



**PAX CHRISTI
HOSPITALITY CENTER**
...serving those experiencing homeless.



Stephen Brazeau, LCSW-R, Director

**Pax Christi Hospitality Center
Hope House Ministries**

255 Oakland Ave, Port Jefferson, NY 11777
(631) 928-9108

www.hhm.org



1991 – Present

History:

I first came to Pax Christi in 1991 as a volunteer – 8:00PM to 12:00. Sandwiches and decaf coffee were served and only 1 person worked the night shift. Not long after I started taking courses at CW Post leading to a degree in Mental Health Counseling. In 1993 I was fortunate to be able to do my internship at Pax Christi. Social Services became involved, the number of guests and services increased. There also became the need for an additional position part time night person. In Jan. 1995 I took over that position.

Stories:

Although there are numerous stories over the years there is one I very often think about.

It was Christmas Eve when an older gentleman arrived. He had just been released after 20 years of incarceration. He appeared scared, nervous, and was very quiet. The timing was perfect as the beautiful Christmas dinner was just beginning.

As we began the intake process the man appeared a little more relaxed and less fearful. About half through the intake I asked him if he would mind taking a break as mass was about to begin. There were numerous gifts in the office. I handed him a box which he promptly opened to find a beautiful green sweater. The man's eyes lit up.

Mass was very crowded. I went into the small chapel and soon realized the gentleman was in the same row praying with another guest wearing his new sweater. After mass we finished the intake and of course opened more gifts. He told me with tears in his eyes that this was the first time in 20 years someone had treated him with respect. He had forgotten what it was like to have anyone care about him.

He was my best Christmas gift. I feel very fortunate to have been able to be present to this man and so many others over the years.

~ Michele Chattaway



2012

I still remember Kenny.

Standing outside Emmaus House garage with his friend, Judy.

Together they would come to Hope House requesting food and a place to shower.

In the Emmaus house garage, there was a shower and a supply of donated clothes, where many of the local homeless would stop by to get cleaned up.

Kenny was always appreciative of any assistance.

That day he looked at me and said "Don't give up on us."

I didn't know I would never see Kenny again. He died a few days later.

His words stayed with me for years ahead.

Very shortly after this Fr. Frank was able to begin his vision, which would become Pax Christi.

Don't give up on us.

Kenny's words are said for all those souls who for different reasons find themselves living in the streets, sometimes seeming hopeless that they would ever break out of their circumstances.

Pax Christi has helped so many like Kenny.

When I stop by Pax, I never fail to notice the interaction between guests, staff and volunteers. The lives of all those who walk through the door are truly touched with caring and compassion.

Pax Christi has not given up.

~ Muriel Erdmann



July 2012

In the early days of Pax Christi I was one of the volunteers who would cook on Saturday nights for the guests. In the beginning, it was a men's shelter but in the winter an occasional homeless woman would also need shelter with her spouse.

I would stay overnight upstairs with her on a cot outside in the hall. On this one particular night the night staff asked if I would stay, there was a snow storm and this woman had no transportation or home to go to.

I fed all the guests and as the night went on they all went to sleep. I went to watch some TV and the young staff member had rented a movie for us to watch. Little did I know that movie would lead me to one of the scariest night's sleep I'd ever have. He rented Silence of the Lambs and then proceeded to leave me alone in the TV room watching it. The sounds of the wind in that cold stone building scarred me to death, and the snoring coming from the dorm room added to the terror.

After the night was over and daylight was streaming into that upstairs hallway where I had been trying to sleep, I looked out onto the street covered in white snow and smiled, there is a God and his new day was a welcome sight for me.

~ *Barbara Coyle*



2012

I had the good fortune to work at Pax with Brother Roger Croteau, Sr. Margaret, Sr. Livian and other daughters of Wisdom. I believe Steve Rabeno was the Director at the time.

I have 4 memories that stand out from that experience.

1. I remember working a Friday night shift during what seemed like a blizzard on Long Island. I received a call from DSS who sent a man to us just out of the jail at Riverhead. When he arrived I could barely see him get out of the cab on the parking lot due to the snowfall. As I proceeded with the intake I learned that he had been in jail for 9 years. When he learned that he would be sleeping in a room with 23 other men he refused to stay with us. We talked about other options but there really weren't any to speak of. I offered to set him up in his own space upstairs but even that was unacceptable to him. He proceeded to remind me that he had been in jail for so many years that he didn't trust anyone. He was as polite and gracious for my help but told me he would rather sleep outside in the storm than with others in the same room. With that he left. I watched him walk off into the snowstorm in disbelief.
2. On another weekend shift I received a phone call from a man who was clearly delusional and who insisted that I help him find a place to stay but who spent the better half of the phone call complaining about Pax Christi and the services there. After 10 minutes of trying to help this rather deranged person and after what seemed like a ton of complaints against the agency I finally began to lose my patience. Just then the voice on the other end of the line began laughing hysterically. It had been Fr. Frank all along.



cont'd. from pg. 5

3. A favorite story involved a man named Chris Crotty. Chris was mentally ill. He used to write out his various philosophies on a chalkboard upstairs. I still remember his handwriting and the way he walked more than I recall his belief systems. For some reason Chris got himself placed on the Pax Christi NO LIST. This meant he was no longer welcome at Pax due to poor behavior. One night I got a call from DSS asking that I accept a Chris "Roberts." I agreed and DSS arranged the cab. When the gentleman got out of the cab I immediately recognized his gate. I knew it was Chris. He was wearing a trench coat pulled up around his collar. Added to this were dark sunglasses. When he arrived at the door I explained that he was on our NO LIST and that he was not going to be able to stay with us. Before I had a chance to inform him that I knew who he was he said to me, "I don't know what you're talking about, I'm not Chris Crotty." He was a dear man and mentally ill. I'm fairly certain Brother Roger lifted his NO LIST ban a few days later.
4. I'll add a generic memory that always brought me a smile. Since not everyone on Long Island has had an opportunity to study Latin, a good portion of the men who stayed with us referred to Pax as "Paps Crispees." Myself and another Pax staff member, Todd Hill got a kick out of this and adopted the phrase ourselves.

I'll add that my predominant memory of working at Pax involves the gratitude of those who received services from the program. There was also an air of reverence for Brother Roger and the religious sisters that I'll never forget. And what a tribute to how they chose to live out their vocations.

~ Keith Deisner



History:

When I first came to Pax I expected to be nothing more than a volunteer. Then I talked to Steve B. and he convinced me to be an intern. From an intern I involved into a part time worker at Pax. From the beginning I knew that this was a special place. The workers here are amazing and the best people I ever gotten to work with. The community at Pax is a symbol and representation of its leaders. The people I've encountered are the best and have all taught me so much. I'm blessed to be here and have amazing co-workers. I look forward whenever I get to work because I know the crew is amazing.

Stories:

When I first heard about Father Frank I heard that he was amazing, kind, nice, and strong willed. I often referred to him in my own mind as the wizard of Hope House. I finally got to meet him and though our meeting lasted about 15 minutes, I knew I was working in the environment of an amazing man. He was a great person and I'm glad I got to meet him.

My first day as an intern hit me like a ton of bricks. I encountered two totally different cases and was taken aback right away. The workers I shadowed taught me so much and working with these people has made me a better person and has given me hope that there is goodness in everyone. I'm fortunate to have been here and progressed and I look forward to a long and fun filled time within Hope House and Pax.

~ Kenneth Kataria



Time periods spent at Pax Christi: September, 1992-May, 1995 and October, 2000-August, 2010.

History:

Thanks to Father Frank's vision and leadership at the helm of Hope House Ministries, my thirteen years of ministry at Pax Christi Hospitality Center and later with the Project Hope drop-in center have been both a privilege and a humble experience for me. Yes, my years with Hope House Ministries have been a blessed time. From my first encounter with Father Frank, I discovered that he was committed in doing everything possible to assist our homeless guests with their needs. My ministry with the homeless predates my arrival at Hope House Ministries; as a result, it had become my belief and conviction that our homeless men and women no matter what their presenting circumstances - each were entitled to be treated with dignity, compassion, and patience. So, like Father Frank, I found myself in complete agreement with his conviction and commitment at being available and hospitable to our homeless guests who frequented Pax Christi Hospitality Center and Project Hope. Therefore, I am indebted and privileged to have had the opportunity to minister with everyone at Hope House Ministries.

It would be a serious oversight if I failed to mention the truly amazing staff of Hope House Ministries and particularly Pax Christi Hospitality Center as they created and gave the ministry a Christian family-like atmosphere. From Bill Erdmann, Bill Hatfield, and Tony who truly had a welcoming and hospitable attitude as they, so often, were the first staff to greet the homeless guests upon their arrival at Pax Christi Hospitality Center and for their wonderful rapport they had with these guests, to Sr. Beata who always had a wealth of referral information and resources to share with both the guests and staff in order to assist them with their predicaments, to Sr. Janice who was full of life and laughter and brought a spirit of joy to the work place, to Sr. Mary who would do everything in order to assist the young guests who needed a stable and supportive environment in seeking entry into the Community House, to Sr. Margaret who kept me in line, to



Sr. Lillian and her dedicated volunteers who were responsible for the daily upkeep of the dorm, kitchen, clothing room, as well as the entire shelter, to Stephen Brazeau for his patience with me and who kept me from taking things too seriously, to Stephen Rabeno who gave me the support, encouragement, and direction when dealing with many challenging cases, to Carla and Linda for taking telephone messages and typing those extension requests, as well as all the volunteers from Ed, Lil, Maureen, Noel, Bob, Dawn and many others, yes, each of these individuals worked together to give Pax Christi Hospitality Center a true family atmosphere. So each day, I would always look forward to arriving at Pax Christi Hospitality Center and meeting the challenges which each day would present.

Then, upon my return to Pax Christi Hospitality Center following my five years away, I found another wonderful group of men and women with which to minister from Kathleen, Maureen, Corinna, Margaret, and Muriel who had a wealth of information and insight in helping me understand the guests who suffered from substance abuse, mental health, and medical issues, to John McClary, Tom Reichart, Tom Winkler, and Matt who got our men ready each morning in order to meet with advocacy, to Kevin for his prayerful support, to Cathey for her patience in searching the building for me whenever I was needed on the telephone; yes, all continued to exhibit this same familial spirit at Pax Christi Hospitality Center which made my days at Pax Christi Hospitality Center a pleasure to work. I must say my years at Hope House Ministries have been years of true Christian ministerial opportunities for me. Unlike other social service organization, Hope House Ministries sought to remind each of us staff who we were and our responsibilities of service to others each time we gathered together as a family to celebrate the daily liturgies at the Community House or at Pax Christi Hospitality Center chapels.

Therefore, thank you, Father Frank for allowing me to minister and to grow with you and your staff at Hope House Ministries.



cont'd. from pg. 9

Stories:

It is difficult for me to share any one story of my years ministering at Pax Christi Hospitality Center because I would find it an impossible challenge to share any one memory as so many have touched me. Yet, I believe the following story will serve as an example of many familiar encounters I have had serving our homeless guests there. So often our guests would arrive at Pax Christi Hospitality Center being referred by the police, a hospital social worker, a friend, a family member, an emergency housing worker, or just walking into the center for temporary housing. Then, following the initial intake and advocacy meeting a trusting relationship with the guests would begin as I would attempt to discover the cause of their homelessness. Often, this could be a difficult birthing process for these homeless guests as they began to accept and to come to terms with the true reason of their homelessness. Yet, if these guests were truly opened and willing to address their problems this would become the pathway to a new and hope-filled future for them.

Bernie a mild mannered gentleman in his fifties, a chronic alcoholic, and over the years a constant guest at Pax Christi Hospitality Center was such an example. Each time Bernie arrived, many times intoxicated, seeking housing, it was becoming apparent to me that he was becoming more and more embarrassed as he just was unable to admit to himself and others that he needed to surrender to his alcohol addiction to his higher power. Then one cold night, Bernie did not return to the center and the staff suspected that he had relapsed again. But the following morning, a Saturday, I met Bernie walking down the street ill-clothed for the weather, apologetic for not returning to Pax Christi Hospitality Center, and obviously ashamed and embarrassed about his relapse. Since, he had sobered up, I directed him to get in the car and I would drive back him to Pax Christi Hospitality Center and I would see him on Monday. But Bernie declined as he just could not bring himself to return to the center but thanked me and wandered off that bitterly cold wintry Saturday



morning. At which point, I did not know what happen to Bernie until one day some years later, when he walked in to Pax Christi Hospitality Center and asked to speak with me. Bernie was now well-groomed, clean shaven, smiling, healthy, and looking years younger. This was quite a change from the last time I had encountered him that bitterly cold Saturday morning. At first, did not recognize him until I looked at his eyes and to my surprise I called him by name. This is one of many miracles which due to the caring and compassionate staff of Pax Christi Hospitality Center that the guests would be empowered to make life giving changes in their lives. Bernie stated he was in the area and just wanted to come to say thanks for being there for him and not giving up on him. With a new beaming smile on his face, Bernie recalled that after much soul searching and his memories of the staff at Pax Christi Hospitality Center who never gave up on him, he was finally able to accept his alcohol addiction and to make the necessary changes in his life. At which point, Bernie got up and left Pax Christi Hospitality Center a changed person from the first encounter and I never saw him again. I believe this is the reason that Pax Christi Hospitality Center was established and continues to exist; to be present to those who walk through its doors and to give them hope and the means to make necessary changes in their lives.

ANECDOTES:

Whenever I had a short fuse and became overwhelmed I would be heard repeating the followings;

To those men and women to whom a treatment plan was formulated but was not complied with, I would say, "UNBELIEVEALBE!"

To those men and women who kept repeating the same story or living in their past, I would say, "GET OVER IT!"

To those men and women who with some prompting but on their own were able to articulate and to accept the reality of their situation and ready to work at making the necessary changes in their lives, I would say, "BINGO!"



cont'd. from pg. 11

To those men and women who sought my opinion and my response was a NO but they would or could not accept it and hope that I would change my response, I would say, "What do you not understand the 'N' or the 'O'!"

To those men and women who were inappropriate, abusive, or uncooperative, I would say, "OUT, OUT, OUT, AND COME BACK LATER!"

~ Brother Roger Croteau, CSC

February 17, 2012

History:

I am not a good historian but I thought it would be fun to try to put in writing some of my memories of how things evolved here at Pax Christi.

I arrived at Hope House Ministries in July 1991. My primary work was to take over the day to day operations of Wisdom House. This work did not consume my full time hours so Stephen Rabeno and Fr. Frank suggested I get involved in various works at the ministry and evaluate where the needs were and where I felt I could contribute. I did some work at the main Community House, observed a few days at Montfort House and worked with Muriel at Pax Christi. It evolved where I took on a couple days a week working with Muriel in the advocacy department of Pax Christi; probably in August 1991.

In those early days my memory is that Bill Daly was the overall director of the building of Pax Christi. Bill Erdmann and Joe Barlotta oversaw the evening work; which was largely the shelter component (utilizing the downstairs office space) and Muriel oversaw the advocacy work during the day (utilizing the upstairs office space). I recall that the two programs largely operated separately. I believe in these early days there were 2 sets of files and little communication between departments. I believe things evolved like this for some time. Bill Daly at one point ended his role and Stephen Rabeno took on



the administrative role. It was during his first tenure that Stephen engaged the task of integrating the two departments together; creating one file and opening doors of communication among the 2 separate departments including group staff meetings on a regular basis.

Staffing needs overlapped and advocacy utilized the downstairs offices.

I am unsure of the exact time frames and years when things occurred but I believe Stephen's first tenure last a few years. During this period Hope House Ministry's needs at the counseling center increased and Stephen Rabeno took on the role as the Director of the Human Services Center. Stephen transferred down to Hope House and Deacon Pat Gerace took on the acting role of administrator.

Deacon Pat was the administrator for about one year.

Stephen Rabeno was called upon to return to Pax Christi where it is at this time that Fr. Frank asked me to take on the role as Associate Director of Pax Christi, a new position for the Center.

In the early days I remember working with staff such as: Sr. Beata Marie Berger, Sr. Lillian Bouchard, Sr. Margaret Oerlien, Muriel Erdmann, Bill Erdmann, Joe Barlotta, Linda Barlotta, Carla Glancy, William Kaneversky among others.

During the period where I was beginning my full time work and engaging as the Associate Director I remember persons such as: Sr. Janice Doody, Sr. Mary McCarthy, Brother Roger Croteau, Todd Hill, Keith Diesner, Sr. Dorothy Schnell and Sr. MaryAnn McCarthy (on weekends).

There were a number of volunteers who were also very involved in those earlier days; Mickey, Barbara Pfeleger (now Moran), Barbara and Tom Coyle, Ed and Lil Kos and Deloris McCarthy among so many others.

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In approximately 2002 Stephen Rabeno took on the role as the Associate Director of Hope House where he also remained the Director of the Human Resource Center as well as the Director of Pax Christi. It was at this time that Stephen Rabeno moved down to an office at Hope House full time where I took on most of the day to day administration of Pax Christi sustaining the title of Associate Director.

Sharing/Anecdotes:

In my 20 years at Pax Christi I have been blessed with so many positive memories; so many wonderful caring and gifted workers, so many circumstances that touched my heart. Fun memories, sad memories, staff and guests that I had the pleasure of sharing life with who are no longer with us. Working with people in crisis, in various states of brokenness is challenging and difficult work. We touch so many peoples' lives as they touch ours. Recently over a weekend one of the staff had called me at home to consult regarding a situation. I called back after the situation had been resolved. I was listening to the circumstance and affirmed how staff handled the matter. I also reflected how difficult and sad the matter had been. The staff person and I shared together our reactions and at the end of the conversation the staff person commented something like; well that's the work here at Pax Christi. Yes, it is difficult and sad at times but the power and the gift is the moments we have where we can be there to respond, to listen, to care. It is in that moment where the pain and the joy lie. It is those moments where I am blessed, where I am thankful for our work, for our ministry here at Pax Christi Hospitality Center.

Story references – Related to staff:

Christmas party skits: Jeopardy, Cinderella, the Wizard of Oz, Dirty Jobs

Mike Chiappone's ideas and energy for the skits.

Mitch Sussman's Wedding.

Brother Roger's antics.



Keith Deisner calling and mimicking a caller in need.

Sr. Janice and her day time parties.

A staff meeting where all the staff gathered and made a Pax Christi banner.

Beginning of the morning banter with advocacy staff.

Me and Stephen Rabeno having an "intervention" with intern Val regarding smoking.

Lisa from Germany: "I don't know if I should laugh or punch you in the face."

Related to guests:

Sitting with a guest telling me he didn't want to stop using drugs.

Guest sharing his mental health symptoms and commenting that the crack cocaine stops the voices.

Talking with a chronic homeless and mentally ill fellow who didn't feel he could change his clothes.

A rap group I ran where the guests drew pictures and shared.

The memorial service for a local chronic homeless man where his family thanked Pax Christi staff for being there for him.

Talking to Bruce encouraging him not to go to Riverhead tonight. He died that night in the cold in Riverhead.

A long standing volunteer's story of his time as a guest and his recovery.

~ *Stephen Brazeau*



Over 18 years

History:

Ed, my late husband started to volunteer at Pax, after he lost his job at Grummans. He told me about the great people who work there; Linda, Bill Erdmann, and B. Hatfield. So many staff here have come and gone in the past years. It is not an easy job dealing with so many men who are down on their luck. I thank God for Pax.

Stories:

Ed was not too domestic, so one night he came home from Pax, and asked me how to make coffee and use the microwave? That is how I got involved.

Since I still had a full time job, we would drive in separate cars; Ed would walk me to mine and give me a good night kiss. As Ed was returning to the building, I noticed some of the guys looking at us and laughing. I walked back in and explained that we were married. They thought that I was a nun and Ed was a brother. So each week after that we explained to them why he kissed me goodbye.

It has been a long journey and I will continue to be involved with Hope House and Pax.

Recently one of our clients returned. And asked me where Ed was? I explained that he passed away in January. With tears in his eyes, he told me what a wonderful man he was and treated the guests with dignity and compassion and had time to talk with them.

~ *Lil Kos*



2006-2012

History:

Around the brick patio installation. Time in the back yard. With Project Hope out of Wisdom House.

Stories:

"I remember when" – John Sherman, while sober, speaking of the construction of the patio in the backyard.

I am a maintenance worker and support staff from 12 midnight to 8am on the weekends.

I have noticed Pax Christi has stood solid through the seasons and so many facets of the poor, destitute, marginal, and wounded come every day for the shelter of these walls and all this mission provides. I am touched by the presence of Pax Christi!

~ *Thomas Reichart*

See the tree empty

True the leaf unfolds in spring

Storms come and go

Peace



In 2007 I left my job in Manhattan and I sought to find a local job that would combine a degree of self fulfillment with viable employment.

I had known of Hope House and Pax Christi through the kind efforts of Father Frank lending assistance to my family.

Pax Christi offered at first an opportunity to volunteer, and this special environment opened up a new world for me. A place of hard work, sadness, a tremendous amount of hands on experience and the overall joyous satisfaction of really making a difference in the lives of other individuals.

Volunteering to help Brother Roger, at the offsite location of Pax Christi's original Project Hope, was a life affirming chance to work with a unique human being whose selfless compassion remains in my memory as a distant star to travel toward.

At Project Hope and then part time to full time as a client advocate at Pax Christi, each day invariably brought a full range of challenging situations and sometimes disappointing results. However the case, Pax gave me the opportunity to truly reach out and relate to each individual in a fundamental way.

The knowledge that you have broken through and really connected with someone in a positive way that has possibility of changing a person for a day or maybe a lifetime, is a beautiful feeling.

The real bonus of being here at Pax Christi, either as an employee, volunteer or helping out in any capacity, is that for every time you extend your hand, mind or heart to help another, at times someone in desperate need, you are inexorably making you a better version of yourself.

For over fifteen years Pax Christi has given so much back to me, co-worker's and clients, friends never to be forgotten.

~ *Jim Laino*



2022

I started volunteering in June 2001 at Pax Christi. Father Frank had done so much to help my family and I wanted to give something back.

I began by answering the phone and assisting the guests and walk-ins with meals and clothing. I found I really loved doing this type of work and soon applied for employment at Pax.

Thankfully, I was hired and began working as a receptionist in September 2001, and later became a full time advocate. I so enjoyed working with my supervisor Stephen Brazeau and colleagues Kathleen Martin, Brother Roger, Cathey Wagner and Peter SanPaolo.

A special case that stands out to me was a young man who was staying at Pax after getting away from an abusive situation. His mother was disabled and lived somewhere in Alaska, but very much wanted her son to live with her. The father lived on Long Island with an abusive stepmother.

It was because of these living conditions that the young man ran away.

I explained this situation to his DSS worker and my colleague Bill Hatfield went to the young man's house to obtain his legal identification. The DSS worker was very conscientious and actually got the young man an airplane ticket to Alaska, and when the plane landed in Alaska the mother and son phoned Pax Christi and told me they were very happy.

This made me feel so good to be a part of an organization like Pax, that can bring help and positive outcomes to those who sorely need it.

I continue to work at Pax as a part time per diem worker, and although the staff may have changed over the passing years, the heart and soul of Pax Christi remain the same.

~ *Maureen Laino*



2022

Several years ago there was a chronic homeless fellow who stayed on the streets in the general Port Jefferson area. He struggled with chronic alcohol abuse. He had been coming to Pax Christi Hospitality Center for many years for drop in services – a meal, coffee, shower, support, socialization.

One day we heard that he was in an altercation nearby where he fell and hit his head badly. He later died from the injury.

Brother Roger reached out to a family member and offered to have Fr. Frank say a memorial mass for the man.

His family showed for the mass. His parents and many of his siblings showed. He was one of 6 or 8 kids. The man grew up on Long Island and the family shared many stories of his childhood and life. He appeared to come from a loving and kind family. They shared that about 10 years ago he had cut off from the family and did not communicate with them. They believe that he was embarrassed by his chronic alcohol abuse and the pain he consistently put them through due to his disease.

They were moved by our work and thanked Pax Christi staff for loving their son/brother when he didn't allow them to love him.

This man was a difficult fellow and I was not as loving to him as I would have liked. I try to remember him and his family when a difficult fellow comes to the door or is staying with us.

~ Stephen Brazeau



Moment of Clarity

I really hate you

You are doing everything

I was meant to do

~ Joe Ricca



Your Memories of Pax Christi...



Your Memories of Pax Christi...





**PAX CHRISTI
HOSPITALITY CENTER**
...serving those experiencing homeless.

You're Invited...

**Anniversary Celebration
& Open House**

Recognizing 30+ years of compassion and hospitality
for those who need us most.

Thursday, September 15, 2022
12 - 2 pm

Guest Speaker:

Fr. Francis Pizzarelli, SMM, LCSW-R, ACSW, DCSW

Prayer Service

Food & Beverages

Meet & Greet plus Tour of Pax Christi

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RSVP: Call Pax Christi Hospitality Center (631) 928-9109
or email the Director, Stephen Brazeau @ sbrazeau@hm.org