



AN INTERVIEW WITH *D. Todd Clough,*

CEO AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF DENVER INNER CITY PARISH

By Jennifer Turner

Todd Clough and his wife Melissa recently celebrated 31 years in their Race Street home. A Colorado native, he is a gourmet cook, accomplished artist and, since 2007, CEO and Executive Director of Denver Inner City Parish (DICP), a non-profit that serves impoverished working families.

DICP was founded in 1960 by a group of Protestant churches but is a non-sectarian organization. It offers all secular programs, with the exception of a bi-weekly evening church service.

Clough began his career in the Mile-High City at the Children's Museum of Denver and was ultimately promoted to Executive Director. In 1987, he was asked to be on the DICP Board. After six months in the position, Clough was tapped to run La Academia, DICP's private 7-12th grade school. He stayed in the job for 20 years and now heads the entire organization.

Described by some as unconventional, Clough has a hands-on management style. He has an open door policy at his office at 1212 Mariposa Street in Denver's La Alma Park neighborhood. There are a number of homeless in the area and many of them rely on DICP and Clough to get by.

On a typical day, he has three to four impromptu meetings with homeless people. Some just want to talk or pet his dog. Others are in need of food or bus tokens. All are welcome. Clough

also keeps a drawer in his office stocked with socks and Band-Aids to handout. He feels these types of interactions, and relationships that develop from them, are integral to his job.

It is not uncommon for Clough's friendships with the homeless to be long-term. There are people he has been seeing several times per week for over a decade. He also doesn't hesitate to give his cell phone number to anyone in need.

One of his favorite quotes is by Pope Francis who states, "If you're going to be a shepherd, you will probably smell like sheep." Clough acknowledges the nature of his work can be messy and taxing, and sometimes come with an unpleasant odor. He credits his wife of 33 years, Melissa, with helping him through the difficult times.

Feeding hungry families is a big part of DICP's mission. Clough realized a long time ago that a full stomach is the first step to a better life and self-sustainability. Approximately 26,000 people per year receive services from DICP across its eight programs. Roughly 18,000 of the interactions are food-related. The nonprofit serves close to 174,000 meals per year and 75 percent of its programs have a food component.

There are food pantries at the DICP office at 1212 Mariposa and its College View Community Center at 2525

S. Decatur. The organization has a client's choice policy which allows visitors to make their own selections rather than being handed a box of pre-selected food. This format adds more dignity to the process since a visit seems more like shopping at a grocery store.

Food is also readily accessible at La Academia, DICP's 7-12th grade school for at-risk-youth. Breakfast and lunch are served at no-charge and the students have the opportunity to pick-up food on Friday afternoons to take home for the weekends.

Current La Academia students are responsible for interviewing applicants to the school. The administration feels it is the best way to weed-out kids who aren't a good fit and may be affiliated with gangs. Roughly half of the institution's funding comes from private donors. Clough raises a substantial amount of the money needed to run the school himself.

Approximately 3,100 people per month receive services at DICP's College View Community Center (CVCC) at 2525 S. Decatur, near Federal and Evans. Roughly 40 percent are 5-18 years old. Many live within walking distance.

Attorney Frank Debick has served on the DICP Board with Clough for close to seven years. He says, "Todd has an uncanny ability to inspire everyone involved with Denver Inner City Parish to strive for excellence. He is also the lifeblood of the organization and driving force behind countless initiatives which make a profound impact on the lives of those suffering in poverty."

For more information on DICP, visit dicp.org. To donate or volunteer, please contact Development Manager Brianna Mol at brianna@dicp.org.