Worth Giving



This year if you are feeling generous, give the gift of hope to a young adult by volunteering to serve on a Table and be in relationship with them. It truly is the gift that keeps giving.

Learn more at our Coffee and Conversation informational session scheduled for:

**Monday, January 21st, 2019**  
**8:00 am - 9:30 am**  
**Panera Bread**  
**1935 Keystone Drive, Erie**

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