

open house

a news update from
ST. STEPHEN'S HUMAN SERVICES

Fall 2009



Mikkel Beckmen, Executive Director

LISTENING

The greatest sin of any non-profit is to be deaf to people. The second greatest sin is to work in isolation from the larger community.

St. Stephen's spends a lot of time listening and staying close to people experiencing homelessness. We ask people about their opinions and experiences. We ask them what they think will help them. This is a primary driver of the innovations here.

Listening to folks on the streets is only half of the work. An important part of my job is to bridge the distance between people experiencing homelessness and the rest of the community.

Homeless people are very isolated and there are few safe places they can go, and even fewer welcoming places. This separation makes it hard for the rest of the community to get to know them. Because of this, many people develop false assumptions about

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WHY I BEG

Begging, panhandling, flying a sign, performing for tips...all are ways for people without an income to get money.

To get a better understanding of why people beg, St. Stephen's Street Outreach staff surveyed 55 people panhandling in downtown Minneapolis.

These are some of the responses.

What led you to start?

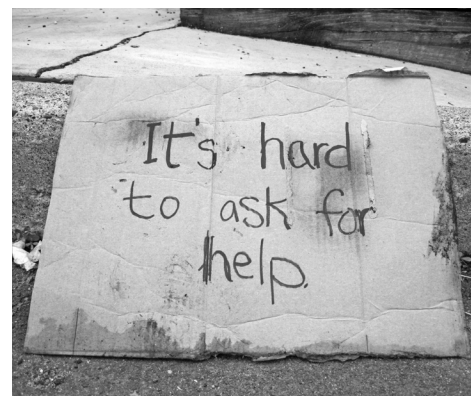
I lost my job.
A friend taught me.
I lost my housing.
My mom kicked me out (homeless youth).
Peer pressure.
I can't work and disability isn't enough to live on.
Drinking.
On a dare.
Chemical dependency.
I don't believe in stealing.

What would it take for you to stop?

A job.
An income.
Quit smoking.
Healthcare.
The police or going to jail.
Starting school.
I don't think I will.
Getting social security.
A home with full fridge.

How do you feel when you're holding a sign?

It's degrading.
I don't feel anymore.
Good, I'm doing it for God.



Like a low-life.
Vulnerable.
I would rather play music for tips than ask directly.
Amazed at people's generosity.
Scared and humiliated.
I have to be buzzed to do it.
I don't want my kids to see me so I turn the lights off. My eyes are open but the lights are off.
I blow kisses to the police.
A college kid beat me up with a baseball bat.
Asking for help is hard.

What do you buy with the money you make?

Food.
Cigarettes.
Healthcare co-pays.
Alcohol.
Clothes.
Supplies for dog.
Food for kids--I don't eat so they can.
I gamble it away.
Crack.
Bus fare.
A motel room.

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St. Stephen's Human Services

Our Programs

Alliance of the Streets

providing essential resources, including the *Handbook of the Streets*, for people experiencing homelessness

Emergency Shelter providing safe & sober harbor, advocacy, housing & employment support for adult men

Employment & Family Services assisting parents transitioning from welfare to permanent employment

Free Store offering clothing and small household goods

Housing Services securing permanent housing for homeless families & adults

Human Rights Program engaging people experiencing homelessness and their supporters in systemic change

Kateri Residence housing & supporting American Indian women recovering from chemical dependency

Programs to End Long-term Homelessness working intensively with individuals or families who have been homeless long-term

Street Outreach securing housing and other services for individuals living outside

zAmya Theater Project offering people the opportunity to share experiences of home and homelessness through theater

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

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Director of Development
612-870-2276
mmiles@ststephensmpls.org

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



Kenza and Josh (left) interview Tina about losing her healthcare.

HOMELESS LOSING MEDICAL COVERAGE

"It's really gonna be devastating to a lot of people," one person on laments after describing health issues that will no longer be cared for come mid-2010.

Shawn, a homeless man with anxiety disorder, depression, and chemical dependency is left with few options for healthcare if General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) gets cut as is called for in Governor Pawlenty's 2010 budget. What will Shawn do to find care and receive medication? "Strictly an emergency room," he says. Without insurance "it's difficult to keep up with appointments or have a regular doctor."

About 30,000 adults without children near or below the poverty line are currently on GAMC in Minnesota. Approximately 70% of them experience chronic or mental illness and other related issues.

St. Stephen's Human Rights Program is collecting video testimonies from people who will be affected by the cessation of this program. Video testimonies are an organizing method St. Stephen's uses to bring voices that might otherwise not be heard to decision-makers.

The Governor has asserted that a variety of other programs, like Minnesota Care, will replace the lost healthcare coverage, but people involved in the field, from

hospitals staff to advocates, disagree.

- The Minnesota Care application can take three to four months to process. During this time healthcare is not covered.
- Newly unemployed people won't be covered for four months on Minnesota Care.
- Minnesota Care co-pays are higher with no monthly maximum, while GAMC co-pays top out at \$12 maximum per month.
- Minnesota Care covers just the first \$10,000 of hospital stays. (An average one-week stay at Hennepin County Medical Center costs upwards of \$23,000.)

St. Stephen's staff have heard from anxious people who plan to begin weaning from their medications rather than go "cold turkey" upon losing benefits. Losing this important resource will cost an already vulnerable population. It will also cost providers of emergency care and the taxpayers that pay for it.

Please view testimonies on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/ststephensmpls09>.

COMMITTED TO VOLUNTEERING: FULL-TIME

“There isn’t a day that goes by that I don’t encounter someone that just needs a little bit of hope,” Jerry Fleischaker says.

Several years ago, Jerry read about a group of professionals working on St. Paul streets to provide services to homeless people. He was unable to work with them then, but his passion for the issue remained intact. Last year when he learned that St. Stephen’s newly launched Street Outreach Team was accepting community volunteers, he signed up.

St. Stephen’s Street Outreach program works with people living on the streets who have the least access to appropriate services and the most interaction with police, detox and other costly emergency services. The Outreach team is a first contact for the homeless to find housing and stability. They are also a resource for the general public who have concerns about a homeless individual or homelessness generally.

Jerry grew up in North Minneapolis and, after marrying, moved to the western suburbs. In his thirties he became involved with the Civil Rights

Movement, working closely with distinguished Professor Mahmoud el Kati educating, advocating, and fundraising for several projects on behalf of the African American community. Social justice and activism are part of Jerry’s make-up.

He started volunteering with Street Outreach a few hours a week. Jerry found the work so engaging and rewarding that he offered to become a full-time unpaid staff member. He’s been exactly that since early this year.

“Jerry impresses me so much,” says Street Outreach Program Director Monica Nilsson.

“While it’s helpful to have certain degrees or fields of study to work with our population, so much of it is about compassion, patience, and determination.”

“I’m grateful to be able to be a part of this team,” Jerry says. “I learned from them the whole concept of working with people where they are—regardless of



Outreach Workers Lam Truong and Jerry Fleischaker (right) visit a riverside camp looking for people in need of housing.

any personal feelings about a person’s lifestyle—and how to help people off the street and into housing.”

As a volunteer with the program, Jerry has things he can offer people depending on available resources: food, clean socks, medical care, and sometimes housing. Every day, however, he can offer them hope.

“Listening” continued from page 1

homelessness, don’t believe we know how to end it, and carry a fear of the “other”.

This fear works both ways, of course. As a formerly homeless man said at an event in a high-income suburb, “If you’re afraid of me, you should know I am afraid of you, too.”

When all we know about people is what we see of them begging on the corner from our car window it’s easy to ignore them. When we don’t know their history and the economics and policies that led them to that corner, it’s easier to explain it away with false assumptions.

The idea that homeless people are different than the rest of us is a myth. People who have been homeless are also the driver of our kids school bus, the cashier at the store, parents, senior citizens worried about co-pays, veterans and former high school cheerleaders. They are people who, like the rest of us, look forward to the next time they get to go fishing, cook a homemade meal for guests, or watch TV.

OTHER WAYS TO LISTEN

- Read surveys with people we work with at ststephensmpls.org
- Hear testimonies of homeless people who are about to lose healthcare at www.youtube.com/user/ststephensmpls09
- Share a meal and converse with the urban poor through our Day in the Life Program.
- Consider passing this newsletter on to someone else, then discuss!

The reality is, human beings care about things and people they know. It is my belief that if we get close enough together to see our shared humanity, it will bring about the changes needed to end homelessness.

ST. STEPHEN'S HOUSING SERVICES PROGRAM:

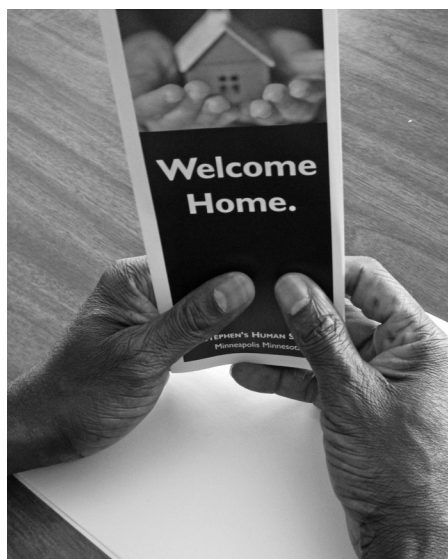
"The 650,000 who are homeless on any given night and the more than 1.6 million Americans who experience homelessness at some point every year are as diverse as America itself. While some are scarred by war, others are women with children fleeing domestic violence. Still others are youth aging out of foster care or are perhaps unable to stay with family hostile to their sexual orientation or gender identity."

Shaun Donovan, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
July 2009

Stories of people's homelessness are as wide-ranging as you can imagine. It follows that the solutions to their homelessness need to be imaginative, too. St. Stephen's Housing Services staff is charged, not just with finding any available housing for homeless people, but to determine what kind of housing will maximize long-term success for people. Some people can move right into a private market apartment. The vast majority of people we help, however, need more creative solutions.

Special housing requirements can be as varied as senior housing, handicap accessible housing, supportive housing, sober housing, or housing with security for victims of domestic violence.

Over the years staff have often found finding the right housing challenging. So what did they do? They created it. Back in the 1990s St. Stephen's launched Alliance Housing, Inc. to create housing for people to whom landlords wouldn't rent because they'd been homeless. This



Since Alan is working on making a new start he asked us not to include his face in his photo.

housing development nonprofit has since created 300+ units of affordable housing.

A few years ago, Richard Amos, Director of St. Stephen's Housing Services created sober, supportive housing for recent ex-offenders. To earn a spot in this high-demand housing, residents must commit to being in school and/or full-time employment. Residents have gone on to college, post-grad work, and home-ownership.

This year another member of the Housing team, Margaret Garrett, created our Expectant Mothers Housing. Six slots in two houses are available to first-time single moms to give them a supportive place to move to from the shelters.

Following are two stories from St. Stephen's Ex-Offender Housing and Expectant Mothers Housing.

TAKE TWO: A STORY FROM ST. STEPHEN'S EX-OFFENDER HOUSING

I got myself into trouble. I got multiple

DUIs. I kept drinking to cover how bad the DUIs made me feel. I drank to cover up the hurt of losing a loved one to brain cancer. I entered the court system, had a charge against me. I went to treatment and when I got done I needed a place to stay.

Richard Amos showed me the St. Stephen's house and it was perfect. Quiet, stable, sober.

I focused on school and completed my degree in liberal arts. I graduated with honors, was the valedictorian. In my speech I gave praise to some of the people in my life that inspired me, like my eighth grade English teacher. Everyone thought she was mean 'cuz she made us memorize poetry like Rudyard Kipling's "If":

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or, being hated, don't give way to hating...

That poem is burned into my brain! I was like, What is this lady trying to teach us?! As I grew older, I'd recite that poem to myself.

At the house you have people from all different ages, older guys and as young as twenty-one. When I see folks older, I say, "Is this what you want to be, Alan? These are good people, but is that how you want your life?" And then I look at the younger guys and I think "There you are. That was me when I was that age. No one could tell me anything." I tell the young guys, "I'm not going to preach, but if you need someone to talk to I'm here."

THINKING OUTSIDE THE A-FRAME

If you can force your heart and nerve
and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are
gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing
in you
Except the Will which says to them:
“Hold on”...

I see only good things ahead. I'm able to go to school on the GI Bill, being in the service for seven years. Desert Storm and Europe. Haiti on a U.N. Peacekeeping mission. I'm studying sociology and political science and would like to get a master's in public policy.

I wouldn't be anywhere without the housing. That's why I take care of the place. I shovel snow, cut the grass. I tell the other residents, “We want to make sure this program continues because this is good. This is a gift. Not everybody gets this chance.”

REACHING OUT TO HOMELESS, EXPECTING MOMS

Last Spring Margaret Garrett, St. Stephen's Housing Case Manager, noticed a trend: pregnant, first-time moms languishing in the shelters.



Margaret Garrett, of St. Stephen's Housing Services Program



St. Stephen's Gino Nelson (left) works with a client. People who have found housing through St. Stephen's range from senior citizens to young people.

“We didn't have a lot of options,” she says. As single women, there was very little funding to find them an affordable apartment. “We could wait until they gave birth and qualified as a ‘family’ for additional funding, but why would we wait to help people get out of the shelters?”

Margaret worked with landlords to create two houses where women could have their own rooms, the support of the other expecting moms, and be taught life skills and parenting.

“It has been really important to me,” says Tina, a resident and new mom. “I didn't want my daughter to be born in a shelter. What kind of start to life is that?”

Instead Tina's baby girl has spent her first months in a home with warm woodwork and a big yard in a quiet neighborhood.

“The women can spend six months here without worrying about housing. After that we help them find a place that will be affordable with what they're earning and the expenses of raising a child.” St. Stephen's continues to help with rent

and support for awhile until our clients feel secure going it alone.

St. Stephen's goal is always to provide enough support and skill-building so clients don't return to homelessness. “In some cases,” Margaret says, “these are very young women, very young. We work a lot on maturity and the reality of what it will mean to be raising a child, earning an income and so on. They thought they were independent and had it all under control. Didn't need mom and dad anymore—in fact, Mom and Dad have gotten so frustrated they're out of the picture. And then reality sets in.”

Margaret brings her heart to this project. Years ago her own daughter was a young mom. “It put quite a strain on our relationship. I had to set limits on her behavior and what I could or could not support.”

Today Margaret is delighted to see some of the parents coming back into their daughters' lives. “They visit their daughters and the look of relief on their faces...She's in a safe place. Thank God.”

WHAT I DID ON MY SUMMER VACATION... AT ST. STEPHEN'S



Twenty-two Hill-Murray High School students camped out for four days at St. Stephen's in order to put in 400 hours of volunteer service! Students concluded their stay by sharing what they'd learned about homelessness with their legislators, Nora Slawik and Leon Lilly.



Kids at the annual Kateri Residence Alumni Picnic participated in the Water Balloon Teamwork Race.



Program staff from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation visited St. Stephen's to learn about replicating The Hennepin County-St. Stephen's Rapid Exit Program in other cities.



St. Stephen's benefitted from the United Way's challenge to nine volunteers to raise \$9,000 in nine hours by any means imaginable. These college students obtained a permit to perform for tips on Nicollet Mall.



Staff enjoyed a newly cleaned, painted, and organized Free Store. Thank you, TreeHouse youth volunteers!



Members of Homeless Against Homelessness threw a parking lot pizza party for those who helped work on the affordable bus fare legislation.

ZAMYA THEATER PROJECT JOINS ST. STEPHEN'S!

zAmya, a community-based theater company, is joining St. Stephen's Human Services! zAmya Theater Project was formed five years ago to increase awareness and understanding of homelessness by inspiring people to end it. And the performances are inspiring.

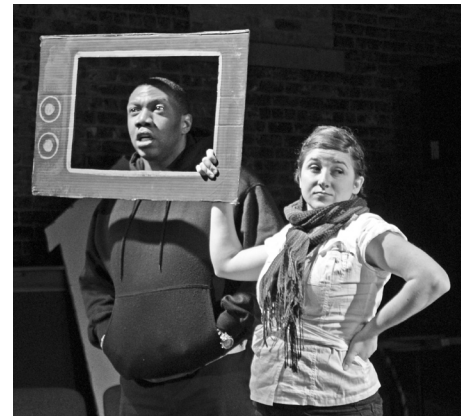
Each fall, zAmya (Sanskrit for "peace") holds workshops where housed and unhoused people create and share stories about the challenges and gifts of housing. Workshops are held in as varied of places as corporate boardrooms and soup kitchens. Side by side, artists, writers, homeless and formerly homeless people, musicians, and directors use workshop material to build a show. Performances are held during National Hunger and Homelessness Week in November, with the actors available at other times of the year as requested.

"I'd always wanted to do something about homelessness, but I was too scared," zAmya founder Lecia Grossman says. Grossman, a consultant and coach,

created the theater concept to fulfill an assignment for a leadership course. "We tried it and the idea grew wings. It's been one of the finest experiences of my life."

St. Stephen's has been a strong supporter of zAmya's work from its inception, providing rehearsal space, encouraging shelter guests to participate, and providing staff as founding board members.

Recently, as zAmya pondered the sustainability of its future as a nonprofit managed almost entirely by volunteers, St. Stephen's offered to take zAmya under its wing. A formal merger was finalized this summer, with Lecia staying on as director through the transition. "The merger is a perfect fit," she says. "This move will make zAmya a stronger arm on a healthy body."



zAmya performances are the week of November 15th.
Visit ststephensmpls.org for details.

We welcome you to participate this fall as a member of the show or the audience. To become involved in the production, please email zamy@ststephensmpls.org or call 612-767-4447.

"Why I Beg" continued from page 1

What is something you are proud of that not many people know about you?

I am a good person.
I don't use drugs or alcohol.
I'm a prayer warrior.
I have a degree in electronics.
I spent six years in the Air Force.
I used to work at HCMC.
I am a hunter and fisherman.
I have been sober three years.
I still have faith in Christ.
I'm proud of my kids.
When I'm sober I'm a perfectionist.
I'm an artist and painter.
I'm a good mechanic.
I went to state and nationals as a cheerleader.
I've helped push cars on the street.
I really do want to work.
Using my military training, I resuscitated a baby on Nicollet Mall until the police could get there.
I have a Bachelor of Arts from Iowa State.

WISH LIST!

HOUSING SERVICES

For people with few belongings who are moving into housing.

Please bring to the front door at 2211 Clinton Ave S between 8:30-5:00 M-F.

Blankets, sheets, towels
Dishes, pots & pans
School supplies: pencils, erasers, loose paper, notebooks, backpacks, calculators, markers, boxes of Kleenex

STREET OUTREACH

For people living outside with whom we work to move indoors.

Please call 612-879-7624 to arrange to drop off at Outreach offices: 1350 Nicollet Ave #104.

Sleeping bags
Backpacks
Plastic sheeting/tarps/tents
Toiletries
Socks, underwear
Pocket calendars/day planners

ALL PROGRAMS, ALWAYS!

Please bring to the front door at 2211 Clinton Ave S between 8:30-5:00 M-F.
Diapers & baby wipes
Bus tokens or bus passes
Rainbow/Target/Cub gift cards

KATERI RESIDENCE

For women & families graduating from this program into housing.

Please bring to Kateri Residence at 2408 4th Avenue South

Twin size sheets and pillow cases.
Seed Beads, charms & feathers for beading class
Pillows
Alarm Clocks
Dishes, silverware, pots & pans

PROGRAMS TO END LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS

For people with few belongings who are moving into housing.

Please phone Kristen at 612-278-1160 to arrange a drop-off.

Vacuums
Microwaves
Cleaning supplies
Clocks/clock radios
Televisions

Thanks!

open house

a news update from
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A BLESSING

This summer volunteers and clients worked together to give Kateri Residence a new backyard. Kateri Residence is St. Stephen's housing for American Indian women in recovery from homelessness and addiction. The newly landscaped yard gives residents a tranquil and lovely place for meditation. The yard was dedicated with prayers and a smudging ceremony in which participants purify themselves with the smoke from burning sage.

As we continue the circles of life, we are united in the love of the Creator God.

As we look downward to Mother Earth we are reminded of the unlimited gift of her care.

As we look upward to Father Sky, we are reminded of the unlimited gift of his grace.

We listen for the drumbeat and are reminded that as we move through our lives we impact all around us. We are reminded of our responsibility to nurture those around us, as we are nurtured. We give thanks for this gathering space for our families. Bless this place.

—from "Four Directions"
Pastor Marlene Helgemo, All Nations Indian Church

