

Tom Miciche

## Compassion

Inside that unassuming little yellow house next to the Parish Center, lives are being saved all the time. It is home to the United Churches Assistance Network (UCAN), offering emergency assistance to people in the community facing evictions, utility shut-offs and more. UCAN is a movement of 25 selfless volunteers from 16 local churches helping some 1,200 families in crisis each year.

These volunteers, according to St Joseph parishioner and UCAN volunteer Tom Miciche, are the face of humanity and empathy to people in times of desperation.

UCAN volunteers see it all, says Tom, from people who are homeless to the grandmother who is now caring for her grandchildren because her child is addicted to drugs.

"I've learned that so many people in this zip code live literally paycheck to paycheck," he says. "And if one thing happens, one unexpected problem, it can be the thing that gets their heat turned off.

We've had clients come in just for gas money or bus tokens so they can get to their jobs. That sounds like a small thing, but it can be the difference between bringing home a paycheck or your family living on the streets. It is extremely hard to be part of the working poor and break out of poverty."

Tom, who is also on the UCAN board, volunteers two or three times a month. He says that witnessing the kindness and commitment of the volunteers at the center has strengthened his faith and made him a more empathetic person.

"There is a lot of shame for the people walking in those doors," he says. "And every one of the volunteers treats every one of the clients with warmth and compassion. I've never taken for granted what God has given me, but seeing the struggles of the folks we help, makes me pause more often to thank the Lord for all he has done for both myself and my family. It inspires me to do more."



To learn more about volunteering at UCAN or about any of the outreach volunteering opportunities St. Joseph offers, contact Kati Atencio, Director of Outreach Ministries, [katencio@sjpmd.org](mailto:katencio@sjpmd.org)