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Lawyers step up to help the homeless

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Chicago lawyers have donated \$1.1 million in the last six years to Franciscan Outreach, which assists people in need with housing and food.

But the lawyers aren't just bucking up.

In fact, Michael M. Marick, a partner at Meckler, Bulger, Tilson, Marick & Pearson LLP, helped in a different way last week, along with his wife and three children.

The family served more than 100 lasagna dinners to homeless men and women on Christmas Eve at the Marquard Center, Franciscan Outreach's building in the Wicker Park neighborhood.

"It places in such clear perspective how fortunate we are and how rewarding it is to support those truly in need, particularly on Christmas," Marick said.

Marick and his firm became involved with Franciscan Outreach's Lawyers United for the Homeless during the past year.

"It's gratifying for my law firm and for me personally and for lawyers generally to help Chicago's homeless," he said. "Being able to provide the most basic human needs — food and shelter — is especially rewarding."

The origins of Franciscan Outreach began in 1963 when the Rev. Phillip Marquard, a Franciscan friar, started an outreach program for ex-offenders on the West Side. They received transitional housing, along with job counseling and placement.

In 2013, the organization helped 258 people get off the streets and into housing.

As of Nov. 30, that number stood at 230 for this year.

Chicago lawyers contributed \$50,489 in 2014, said Diana Faust, Franciscan Outreach's executive director.

The lawyer donations range from \$25 to \$28,000.

"The money helps keep people sheltered and fed and helps them build a better life," said Faust, whose Illinois law license is now inactive.

The Lawyers United group was formed in 2008 and now has about 100 members from various sized law firms, sole practitioners and recent law school graduates.

About 50 lawyers attended the lawyer group's annual fund raising reception in September. A total of \$13,170 was raised at that event, held at Freeborn & Peters LLP's downtown offices.

That firm's involvement in Lawyers United was led by partner Jeffery M. Cross in 2008.



Michael M. Marick



Anthony J. Carballo

Cross and Anthony J. Carballo, a fellow Freeborn & Peters partner, sponsored and hosted the September event.

The firm has donated money to Franciscan Outreach and also conducted "dress down" days in which the proceeds went to that organization.

Some 50 Freeborn & Peters lawyers, staff and family members have volunteered at the soup kitchen over the years.

"You see the appreciation they have when they come into the soup kitchen," Carballo said referring to those in need. "It (also) creates camaraderie with the people you work with."

Lawyers also provide free legal

services to the homeless who visit the Bucktown location.

The organization also has a shelter on the West Side. That building is about 100 years old and faces a building code violation related to its truss roof.

Scott E. Saef and Patrick E. Croke, both lawyers at Sidley, Austin LLP, are providing pro bono services to address the code violation.

While the money donated by lawyers helps greatly, Franciscan Outreach still needed to raise \$100,000 by this week to reach its \$2.3 million budget goal for 2014, Faust said. For information about donations, visit franoutreach.org.