

GOTWALS

HEALTHY PRESS

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 2

Celebrating 10 years of service

SPRING 2021

Helping people who are hungry

For Martha's Choice in Norristown, the pandemic has meant a whole new way of helping people who are hungry.

Before the pandemic, Martha's Choice "was like a grocery store where people would go through with their shopping carts and pick out the things that they needed, and it was a lot of fun," said Patrick Walsh, the director of the organization's programs.

The pandemic meant that customers couldn't go inside the store. Instead, Mr. Walsh and his staff set up a drive-thru, so that people could stay safely inside their cars.

For five years, Martha's Choice has run a food pantry in Norristown that offers free fruits, vegetables, and other healthy food to people in need.

Mr. Walsh said his staff misses seeing their customers face to face and having their usual friendly conversations. He said those contacts have been an important part of Martha's Choice. But he added the most important thing was "keeping everyone safe."

Because of the pandemic, more people need food and assistance because they have lost their jobs, Mr. Walsh said. Martha's Choice staffers even have ordered rides for people who can't get to the food pantry. They also have helped people look for jobs and pay rent and other bills.

Mr. Walsh said that a lot of people make sure Martha's Choice runs smoothly—especially volunteers. The volunteers are often school kids and older

(See Lending on Page 2)

Thrilled by the Mars rover landing

Editor's note: Healthy Press reporters describe what it was like to watch the Perseverance rover land on Mars on February 18.

It was amazing! I felt like I was in the rover in person, but no! I was sitting on my couch. Waiting, waiting, and even more waiting to see what will happen next ... seeing the people that built and programmed the Perseverance biting their nails, getting up and out of their chair, shaking, sweating, terrified, thinking will the rover land safely. I was shaking in fear like them! But when they heard that the parachute opened, I could see their smiles on their faces! They were so happy I started to smile too! I felt like this landing was going to be a success!

(See Mars on Page 2)



Illustration by Jennifer Lazo

Mars mission was not boring

(Continued from Page 1)

I was daydreaming right after I saw their smiles. I was daydreaming about them finding life on Mars.

—By Briana Hernandez

I was sitting in my bed so nervous. I was wondering if Perseverance was going to make it to Mars or not. Perseverance is a robot or a machine that was sent up to space to collect data and information to report back to the people at NASA.

Anyways, I had my computer sitting right in front of me playing the video. I saw workers constantly hoping that Perseverance was going to make it safely. Some were probably sweating, some were probably shaking, and others might have been even praying. And when I saw the look on their faces when Perseverance landed they were jumping, dancing, and



Illustration by Kimberlyn Santiago

happy that it wasn't a failure. ... They worked their tails off to make that robot. —By Katelynn Gibbs

I thought it wasn't going to land safely and I thought something was going to go wrong. But then when it landed safely I was so shocked and surprised. I kept re-watching it. It was really AMAZING!!!!!! And still today I am blown away, like my mind still can't believe that it landed!

When it landed I daydreamed about how if I was there and it landed, how happy I would be ... and I helped make it and it was a success. During it, I was especially entertained because of the pandemic I have been bored. It helped because at least I got to do something for a few minutes.

—By Kimberlyn Santiago

Lending a hand to help others

(Continued from Page 1)

people, but because of the pandemic they have had to stay home. It has been especially difficult to feed the huge number of people in need at Martha's Choice without their usual volunteers, Mr. Walsh said.

Despite the challenges, some good things have happened. For instance, Martha's Choice now owns a farm where they grow food and flowers to give to people.

During the pandemic, Mr. Walsh said he has learned to be a better leader, make time for his family, slow down, pay attention to what people need, and look ahead to plan for what could happen next. He said he found time to learn more about himself, too.

Mr. Walsh said that he will tell his grandchildren that the pandemic was "difficult, but I was lucky to help people when they were struggling."

—By Brianna Peña Aragón, Brianna Hernandez, Kimberlyn Santiago, and Katelynn Gibbs

Editor's note: This story about Martha's Choice will also appear in Leading Healthy Change In Our Communities 2021—Doing the Undoable in a Pandemic. The book will be published this spring.

How has Patrick Walsh handled the pandemic?

The *Healthy Press* asked Mr. Walsh whether the pandemic has been hard for him and how he has coped. He has four young children ages 1 1/2 to 8. He said he has tried to find ways to be creative.

"I've had a lot of fun playing in the snow with my little kids," he said. "Playing with my kids is therapeutic. I write songs and play the piano. My dad just sent me my childhood piano."

"A lot of my coworkers are also close friends so that helps a lot. I try to get enough sleep and exercise and pray and meditate. I do things that help me stay calm and sane," Mr. Walsh said.

Gotwals Healthy Press

The *Healthy Press* is a publication of Gotwals Elementary School in the Norristown Area School District. Third grade student staff members include Brianna Peña Aragón, Dari Brown, Nadia Caesar, Samir Clay, Katelynn Gibbs, Oscar Gonzalez-Chavez, Amanni Greer, Brianna Hernandez, Ahmad Hicks, Jennifer Lazo, Julian Lopez, Mason Polite, Ian Rodriguez, Adreanna Sanders, Kimberlyn Santiago, and Denim Swittenburg.

The *Healthy Press'* faculty advisor is Mrs. Ogoussan. Ms. Fernandez is Gotwals' school principal.

A *Healthy NewsWorks®* project www.HealthyNewsWorks.org
This document is protected by applicable law. All rights reserved.