

SISTER MARY ALICE MURPHY

Sister Mary Alice Murphy is a pioneer for the poor and homeless who has led several outreach programs, from soup kitchens to affordable housing. The Sister Mary Alice Murphy Center for Hope, which she established, provides a central location for homeless people where they can feel welcome, safe and supported, as well as getting access to services they need.

EARLY LIFE

Mary Alice Murphy was born in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, the eldest of five children. After graduating from high school she attended Victory Noll Junior College in Huntington, Indiana.

EDUCATION

She earned a bachelor's degree from Sienna Heights College in Adrian, Michigan, and a master's degree from the University of Denver in 1968.

CHARITY WORK

She worked in Denver following college graduation until coming to Fort Collins in 1983 to take a job as director for Catholic Charities Northern. Becoming aware of the number of homeless and hungry people in the vicinity, she started a hospitality kitchen in St. Joseph's Catholic Church to serve meals on weekends. From this beginning came the Catholic Mission, which provided not only meals but a place to stay.

She initiated programs to serve the poor, including a job bank, emergency assistance to help pay utility bills, and Care Housing, which she directed for several years. Care Housing works to develop affordable housing and offers resident services to those who qualify. She also founded Hand Up Cooperative, which became Homeless Gear, an organization that assists with finding employment.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Sister Murphy was one of 12 "women of distinction" honored by BizWest in 2013, recognized for her work in nonprofit human services.

In 2016 the City of Loveland bestowed its Model Partnership Award to the Murphy Center for Hope.

HER LEGACY

Sister Mary Alice Murphy has dedicated her life to helping others, choosing to devote her time, energy and skill to improving the lives of the poor. She is a role model for

selflessness, compassion, and action—rather than simply donating money to help those less fortunate, she has given freely of herself.

QUESTIONS

- Helping the homeless seems like a task too big to undertake. Has Sister Murphy's work been effective? Is there more she could have done?
- What do you think causes homelessness? How can it be prevented?
- Sister Murphy is a nun, a woman who agrees to abide by her vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Did choosing this kind of life make her more able to help others?
- What would you do to help the homeless?

GLOSSARY

Bestow—to give or award

Chastity—celibacy, meaning no sexual relationship

Compassion—care and concern for others

Distinction—standing out from others

Initiate—to start

Master's degree—an academic achievement award

Vicinity—area

TIMELINE

1968—graduated from University of Denver with a master's degree

1983—moved to Fort Collins

1983-1999—developed Job Bank, Emergency Assistance, directed Care Housing

2013—named a woman of distinction by BizWest

2016—Murphy Center for Hope honored by the City of Loveland

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