

openhouse

a news update from st. stephen's human services HOLIDAY 2013

HEARTBREAKING... HEARTWARMING... SNAPSHOTS FROM ST. STEPHEN'S

Sometimes the best way to describe the work of ending homelessness is through stories. Data and statistics are critical, but they can't show the level of complexity in resolving the complicated situations people experiencing homelessness live with. Here, then, are a few snapshots from a year of ending homelessness.

A single mother of two young girls had secured housing through St. Stephen's Family Housing Program, but she was struggling to make ends meet on her low-wage income. We helped her secure a volunteer position with Hennepin County to gain professional experience. She proved herself

invaluable and turned that opportunity into a full-time job to create the stable and secure upbringing she hoped for her children.

A veteran was staying in St. Stephen's Shelter after losing his last two apartments for non-payment of rent. We were able to connect him with a housing voucher specifically for veterans, but asked him to let a professional Representative Payee manage his money. He agreed and has maintained his housing for several months so far and has savings that will enable him to visit family in Kansas City for the holidays.



Families who become homeless often find navigating services overwhelming and reach out to St. Stephen's as a first step.



St. Stephen's Street Outreach team works with probation, police, property owners, and private citizens to help people who may be living outside or are not yet connected to services.

St. Stephen's Street Outreach team encountered a young man downtown who they suspected had given them a false name and age. Staff researched and learned that this young man was a "Missing Person" from another part of the state. We alerted the police and his family, and then tracked down the young man again, finding him in an unsafe situation. We contacted the police and within a matter of minutes the youth was reunited with his family who had come to Minneapolis looking for him.

A woman lost her job after sixteen years due to illness. Her disability claim has been pending for over a year, so she was trying to manage on general assistance of \$203 per month. She also exhausted all savings

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St. Stephen's Human Services

Housing

Housing opportunities for individual adults and families, including Kateri Residence for Native American women, our Rapid Re-Housing partnership helping families and singles move quickly out of shelters, supportive housing in our Long-Term Homeless and Family Supportive Housing programs, and Homeless Prevention for people in danger of losing their housing.

Employment

Employment support for single adults staying in south Minneapolis shelters as well as families leaving the Minnesota Family Investment Program.

Community Engagement

Educational and advocacy opportunities for housed and not-yet-housed people to promote a greater understanding of homelessness, including through our zAmya Theater Project, A Day in the Life Program, and Homeless Against Homelessness.

Shelter, Street Outreach & Emergency Services

Shelter and advocacy for adult men in our Shelter. For people living without shelter, and the community members concerned for them, we provide on-the-spot outreach and resources, including The Handbook of the Streets, help obtaining birth certificates, and representative payee service.

For questions about this newsletter or St. Stephen's Human Services, please contact:

Margaret Miles
Interim Executive Director
612-870-2276
mmiles@ststephensmpls.org

St. Stephen's never sells or shares the contact information of its supporters.



Agency Update

Dear friends,

We want to make you aware of a change at St. Stephen's Human Services. Roy Richardson has resigned as Executive Director of the organization. We thank Roy for his service and wish him well in his future endeavors.

St. Stephen's Human Services is in good health. Our financial position is strong, we have a talented staff and leadership team and a committed Board of Directors. St. Stephen's remains a leader in ending homelessness.

The Board has begun the process to find the next Executive Director of St. Stephen's.

During the interim period, Margaret Miles will serve as Interim Executive Director and is working closely with the board and program directors. Margaret has been with St. Stephen's for fifteen years and is the agency's Director of Development and Communications.

Thank you for your continued partnership in ending homelessness for our neighbors. Please don't hesitate to contact us with concerns or questions.



A handwritten signature of Jim Nikolai in black ink.

Jim Nikolai
Board Chair
651-245-8457



A handwritten signature of Margaret Miles in black ink.

Margaret Miles
Interim Executive
Director
612-870-2276

Gifts that Enlighten

Give the gift of understanding! As you make your holiday gift list, why not share your compassion about homelessness and poverty by making a gift of a book?

Disclaimer: We aren't certain that all of these are still in print.

Additionally, staff at St. Stephen's are still in the process of reading some of them, so we don't outright endorse all content.

FOR ADULTS

So Rich, So Poor: Why It's So Hard to End Poverty in America by Peter Edelman

Edelman, well-known lawyer and author about poverty, writes about how income disparities and economic policies hurt people at the bottom of the wage-scale and enrich people at the top.

Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America by Barbara Ehrenreich

Ehrenreich, winner of a MacArthur Genius Grant, went undercover working jobs around the country for poverty-level wages. More recently she wrote *Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream*, based on her experiences as an undercover white-collar job seeker.

The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates by Wes Moore

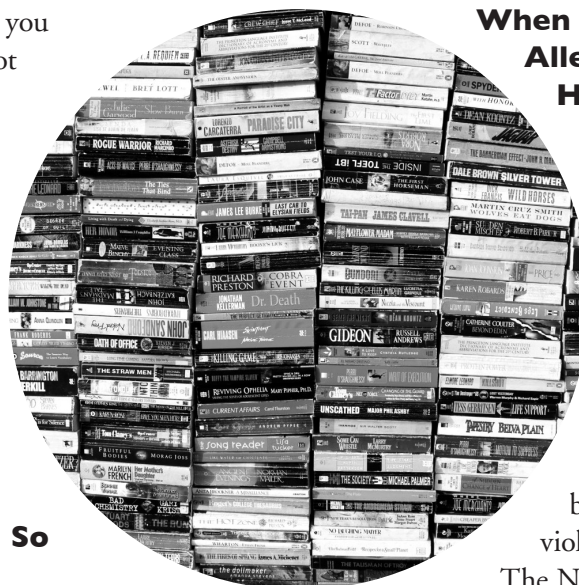
This New York Times Best Seller tells the true story of two kids with the same name—Wes Moore—who were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up with similarly challenging childhoods, but one of them found great success in life while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence.

Grand Central Winter by Lee Stringer

This memoir of his homelessness tells how Stringer had a successful career until he became addicted to crack and his life fell apart. He is a great writer with a compelling story.

Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America by Jonathan Kozol

Kozol is a well-known expert on poverty in America; this book is based on experiences and interviews with people he met while staying at a family shelter.



When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself by Steve Corbett

This thought-provoking book challenges us to think about moving from providing charity to making real and permanent change.

There Are No Children Here by Alex Kotlowitz

This is the true story of young brothers trying to make it in a violence-ridden public housing project.

The New York Public Library chose it as one of the 150 most important books of the twentieth century.

The Pursuit of Happyness by Chris Gardner

Chris Gardner, the CEO of a multimillion-dollar brokerage company shares the story of having fallen into homelessness as a young man raising his toddler. The book was made into a movie with the same title.

The Soloist by Steve Lopez

The true story of journalist Steve Lopez's discovery of Nathaniel Ayers, a former student at Julliard, playing a two-string violin on Los Angeles' Skid Row. The book was made into a movie with the same title.

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE & CHILDREN

The Double Life of Zoe Flynn by Janet Lee Carey

This fiction story tells how Zoe's family has to live in their van for months after moving from California to Oregon so her father can find work. Grades 3-6

Sophie and the Sidewalk Man by Stephanie Tolan

This fiction story tells how Sophie is saving all of her money to buy the teddy bear she desperately wants until she meets someone who is homeless and changes her mind. Grades 3-6

Fly Away Home by Eve Bunting

This fiction story tells about a boy and his father who live in the airport. Grades K-2

and retirement accounts and maxed out her credit cards. Facing eviction, she came to St. Stephen's Homelessness Prevention Program. She wanted to try to go back to work, but she feared facing job interviews after so long. We helped her set realistic goals like updating her resume and doing a mock interview to regain confidence. We helped her with budgeting (her rent is only \$330.00/month). She received a property tax refund and was able to pay her rent with a buffer for the near future.

We were contacted by a healthcare provider who said a member of her health plan had been sleeping in a car for a year. The woman is a senior citizen from a prominent family—in fact, she is a lifetime member of a local health club founded by her family and goes there to bathe. She was supported by a trust fund until 2009 when the market tanked and she lost her money and condominium. She now lives on General Assistance of \$203/month. She keeps her make-up perfect, wears designer clothes, and carries herself with tremendous poise. She is very petite so says she doesn't need to eat much. She was aghast when her healthcare provider used the word homeless, but she ultimately admitted that she was. After working with St. Stephen's she now lives in affordable housing and is reconnected with family who were unaware of her situation.

A gentleman was having trouble accessing shelter because he worked third shift. We allowed him to sleep during the day in our Shelter while he saved money for housing. He now has an apartment and has been promoted at his job. He told staff that that he is in debt to St. Stephen's for not only taking him in, but for giving him hope.



Last year St. Stephen's helped over 1,500 Families and single adults move from the streets or shelters into affordable housing.

A single mom with four children (the youngest under a year old) came to us after being suspended from work for not meeting telemarketing goals. She'd worked there successfully, but since the birth of her child had been unable to perform well at work due to lack of reliable child care. "I usually bring in a decent pay check, but every week I was worrying about my baby." She was behind in rent so St. Stephen's Homeless Prevention Program helped her catch up to prevent her family from becoming homeless. We have also connected her to an agency that provides assistance with child care.

The Street Outreach Team met with a twenty-year-old woman who has been camping by the river for the last six months. She was kicked out of her mother's home because they were unable to get along. Her step-father contacted us to seek her out. She describes her barriers as being lack of income and knowledge to find her way; she does not drink or use drugs. We helped her apply for housing for at-risk youth, but the waiting list is four months long. We are connecting her with shelter in the meantime.

A woman was sleeping in her car with her dog who she considers to be her companion animal. She is unwilling to stay in a shelter that doesn't allow animals. While she struggles with mental health issues, she works when she can as a landscaper. She agreed to visit a psychiatrist with us and we are looking into the possibility of having her dog registered as a companion animal which would allow her to access a shelter and a wider spectrum of affordable housing.

A man in his 60s was living outside with Stage IV colon cancer. This gentleman has a significant criminal history, which has made it hard for him to find a place to live. We are helping him get into senior housing so he can focus on his health.

A woman called to ask us to check on her mother who was living in her vehicle in an outer ring suburb and would not seek help. We located the woman and we're working with her to secure affordable senior housing. While looking for her we learned that there are at least a dozen individuals living in their cars in this same affluent area.

A property owner phoned us to say, “I heard about your organization on the news and wanted to extend a helping hand. I own some apartments and I would love to help. We’re a little ways out of the city, but right on the freeway. I hope it’s a match and we can help someone.”

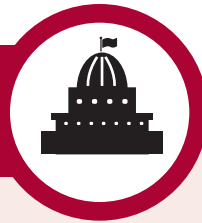
A program participant said, “I’m not sure if you get many compliments, but I just wanted to

tell you that this place saved my life. I had never been homeless before, and you have all treated me so kindly.”

A supporter emailed, “Every morning I go to McDonalds and get a large coffee. On the side of my cup is a little triangle – when you collect five you get a free McCafe drink of your choice. I have collected enough of them for seven free hot

drinks. It occurred to me that I could send them to a homeless shelter to distribute to the people who stay overnight and at least they could go in and get a cup of coffee for free and warm up a bit. I am collecting these free coffee stickers to send to you along with our love and prayers for every man you shelter and for everyone he loves and who loves him.”

Legislative Lookout



Another legislative session will soon be upon us. As always, there is work to be done to ensure that we’re providing the most comprehensive safety net as well as paths out of poverty. This legislative session is a bonding year when the legislature considers long-term infrastructure needs. The legislature may also take up some policy issues as time allows. St. Stephen’s works with a broad coalition of nonprofits, concerned community members, and people who have experienced homelessness to help policy-makers understand issues facing people in poverty.

Our priorities this year will be to encourage the legislature to:

- Allot bonding dollars for the construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing all across the state. The availability of affordable housing is at an all-time low in the metro, and not much better in greater Minnesota.
- Increase educational opportunities for families on the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). This includes removing roadblocks for families to access post-secondary education; making completing a GED an “approved work activity” to encourage people to get their diploma; and including completion of English as a Second Language study so that new immigrants can become more self-sufficient.
- Increase the minimum wage, allowing those in our shelters who are working full time to be able to afford their own apartments.

St. Stephen’s is committed to not only meeting the immediate needs of people experiencing homelessness, but also to creating a world where homelessness doesn’t exist. For this to happen, we all have a role to play in building systems that are just and equitable. St. Stephen’s will continue to do our part by partnering with elected officials to introduce legislation and policy but **we need you** to contact your elected officials, speak to your neighbors and friends, and write letters to the editor. We will help you! To get involved or learn more, please call Cathy Heying at 612-760-5125.



St. Stephen’s and its constituent group, Homeless Against Homelessness, work to empower people who have experienced homelessness to become self-advocates on policies affecting low-income people. In this photo, St. Stephen’s offers voter outreach to people experiencing homelessness, including educating those voting in Minneapolis about Ranked Choice Voting.

RECENTLY AT ST. STEPHEN'S...



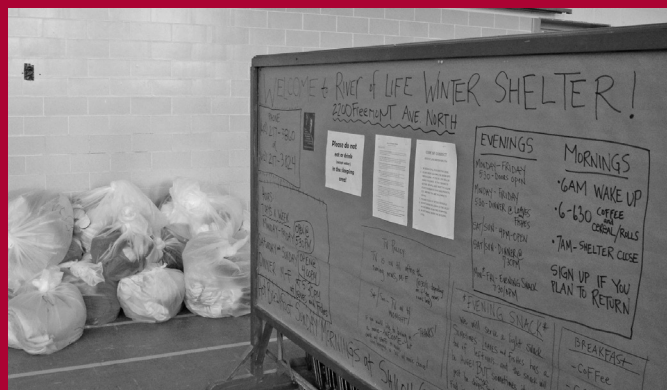
Shelter Manager Allysen Hoberg accepted a donation of used bunks to replace the WWII-surplus bunks the shelter used for 25+ years.



Participants prepared to complete the Race for the Key 5K Walk/Run hosted by St. Stephen's and our partner providers.



Children in St. Stephen's Family Programs received new backpacks just in time for school!



For the fourth year in a row, St. Stephen's has opened a second shelter during the cold months to relieve overcrowding at area shelters. The shelter is located at River of Life Lutheran Church on Minneapolis' north side. (The bags in the corner hold blankets.)



Residents and alumnae of the Kateri Residence program at St. Stephen's participated in a picnic with games, including the popular "Race-while-carrying-a-balloon-between-two-foreheads"!



Nonprofit partners in Crookston and Bemidji hosted our traveling exhibit, "Homeless Is My Address, Not My Name".

Quilting for Emotional and Physical Warmth

Creating 1,003 quilts requires a great deal of fabric, thread, and heartfelt dedication. The Mount Calvary Quilters from Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in Excelsior do not lack any of these.

The group has been making quilts for people experiencing homelessness since 2006. The operation began with four people and has grown to 37 members. They gather three times each month to cut, tie, and sew one-of-a-kind quilts.

Longtime quilter Nancy Fleagle says, “Our idea with the quilts is that they provide just as much emotional warmth as physical warmth. The people who get them might think back to when they were at a low in their life and how someone who didn’t even know them gave them a quilt and asked for nothing in return.”

Susan Roos, who has been with the group since it began, says, “It’s easy to live in Excelsior and think poverty doesn’t affect us.” For that reason the quilters also work to educate the congregation about homelessness in their own community and the services available to folks in need. In turn, this heightened awareness brings an abundance of materials for the quilters’ handiwork.

St. Stephen’s is fortunate to have many faith communities that offer educational opportunities about homelessness



Nancy Fleagle and Sharon Roos of Mount Calvary Quilters

and inspire members to take an active role in ending homelessness. Whether it be volunteering in our shelter, coordinating a donation drive to collect needed items for folks moving into stable housing, there are countless ways for groups to help.

If your faith community or employer would like to get involved, please contact Michelle at 612-879-7627 to volunteer or Andria at 612-870-2292 to donate!

WISH LIST

AS WE TRANSITION PEOPLE FROM SHELTER TO STABLE HOUSING THIS WINTER, WE ARE IN NEED OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- radios
- tvs (not too large, please)
- tv converter boxes
- dishes, glasses, silverware, cookware
- microwaves (working please!)
- bedding, towels, pillows & shower curtains
- toilet paper and hygiene items
- cleaning supplies

IN-KIND NEEDS

Accepted Tues & Thurs 8:30-11:30 and Wed 11:30-1:30

Please drop off at our new location: **2309 Nicollet Avenue Minneapolis 55404.**

Small loads can be brought to the front door.

If you have more than one bag/box, please bring to rear of building and ring intercom.

For more information call Andria at **612-870-2292.**

ending homelessness

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BRING SOMEONE "HOME" FOR THE HOLIDAYS.

For people who are homeless, the holidays and the cold weather are a time of deep despair.

Please keep them in your thoughts and if you pray, in your prayers.

Your donation today means we can help them find a home tomorrow. Can you imagine a better gift?

Thank you and HAPPY HOLIDAYS from your friends at St. Stephen's Human Services.