

Retired volunteers find joy serving as Ignatian Volunteers

Cleveland

For 12 years, Mike Grogan fed and helped the homeless or underprivileged in his hometown of Olmsted Falls. He then suffered a heart attack and took a break from volunteerism. His wife, Norma, took ill and he retired from auto care business.

The couple were high school sweethearts.

In 2003, Norma passed away. She was survived by her husband and their three children and eight grandchildren.

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Following her death, Grogan sought spiritual growth and had a renewed interest in serving the homeless and less fortunate. He found both in the Ignatian Volunteer Corps.

"I think its such a wonderful program because it ties volunteering into spiritual growth," the 75-year-old retiree said. Grogan used to be a military jet pilot and sold military supplies before he opened his own service station.

For the first couple years in IVC, Grogan ran Friday community meals which served the elderly, underprivileged and homeless at the now-closed St. Procop Church on Cleveland's West Side.

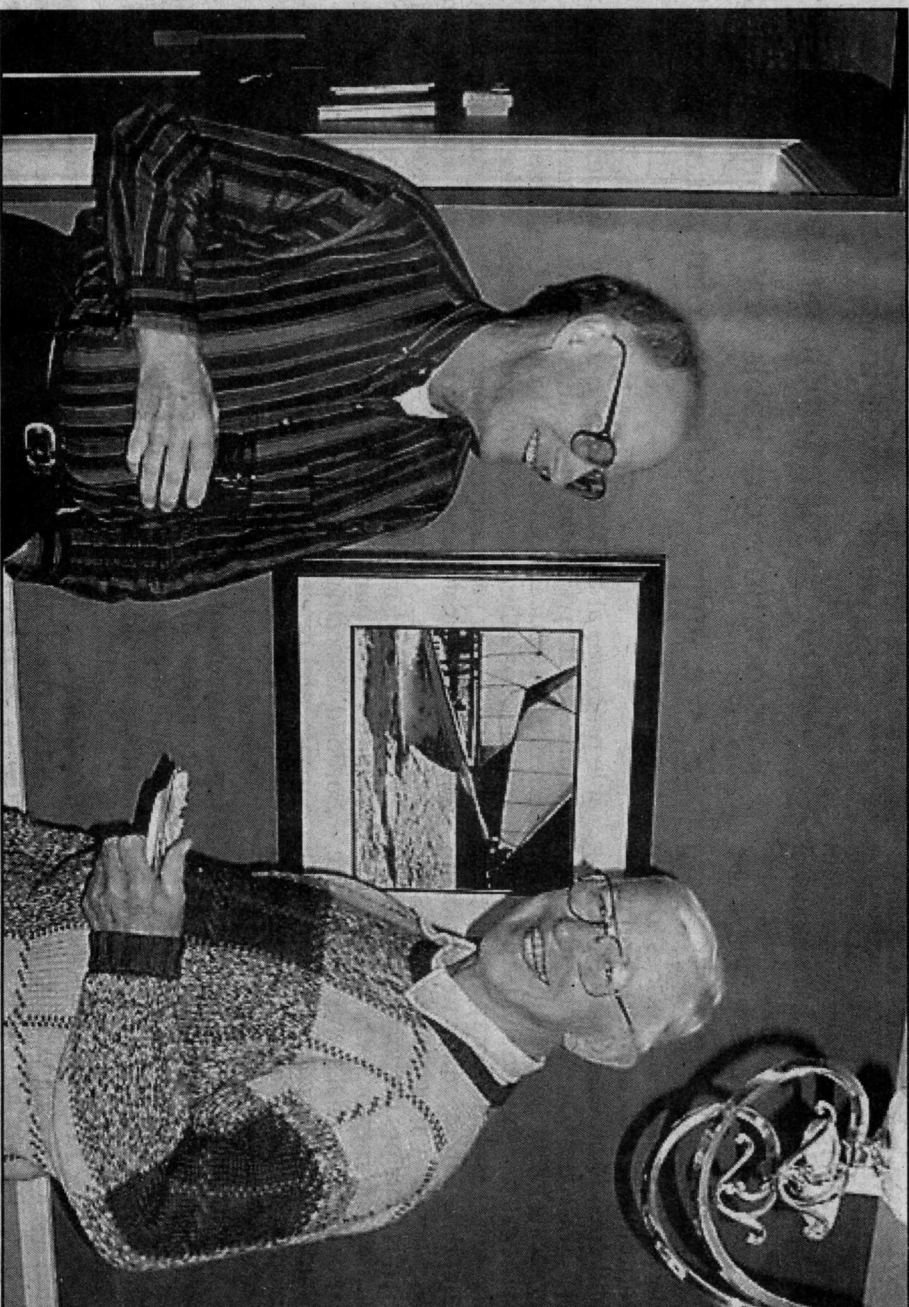
Last August, Mike and the meal program moved to St. Augustine's Church.

Through IVC, Grogan has expanded his volunteer work to include homeless men. Grogan helps these men legally obtain state ID cards so they can obtain social service assistance.

"The homeless are non-entities in the eyes of the state until they get state IDs," Grogan said.

Grogan also helps St. Ignatius High School boys care for the homeless. These boys hit the streets every Sunday through the school's Labre program to visit the homeless.

One time, Grogan said some St. Ignatius students noticed a homeless man sleeping on a heated grate in downtown Cleveland.



Deacon Bill Merriman of St. Patrick Parish on Bridge Avenue on Cleveland's near west and Ignatian volunteer Mike Grogan have seen the difference faithful volunteers can make in people's lives.

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"They asked me to go see him. I went the next day and (the man) was close to death. I rushed him to the hospital. Here he had a deadly blood disease," Grogan said.

"If those boys hadn't taken an interest in him and cared about him, he would've been dead. Now he's in a home. One of the most rewarding experiences."

He added: "It's been humbling to me to see what's going on out on the streets. Spiritually, as a person, I've grown." And so could you.

Contact Cleveland's IVC at 216-470-9470 or e-mail Cleveland@ivcusa.org.