



# From Karen House

by Braden Tobin

As cool air begins to fill the rooms of Karen House, Autumn breathes new life into all of us who live here. The stifling heat of summer is gone along with the mania that tends to characterize it. There is hope in the city as well. We are experiencing a lot of transition with the changing of the seasons. At the beginning of the summer, we had four community members move out of the house, all still having an impactful presence in our lives. We have invited three new community members to move in this fall and winter.

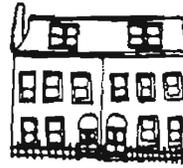
Inclusivity is a concept foreign to capitalism. As such, it becomes more and more important to the way that we offer hospitality, both to the homeless and our fellow volunteers. Prior to moving in, I never considered the plausibility of radical hospitality, to bring home the homeless. We are lucky at Karen House to inherit the legacy of inviting the most marginalized into our center, our home. We are equally lucky to have the support of fellow community in what sometimes feels impossible. The concept of home for me has transformed itself since moving here. I hope the same for our future community members.

My favorite times in the house revolve around meals; sometimes those are the most chaotic, too. Having a child ask me to sit with her or him is the biggest lesson in inclusivity. The complete lack of fear in the shameless begging is so refreshing. With the prospect of new community, I remember times like these and feel relieved of the fear which causes insecurity. Everything is better when we are all welcome, and I am so thankful to have found home in Karen House.

I have found it a wonderful thing that people are welcome here and encourage others to share in the joys of offering hospitality.



**Braden Tobin** has been answering the phone saying either Karen's House or Carol House (The Furniture Store) and confusing those calling us. Sorry.



# From Little House

by Teka Childress

I thought my husband, Mike Baldwin, would write this article, From Little House, but he simply pointed out to me that it was my turn. For those of you who did not read Mary Ann McGivern's years of From Little House RT articles, I will explain that the house is a four-family-1870's built apartment that sits on the land that once was the edge of the "common fields" once farmed by people in the early days of the City's history. The house now provides a home to members of basically three families, several of whom were part of Karen House or the Dorothy Day Co-housing Community. We are three blocks from Karen House and are "little" only in comparison to it.

Right now, Shameka Adams, her partner James and her two boys, Najee and Adain live across from us, her brothers Walter Quinton, and Mercedes and Mercedes' partner, Olie live below us and Ms. Yvonne and often her grandchildren stay across from Quinton and Mercedes. Our most communal times occur over meals cooked in the backyard, especially when Whitney Baldwin (Mike's daughter), her partner, DaJuan Adams (yes, brother to Shameka, Quinton, and Mercedes) and their son Cayden, Mike's and my perfect grandson, come to visit.

In addition to inheriting a building to house people, Mary Ann also left us a garden she had lovingly tended for over twenty years, renewing the vision of living close to the land, a vision "so old it looked like new" as Peter Maurin would say. Last year, after meeting with people from the Possibility Alliance I was inspired to step up my own efforts to grow food and planted a sizable garden in the orchard. Recently some of our north-side friends sponsored a workshop on permaculture, a set of ethics and design principles that allow us to live a more sustainable life. Mike and I were lucky enough to have some of the participants of the class come to look at the Little House to see how we might be able to use more permaculture principles in the design of our back yard, garden and home. Mike and I plan to incorporate as many of these ideas as possible.

I am grateful for the opportunity to continue growing and changing. The longer I am part of the Catholic Worker movement the more I understand of the vision of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. I see it in ever expanding ways and am awed at how comprehensive, if not perfect, are its elements. I give thanks for all of the people who have taught me to see what Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin saw. I have lived with and met amazing people over the years while being part of the movement-- the Catholic Worker communities (especially the ones I've come to know well in St. Louis and in the Midwest), friends at the Possibility Alliance, and all those who have been homeless. They have shared their need and their abundance and they continue to inspire me to follow God's will with more courage, generosity and compassion.



**Teka Childress** has really enjoyed the challenge of working cooperatively on publishing this Round Table.