THE LEO HOUSE

332 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10011 212.929.1010 *A heart in New York City*

Spring 2024

Handicapped Accessible Room

As described in the July 2022 Appeal Letter and in the Fall/ Winter Leo House newsletter, a Handicapped Accessible Room was going to be constructed. Leo House guests with disabilities would be accommodated.

Such a room was in great demand and to date has been completed, is being used and is greatly appreciated. The appeal letter that had gone out to request financial assistance for the project was backed with support, encouragement, and generous contributions.

When the project started in the spring of 2023, Rooms 410 and 412 were deconstructed. First off, the wall between the two rooms was demolished. Then Room 410, a double room, became a single room because a portion of the space was needed to widen the doors and the entry way into Room 412. Wheel chairs need a double-wide space to maneuver properly through doorways and into a shower.

The construction company hired to take on the project, ***Ivas Facilities Services***, finished in Fall 2023.

A word of advice from the Reservation Office if the Handicapped Accessible Room is needed: Request Room 412 upon making a reservation. Do not wait until you arrive at The Leo House to make that request; it may not be available.

The wall was removed between Rooms 410 and 412

The new shower is double-wide for wheel chair access

Remembering Those Who Died

✞ **Paul Gerlin**
✞ **Jamel Wallace**
✞ **Msgr. Kenneth Smith**
✞ **Sister Jean Steffes, CSA**

Each year during the month of November, the Book of Remembrance is available and located in the chapel area of The Leo House. November is the month for remembering loved ones and friends who passed away. More names were added in 2023 by guests and Leo House employees. The names of Paul Gerlin, the brother of Carl Gerlin, and Jamel Wallace, mother of Maintenance Manager, Alexander Wallace, were inscribed and remembered with prayers during the month of November.

Also inscribed were the names of Sister Jean Steffes, CSA, and Msgr. Ken Smith. Sister Jean had been a past member of The Leo House Board of Directors, and Msgr. Smith had been a member since 1997. His wise counsel and humor were always present. He offered a Mass in honor of The Leo House Patron, Saint Raphael, prior to each Board Meeting and led the Opening Prayer for each of the Leo House Galas in 2017, 2018, and 2019.

Sister Jean had been a high school English instructor for fifteen years and then was general superior for the Sisters of Saint Agnes for four terms. She was always mindful and supportive of the ministries of the congregation, including The Leo House and its three Galas.

May Paul, Jamel, Msgr. Ken, and Sister Jean rest in peace.

Beach Reading?

The *Little Free Library* at The Leo House is enjoyed and used by many guests. There is a constant turn-over of books being 'taken' and those being 'returned' by international and domestic travelers. "Take a Book, Leave a Book" is the motto for this international project.

The shelf labeled *'International'* features books written in French, Russian, and Italian, to name a few.

A guest from Europe recently sent a photo of a **Little Free Library** spotted on an island in Greece. It's painted the color of the ocean. Can you imagine the books that might be on the shelves? Greek history, mythology, geography, literature, antiquities, oceanography, cooking? The possibilities are endless. Maybe there's even room for books matching the styling of the bookcase? Beach reading, anyone?

Water Reigned!!!

Yes, water ruled the day when a water line broke on second floor and water had no where to go but down. A huge waterfall was created going down the stairway to the basement, it poured into the elevator shafts, drained through the light fixtures, then drenched the first floor carpet, and was ankle deep. Damage was so extensive, all Leo House reservations got cancelled and all guests had to vacate or re-locate. Almost all staff were new employees, but it was team effort on the part of all to 'quell the storm." All front lobby furniture and carpeting were destroyed, then replaced. Photos show the results. Original tiling is now exposed and compliments the new arrangement of furniture nicely.

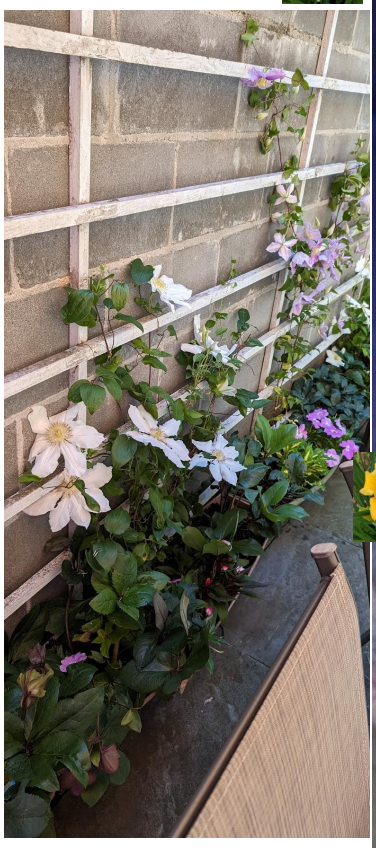
Water pouring down an elevator shaft from the second floor. To the right is shown the new furniture arrangement following cleanup of a massive amount of water in the first floor lobby.

See How The Garden Grows

Recently, The Leo House Garden took on a special glow when a new grill, flowering plants, and solar lights were added.

The first cook-out was held on June 13th and the new grill, seen smoking in the photo on the right, did wonders with the food.

Flowering plants were added to the Garden in recent weeks. Clematis vines are seen climbing up the trellis and some of the blossoms are decorations on other pages. Executive Director, Ashley Bryant added angel solar lights to the flower beds. Guests have been spotted enjoying an evening respite in the presence of the sparkling angels.



The following article, called

My Introduction to The Leo House

was written by Colleen Fahey, a *Friend of The Leo House* and a frequent Guest.

"The first time I walked into my tidy room at The Leo House, I felt my shoulders drop. I saw a narrow bed, a simple sink, a desk, one chair, one thin bar of soap. If there was a TV, it must have been small, I didn't notice it.

I had recently left my executive job working on Publcis Worldwide's (an international advertising company) global client, **Nestlé**. Their policy had been, "Travel the way our clients travel," so I stayed at the **Trois Couronnes** in Vevey, Switzerland, the **Sol Melia** in São Paolo, the **JW Marriott** in Bangkok, the **Presidente** in Mexico City, the **Essex House** in New York and so on and on and on.

I'd wake up wondering what county I was in, meet a new team, make a speech that I hoped was relevant and lead an energetic workshop, then, exhausted, be wined and dined. A consequence was that my body went on red alert whenever I walked into a luxury hotel.

Now, our small, entrepreneurial business couldn't afford those extravagant visits, and I turned to my father's cousin, Fr. Michael Fahey, SJ for counsel as to where I might stay in New York. His enthusiastic advice brought me to 332 W. 23rd St, where I was to discover a homey inn with an elevator that locked out the 8th floor – a place that came with heartwarmingly good values and head-achingly bad Wi-Fi.

At breakfast, I heard snatches of conversations about schools in Africa, UN visits to mitigate climate change and women's shelters. The reading room gave pride of place to *Lives of the Saints* and Pope Leo XIII with his kindly expression, watched over the occupants. This was a New York I had never encountered.

And it was where I wanted to be.

I can't count the number of times I've stayed there since. The 8th floor is now open, the tiny soap has been joined by shampoo and a bath bar, *Lives of the Saints* has gone off to a new home, the Wi-Fi works and the décor has evolved in a more secular direction.

But I've made friends who live by the values that I'd sensed on my first visit. And every visit to New York lets my shoulders drop."

Jubilee 2024

On June 23,2024. Sister Marilyn will celebrate her 60th Jubilee as a Sister of Saint Agnes. In honor of the special occasion The Leo House sponsored a special luncheon for her on April 22, 2024. Leo House Staff and Managers attended and so did members of her immediate family from the states of Wisconsin and Connecticut.

Following the meal, Sister Marilyn gave a slide show, presenting the time-line through those 60 years. The first 25 years were as a teacher in two different schools in the cities of Hays KS, Milwaukee WI, and New York NY. The last 17 years have been here at The Leo House as Development Director. She hopes to be here for her 70th Jubilee!