

## Gerard Place Volunteer Spotlight - Dr. Larry Whelan

For volunteer Larry Whelan, the six hours he spends at Gerard Place are the most joyful hours of his week. He volunteers for the Take-out Meal program on Mondays and Wednesdays and distributes 240 meals to neighborhood clients each week.

His desire to serve was inspired by Winston Churchill, Gandhi, and Pastor Jim Wallace who helped the poor on the streets of D.C.

When Larry, a dentist with a thriving practice in Tonawanda, decided to get involved in community volunteer work, he carefully considered several opportunities. Around that time, one of Larry's dental patients who worked at Gerard Place invited him to visit. The Takeout Meal program had just started, so he showed up, witnessed the impactful work taking place, and was hooked.

Larry wanted to work directly with the people Gerard Place helps, so he chose to be out front talking to the clients and finding out about their lives. Larry serves each week with Sr. Mary Ann and Sr. Pauline who have become good friends. The trio works together efficiently - greeting clients, serving food and helping clients with other needs.



**“I'm out in front and that's where I want to be.” Larry said.**

In addition to serving meals, Larry picks up donated baked goods at Five Points Bakery and Butter Block, which are added to the meals on Wednesday. He also brings clothes from the Ken-Ton Closet that are distributed to Gerard Place clients. Larry is also been a tutor for GED students.

Larry is impressed with how Gerard Place meets the needs of the community - whatever need is there, the team can meet it. Understanding that the needs in our community are constantly changing, Gerard Place opened a food in 2021.

About a year ago, Larry connected with a woman named Sheila who came to Gerard Place to receive a meal. They got to know each other, and Larry learned that she had a skill that could help other clients.

“She is really good at folding clothes and I’m not, so one day she started folding clothes for me,” he said. “And she has stuck around, so she is a community member that has become an adjunct volunteer.”

While Larry has had a positive impact on the clients he serves, they have impacted him as well.

**“Volunteering at Gerard Place has changed me immensely,” he said. “I knew I was always heading in this path. I just didn't know what it was, and now I found it at Gerard Place.”**