

Help The Homeless Week - February 22-28, 2009

# the beacon

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ERIE CITY MISSION

A Beacon of Hope Since 1911  
www.eriecitymission.org



In one of the most unique events ever to hit Erie, Lou Bizzarro and his crew are once again ready to give homelessness the one two punch.

“Knock out Homelessness-Round 2!” will be heating things up at Cauley Auditorium on February 26th. Last year it was Erie Mayor Joe Sinnott in the ring with boxing legend Lou Bizzarro. This time they’re bringing some friends along, including a former World Champion boxer and two of Erie’s own heavy hitting legal eagles. The program also includes a special video tribute to the late Johnny Bizzarro, a hometown boy who rose to the highest levels of boxing elite.

The capacity crowd that witnessed last year’s inaugural “Knock out Homelessness” event came away smiling and wanting more. The Bizzarro family is happy to oblige, all to raise money to house the homeless, feed the hungry and rescue the lost, right here at home.



Erie Boxing legend Lou Bizzarro & Mayor Joe Sinnott headlined the inaugural event last year

Among the many things making “Knock out Homelessness-Round 2!” even more special is seeing former #1 contender for the world lightweight crown Lou Bizzarro get into the ring to box his former protégé and long time friend attorney Ron DiNicola.

DiNicola learned to box as a teenager from Lou and his legendary trainer Stan Rocky. DiNicola fought amateur and was nationally ranked. He won the All Marine Corps Championship in 1975. Ronnie is the cousin of Vinnie DiNicola, the well known middleweight puncher who was a best friend and stable mate of Johnny Bizzarro in the 50s and 60s. At Louie’s urging, Ronnie focused on his studies,

attended Harvard and become a lawyer. Attorney DiNicola is now a heavy hitter in boxing circles having represented such ring legends as Muhammad Ali, Oscar De La Hoya, and reigning heavyweight champions Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko.

Sure to pack its own emotional 1-2 punch is a video tribute to Johnny Bizzarro by WICU Sports Director Mike Ruzzi. Lou Bizzarro will assist in highlighting his older brother and mentor’s career, including the 1966 fight for the World Lightweight crown between Johnny and Carlos Ortiz.

This event is a fun night for boxing fans and non-boxing fans alike with its delicious Italian buffet and fantastic sports memorabilia auction.

The auction features an original, one-of-a-kind mixed media action portrait of Muhammed Ali, to be completed live at the event, after 50 hours of work by celebrity sports artist Kevin-John. The amazing artwork will be autographed by “The Greatest” himself!

## KNOCK OUT HOMELESSNESS <sup>ROUND</sup> 2

### The fight card includes:

<b>John Boy Bizzarro</b>	<b>Lou Bizzarro, Jr.</b>	<b>Erie Boxing Legend</b>
<b>vs.</b>	<b>vs.</b>	<b>Lou Bizzarro</b>
<b>Erie County</b>	<b>Former Featherweight</b>	<b>vs.</b>
<b>Common Pleas Court</b>	<b>World Champ</b>	<b>Former Protégé &amp; Marine</b>
<b>Judge John Trucilla</b>	<b>Jesús Salon</b>	<b>Champ Ronnie DiNicola</b>

**Thursday, February 26, 2009**

**Cauley Auditorium**

**215 E. 4th Street, Erie, PA**

**6-9:30 pm**



Major sponsors for “Knock Out Homelessness” include Erie Federal Credit Union, Mikron Valve and Marquette Savings Bank.

Individual tickets to the event are \$40 for general admission and \$100 for Ringside Gold sponsorship. For tickets and sponsorship information please call (814) 452-4421 or log onto [www.eriecitymission.org](http://www.eriecitymission.org)



Jack Kovacs – President

# PRESIDENT'S

## C O R N E R

### “Mission Possible” Building Hope, Changing Lives - The Faith to Rebuild

If you are reading this newsletter, chances are you are a part of the Erie City Mission family. It is a true family and community effort being

undertaken to ensure that the Erie City Mission remains a Beacon of Hope for the next 100 years, as it has for nearly the last 100.

Aside from the yearly challenge to keep the doors open to house the homeless, feed the hungry and rescue the lost right here at home, this year we go to you, our family and our community, asking you to help us rebuild what cannot be repaired.

While the Mission programs for the poor, homeless and addicted are strong and growing, in answer to the ever growing need, the condition of the current physical building at 1023 French Street threatens the Mission's future, and is in desperate need of being rebuilt. The Erie City Mission/New Life Center at 1023 French Street is a vital part of our community that makes it a safer and healthier place for all of us to live, work, run our businesses and raise our families.

2009 is the year when we identify those in our community with the faith in the Mission and the ability to significantly impact its future by pledging to support the Erie City Mission Capital Campaign to help rebuild the Mission.

The Capital Campaign will be led by Chairpersons Dr. John & Colby Tucker. Long time Mission board member and supporter Dr. Tucker says, “I have often marveled at how socially responsible this community is. I believe in the Erie City Mission and its impact on the lives of those who are homeless, hungry and lost. I encourage everyone to get involved and be part of this legacy that will help care for our neighbors in need for decades to come.”

The Erie City Mission has in fact received the sole endorsement of the Community Fund Drives Committee, established in 1975 by the Erie Conference on Community Development to prioritize and schedule community-wide fundraising campaigns. The following is an excerpt of the Community Fund Drives Committee endorsement letter, written by its chairperson Thomas Vicary:

November 11, 2008

On behalf of the Community Fund Drives Committee, I am pleased to announce that the Erie City Mission has received our endorsement for a capital campaign in 2009.

The Erie City Mission provides quality services and care that rebuild the lives of individuals and families impacted by the effects of addictions, poverty, homelessness and lack of hope. They are a beacon of hope to the area's neediest individuals and families. The current state of the economy has caused an increase in the need for services and your support is more important than ever.

...Because of the ravages of time and increasing demand for services to the poor, a new facility is vital for the Mission to house the homeless, feed the hungry and rescue the lost, right here at home.

Following a detailed review, the Committee believes the campaign is well organized and the case for support is strong. During these difficult financial times, the Erie community is fortunate to have the Mission. We encourage you to consider supporting the Erie City Mission in their effort to better serve those in need.

You will be hearing much more about the Capital Campaign as the year goes on. Please consider playing a part in this vital community project. If you would like to learn more about the campaign or the Mission's building plans, please contact the Erie City Mission at (814) 452-4421.

## “Help the Homeless Week” Declared in Erie & Erie County

The City of Erie and Erie County have once again declared the last week in February “Help the Homeless Week”. It is a shout from the rooftops to everyone to focus on the problems of homelessness and poverty right in our own backyards.

I know what you're thinking, it's a bad economy and times are tough for all of us, right? That may be true, but there is always something we can do to help those less fortunate. As the economy worsens, the numbers of those who need help just making it through the week continue to grow. That includes the “working poor” and the newly unemployed, trying to get themselves and their families back on solid ground.

The Erie City Mission invites all area schools, churches, businesses and other groups to help raise awareness of the problems, and raise funds and other items needed to help those served at the Erie City Mission and the areas other fine shelters and social service agencies.

Here are some of the other ways you can get involved:

- Have a “**dress down**” day. Invite those in your school or business to donate a set amount for the ability to go casual for a day.
- **Sell delicious “Mission Possible” bars.** They are \$1.00 Pulakos Chocolates that everyone loves!
- **Have a collection drive** of funds/new or gently used clothing/furniture/personal care/baby items or paper products. Our needs list can be found on our website: [www.ericcitymission.org](http://www.ericcitymission.org)
- **Can or Cereal Collection Challenge**-Be the school or group to collect the most cereal boxes and/or create the most unique sculpture with your collection.
- **Create an “I AM THE ERIE CITY MISSION” Wall**

The creative sky is the limit for what your group can do! For more information, or to let us know how you are choosing to be a part of Help the Homeless Week, call us at (814)452-4421.

### Scheduled Events Include:

#### A Multi-Denominational Prayer Meeting

Sunday, February 22nd 7-8:30 PM

Erie City Mission Public Dining Room • 1023 French Street

*The purpose is to gather in unity and pray for God's glory to fall upon the city, county, region and country.*



### “Knock out Homelessness-Round 2!”

Thursday, February 26th 6-9:30PM

Cauley Auditorium

215 E. 4th Street, Erie

*Please see story on page one*

## The American Dream

In the late 1990's Johannes Mayer, known to most people as Hans, was living the American dream. A highly intelligent man with a degree in math, he attended graduate school at the University of Hawaii and taught math there for 5 years. He wed his bride in Hawaii and went on to have two children, a son and a daughter.

Hans made 6 figures managing the engineering department of a telecommunications company in Dallas. He was a workaholic, often spending 80 hours a week doing the job that he loved, to the detriment of his home life. In 2000, after 17 years of marriage, his wife divorced him. In 2001, after 17 years on the job, the telecommunications industry went bust. Hans and the entire department he managed were laid off. With plenty of money in the bank and a new car in the garage, Hans was not really concerned. He got an apartment and spent lots of time by the pool drinking rum and cokes. He thought he could afford to wait for the right position to come along. It never did. The fun in the sun turned into alcoholic despair.



*Hans Mayer has a new outlook on life, thanks to the Erie City Mission*

Fast forward to 2009, Hans sits behind the Men's Desk in the Erie City Mission where he has lived on and off since May of 2007. Somewhere between the American Dream and the reality of today, Hans says he was afraid he was going to die, and equally afraid that he wouldn't.

Hans had moved to Sharon, PA to be near his girlfriend. Although they remained close, she got fed up with his drinking and kicked him out. At that time, he was experiencing black outs for months at a time. "Alcohol almost killed me", says a sobered Hans. After nearly a decade of downward spiral, which included several stints in rehabs, he finally said UNCLE.

Counselors at Turning Point, a drug and alcohol rehab in Franklin, PA encouraged Hans to get into a long term treatment program and suggested the Erie City Mission.

Hans says even though he has been a life long atheist, it is the spiritual component of the Erie City Mission's New Life program that he finds most beneficial. He says he is keeping an open mind and is looking into all roads to spirituality.

Alcoholism is a disease recognized by the American Medical Association. In this case, it took an intelligent, hard working and happy man to the very brink of death. Hans says his belief in a power greater than himself is the only thing that will keep him sober.

Where would he be without the Erie City Mission? Hans says in jail, or dead. This month will mark his first year sober since he was young. "There is no way I would have gotten sober and had any kind of spiritual awakening if not for the Mission." He reasons that the Mission's worth, besides saving his life, is a matter of practicality. The Mission takes people who are costing society money, and turns them into people who contribute to society. People like him.

Hans has just started teaching a computer class to fellow Mission residents and is working to help start a private enterprise in the community.

The 80 hour a week power job and the self centeredness are behind him. Hans' new American Dream has more to do with his sobriety, his children and their children. What will the future hold? Hans says he's grateful to the Erie City Mission for giving him the chance to answer that question one day at a time.

### The Erie City Mission houses up to 72 men a night.

- Up to 28 men a night come in out of the cold in the Samaritan Care emergency shelter where they can stay for up to 30 days
- 8 beds are devoted to Hope Center, a state licensed inpatient drug and alcohol rehab
- 36 beds are for the New Life Program in which men, including Hans, live for 6 months to 2 years working on their spiritual, physical, and mental health as well as addictions and vocational rehabilitation.

## Erie SeaWolves Help the Homeless

SeaWolves fans, mark March 14th on your calendar. It is the Opening Day of Ticket Sales and once again the Erie SeaWolves are offering generous ticket packages to benefit the Erie City Mission. There are 3 ways to help the Erie City Mission & bring home tickets to see your home town team:

1. Bring in 2 boxes of cereal for the needy and earn a free ticket to the SeaWolves Opening Day game
2. Purchase the Grand Slam Pack – \$80 for 1 Club Seating Section, that's 8 tickets at a \$16 discount
3. Purchase the Silver Slugger Pack – \$40 for 4 Box Seat tickets, 2 SeaWolves T-shirts & 2 SeaWolves Caps

These offers are good on the Opening Day of Ticket Sales only. All sales of the Grand Slam & Silver Slugger packs that day directly benefit Erie City Mission programs that house the homeless, feed the hungry & rescue the lost, right here at home.



**Opening Day of Ticket Sales:**

**Saturday, March 14th, 2009**

**12-4 pm at Jerry Uht Park**

## A "Taxing" time of year benefits the Erie City Mission

H & R Block is offering a \$25 donation to the Erie City Mission for every new client getting their taxes done this year who brings in a referral form. You can find that form on line at [www.ericcitymission.org](http://www.ericcitymission.org) or call the Mission at (814) 452-4421 and we'll send you one.

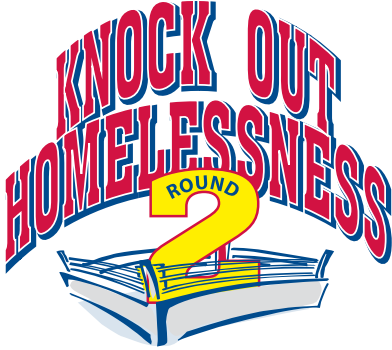
Thank you to H & R Block employees who recently set up shop in the Mission dining room for National Free Tax Advice Day. Employees also brought in mounds of cereal and diapers collected at their branch offices to the benefit of many families in need served at our Family Care Center.



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# Help The Homeless Week - February 22-28, 2009



- FACT:**
- Erie County reports up to 2,000 homeless people each year
  - The latest numbers show that 1 out of every 5 individuals living in the city of Erie live below the poverty level
  - 1 in every 4 children in Erie live below the poverty threshold

## Building a Bridge to the Future

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to the more than 150 donors who have helped us to make it through a tough year end at the Erie City Mission. These partners have generously pledged a minimum of \$1,000 each. Their donations will each be commemorated with a granite marker built into a footbridge to be constructed in front of the new Erie City Mission/New Life Center in 2010.

Many of our “Build a Bridge to the Future” partners are still deciding what legacy they would like to leave on their markers. When the list is complete, it will be posted on our website [www.eriecitymission.org](http://www.eriecitymission.org)

- ### Upcoming Events
- Feb. 6** Grand re-opening Thrifty Shopper - 914 State Street • 4-8pm
  - Feb. 22** Prayer service to kick off Help the Homeless Week  
ECM Dining Room • 7-8:30pm
  - Feb. 22-28** Help the Homeless Week - Erie County
  - Feb. 26** Knock out Homelessness - Round 2!  
Cauley Auditorium • 6-9:30pm
  - March 14** Opening Day of Seawolves ticket sales Jerry Uht Park • 12-4pm
  - April 12** Easter Sunday, Public Easter Meal  
ECM Dining Room • 11:30-1:30pm
  - Aug. 13** Erie City Mission Scramble - Whispering Woods  
Golf Club • 1pm shotgun start

*Please clip and return this coupon with your donation in the envelope provided*

**your HELP means so much!**

Please accept this coupon to house \_\_\_\_\_ person/people tonight.

It costs approximately \$25 to house, care for and feed a homeless person for the night at the Erie City Mission.

If you would like, please include some words of encouragement for a homeless man you are helping to come in from the cold at the Erie City Mission

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## In 2008 . . .

- 180,000 free meals were provided to hungry men, women and children in the Erie City Mission dining room
- 14,234 family visits to the Mission’s Family Care Center provided emergency groceries and other necessities for 59,400 people
- Kings Kloset, a collaboration with Bethany Lutheran Church provided free clothing for 7,500 people
- Two different toy giveaway programs at the Erie City Mission Family Care Center provided new toys for 674 children at Christmas