

open house

a news update from
ST. STEPHEN'S HUMAN SERVICES

Holiday 2009

A PARADOX

When I was in grade school, I rode a school bus from Uptown Minneapolis to a school near the projects on the North side. Waiting for the bus in the winter time was especially challenging. There was one kid, a friend, who never seemed to be bothered by the cold.

While the rest of us huddled on the corner, shivering, he would stand there without a hat or gloves, and seemed

oblivious to winter. I asked him one time why the cold didn't bother him and he shared with me his secret which I still use. It involved a paradox. In cold weather people tend to hunch their shoulders. Yet the more you relax your shoulders, the

less cold you feel.

I think about my friend when I'm outside during these winter months, when

"Reality is not destiny; it's a challenge. We are not doomed to accept it as it is."

by Edwardo Galeano



Mikkel Beckmen, Executive Director

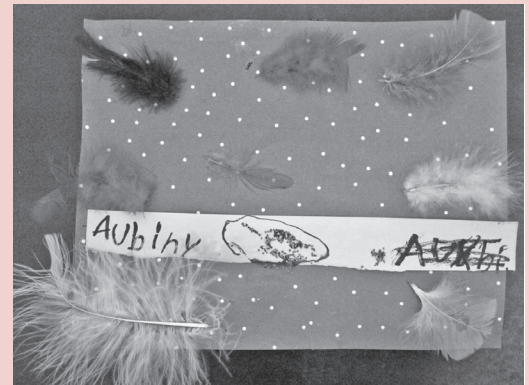
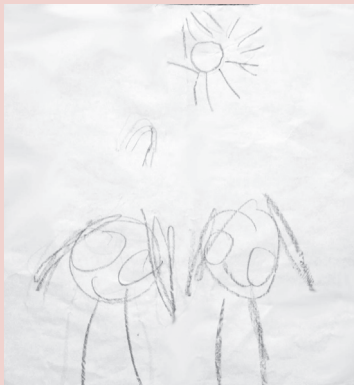
it's dark and cold and I'm trying to relax my shoulders. I think about him

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ART AT KATERI RESIDENCE: A PICTURE OF HEALING

Art plays an important role in the healing that takes place at Kateri Residence, St. Stephen's housing program for American Indian women in recovery from homelessness and addiction. Classes in beading, sewing and other crafts

are offered when possible. Residents create artistic displays depicting their journeys of recovery. Recently we hosted a Kids Art Contest for the children of Kateri residents. Here is some of their artwork.



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



UNALLOTTED

This fall state funding for some programs that are critical to low-income people has been eliminated. In order to balance the state budget Governor Pawlenty unallotted funding for Emergency General Assistance (EGA) and Emergency Minnesota Supplemental Aid. These programs provide funding for people who are in danger of losing their housing through one-time emergency assistance, as well as to get assistance paying a damage deposit when accepted into housing.

Kristen Brown, St. Stephen's Director of Programs to End Long-term Homelessness, notes that, "In the past two months, we have moved twenty long-term homeless people into housing. Nearly every one of them used EGA for their deposit. There is no way our budget can cover that expense, so we can only envision that this means being able to house fewer people going forward."

Also unallotted was General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) a state-funded program that insures single adults with incomes up to 75% of the poverty level. About 28,000 Minnesotans are currently enrolled in GAMC, many living on General Assistance (\$203 a month) and homeless or precariously housed.

Governor Pawlenty has instructed that enrollees will be moved onto MN Care. While an alternative is preferable to none at all, MN Care isn't a replacement. For the lowest income people two critical differences will make getting sick a financially devastating prospect:

MN Care co-pays are higher with no monthly maximum, while GAMC



St. Stephen's Human Rights program presents on issues that impact low-income people

co-pays max out at \$12/month.

MN 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 is working with partner agencies in calling for the restoration of these programs. Our Human Rights Program has amassed hundreds of video testimonies from GAMC enrollees. For more information, please visit ststephensmpls.org.

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"St Stephen's Human Services"

LANDLORDS: A LIFELINE

St. Stephen's relies on the private rental market when helping people leave homelessness. It's more efficient than our trying to own property, and more importantly, it's critical that our program participants learn tenants' rights and responsibilities out in the "real world".

Compassionate property owners are important partners in providing the safety and consistency of a home that those experiencing homelessness need. Many have also found that working with nonprofits makes good business sense in an economy where keeping urban apartments full can be difficult.

To encourage landlords to consider our program participants as tenants they might otherwise decline, St. Stephen's supports tenants with time-limited county subsidies, guidance, mediation if necessary, and a guarantee to pay



Melissa, a caretaker, works with staff and program participants

eviction costs in a worst case scenario.

Many landlords won't rent to people with backgrounds of homelessness, criminal records, or prior evictions. It could be a financial risk, but they also fear retaliation from neighbors who don't want them renting to people recovering from these circumstances.

The owner of one of our property management partners says, "The backup support St. Stephen's provides is huge. Sometimes we'll take a little more of a risk if they have a case worker involved, because we know if we get into a bind with that individual we have someone to help solve the problem."

Melissa, the property's friendly caretaker gives the example of when one of our folks first moved in. "He had a lot of people visiting him...he received several noise complaints...it was a rocky start. Once we contacted his case manager, she began to visit more often and follow-up with him. Everything has been fine since."

Ending homelessness is a community endeavor and these valuable partners help us offer life-changing opportunities.

EVERYONE COUNTS

A young man and his expectant wife, in need of somewhere to rest after their travels, find lodging hard to come by as they wait to be counted. The Nativity story of Joseph and Mary travelling for the census illustrates just how far back—and how important—counting the citizenry is.

The U.S. Census has historically been taken according to dwelling address. How do you count people who don't live anywhere? In Minnesota we do this in a couple of ways.

Every three years Wilder Research coordinates hundreds of volunteers statewide to complete surveys with people experiencing homelessness. Surveys ask about people's income, health, history of homelessness, veteran status, and much more. Wilder's most recent count was held this past October. The results will be available

next spring and are highly regarded for their thorough analysis of the issue.

Locally, every three months St. Stephen's Street Outreach coordinates eighty organizations specifically to survey unsheltered people. This is done on a quarterly basis to help us understand how seasons affect people experiencing homelessness as well as measure the availability of services. This effort captures important information about people who are newly homeless and unaware of shelter options, chronically homeless and staying outside, or those who don't have access to shelter in their area.

More than just tallies, the surveys help us understand who is homeless and/or



Volunteers complete the Wilder survey with visitors to Loaves & Fishes

unsheltered and why and how best to provide help.

Volunteering a few hours can make a big impact when the local count occurs again. To sign up to help call 612-879-7624.

For more information about Wilder's statewide count, visit www.wilder.org.

ST. STEPHEN'S SHELTER:

Homelessness as we know it didn't exist thirty years ago. With rare exception even the lowest-income Americans could afford someplace to live. Federal and local policies in the 1980s dramatically changed the landscape for the nation's poorest citizens. The 1970s had been a period of high inflation and low economic growth. Ronald Reagan, promising an economic revival, won the 1980 presidency with a record number of electoral votes. He slashed income taxes by 25% and the economy rebounded—but not for everyone.



The shelter after opening in the early 1980s

Additionally, federal assistance to local governments was cut by two-thirds, necessitating the elimination of transit programs, school programs, job training, and other anti-poverty programs. The budget of Housing and Urban Development—the primary provider of affordable housing—was slashed by 75%. In ten years the number of people living beneath the federal poverty line rose from 24 million to 32 million in 1988. The movement toward deinstitutionalizing people with mental or developmental disabilities gained

momentum (particularly since federal funding was being yanked, anyway) dropping people into communities that were also losing the funding that might have supported their reintegration.

St. Stephen's Church was, by 1980, no stranger to people in need. Its neighborhood, once the idyllic home to Minneapolis' founding lumber and flour-milling families, had grown densely populated and then split in two by the Interstate system. Urban renewal in nearby downtown had demolished the affordable housing where many low-income people

lived. The church was accustomed to being a resource for people in need, but it had never seen the likes of this. "As if overnight" then-pastor Ed Flahavan has said, "I found myself having to step over sleeping people on the steps just to open the church for Mass." Parishioners held emergency meetings and opened the city's first church-based shelter in the Parish Library to shelter thirty people each night.

St. Stephen's Shelter has been in operation for twenty-eight years. There has never been an unassigned bed. Mats on the floor were replaced with more comfortable military-surplus bunk beds. Additional programs were added and eventually incorporated, with the shelter, into an independent nonprofit.

In the early 1980s the homeless crisis was a municipal emergency of such proportions that the mayor led representatives of Minneapolis' philanthropic families on a tour of the dozens of newly sprouted social services.



Shelter guests pitched in when a broken pipe flooded the shelter last year

Today, urban homelessness is old news, an item on the list of things any city needs to address along with potholes and plowing.

There is momentum for change today. In 2006, the mayor, the Minneapolis City Council and the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved a plan to end homelessness through a number of proven strategies. We join 450 other municipalities (so far!) in committing to similar plans. President Obama has directed his secretaries of Housing and Urban Development and Health and Human Services to end homelessness.

St. Stephen's shelter advocates know how to end homelessness. Every day they help someone take the steps necessary to find housing, employment and peace of mind. Twenty-eight years has been a long education for people working on this issue. They have become reluctant experts in abject poverty and the systems that create it. They will be the ones who lead our community out of this dark era.

SNAPSHOTS

Shelter Advocates keep a log to inform one another of updates about shelter guests. These are abbreviated samples of entries to give an idea of some of the challenges guests face.

- Met with G. B. He's bi-polar and has a record. He wants to work, but knows he will have a rough time finding a job.
- K. P. very distressed and will need a lot of attention as we try to help him to a better quality of life. Seeing the county social worker Thursday. Be available to him in case he's feeling suicidal.
- W. M. called to give up his bed. He's at the hospital and scheduled for surgery tomorrow a.m. He's scared and lonely. He's afraid to have surgery for several reasons, including nowhere to recuperate.
- N. M. fell slept at the dining table all evening. He may need to go to a nursing home—very frail.
- A.B. has a work-readiness class upstairs at 9:00 and has permission to stay in the shelter until then.
- Working with M.A., who is a vet, to secure a vet housing subsidy.
- R. J. will be starting his new job (overnight 6 p.m. to 2:30 a.m.) and is looking for day shelter so he can sleep until he gets a place.
- D. M. appears very sweaty and nervous. He had called in that he'd be late, saying "This is D. M., prisoner of war."
- Q. J. came in looking for shelter—very young man. We got him into a youth shelter.
- Able to get P.J. on waiting list at _____ Residence. Perfect candidate, but two-month wait.
- C. A. goes straight from classes to work every day, with no time to shower. By the time he's here shower hours are over. We'll make special arrangements.
- M. P. is starting a \$15/hour job on Monday!
- Gave orientation to S. T. First time homeless. He's 50 yrs old, hasn't drank since the 80s and no other chemical use. He's looking for work.
- P. W. came by to let us know he had a place to stay and was moving out tonight. He came to say thanks. Along with moving, he is starting treatment for his alcohol addiction. He seemed very happy.
- Had a long conversation with D. K. Medical conditions have taken a turn for the worst. Doctor told him he has 3-6 months to live. He gave me instructions about what to do if he dies in his sleep.
- Bed mix-up, so we put K.L. on a mat on the floor by the lockers. K.L. said he had never been to a place like this before and was very distressed. He kept saying it was a dream he wanted to wake up from. Several guests chimed in to corroborate these feelings.

ST. STEPHEN'S SHELTER 411

St. Stephen's Shelter sleeps forty-four adult men each night. Beds are distributed through a weekly lottery held with two partner shelters. Guests may stay up to twenty-eight days or longer with special circumstances (such as working full-time and saving a portion of income for housing.) In addition to a bed and storage space, the men have access to meals, laundry, showers, healthcare, and employment counseling and resources. Shelter advocates work intensively with each guest to make his stay an effective means of addressing the reasons he is here.

IT WORKS

Dear Shelter Staff:

I appreciate all the help you are giving me. I would feel privileged to help you in any way. Please let me know as I would like to volunteer. Life is like a stage. And in the front row you want all the people that want to see you make all your dreams come true. And in the balcony are all the people that don't. You are most definitely in the front row. You support everything positive that I am doing. You always encourage me and you don't have to. I really feel it's sincere and from the heart, so keep doing what you're doing, help change lives one life at a time. Thank you for everything.

A former guest

ST. STEPHEN'S AUTUMN ACTIVITIES...



Homeless & non-homeless actors rehearsed for zAmya Theater's November performances.



St. Stephen's benefitted from the United Way's Loaned Executives who gave our shelter a shiny clean-up.



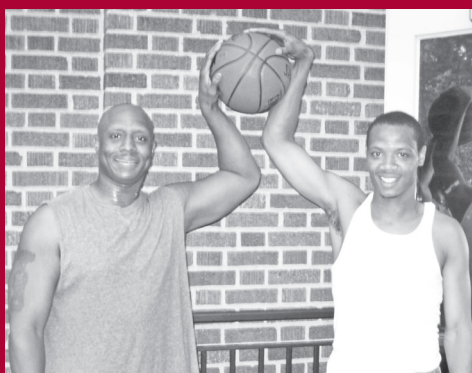
Each time the neighborhood has a Clean-Up Day, St. Stephen's shelter guests pitch in and pick up.



Kevin & Anna Kniebel (on left) donated a gift to St. Stephen's in honor of their marriage! Thanks & Congratulations!



Once again the employees and partners of Robert Haff Int'l donated hundreds of items of professional clothing to our employment programs! Five SUVs-full!



Every other Tuesday night shelter staff and guests play basketball! Care to join us?



Rep. Paul Thissen (2nd from right) toured sites of urban homelessness (including this campsite) with St. Stephen's staff and park police.

also because he ended up dying, homeless on the streets of this town that I love so much. I think about him because all around me I see people hunching up, getting tense and even panicking during this economic winter that we are in and it reminds me that the way to get through these times presents a paradox.

When times are hard, it's easy to let fear and scarcity dictate our behaviors and decisions. It can also make us lose sight of our shared humanity, our own values and our responsibilities to each other.

This is our 'Valley Forge' winter. The shelters are packed. Resources have been eliminated. Some are starting to question this community's plan to end homelessness. I can sense the panic and fear in the community.

This may sound odd but I want to tell you not to panic.

We are not panicking here. The staff are quietly yet heroically working harder, thinking creatively and holding their own against the tide of increased need. We will never abandon our core values or forget our shared humanity, no matter how cold and dark the night, no matter how hard the battle and come what may. We will come through this winter together.

WISH LIST!

→

URGENT NEED:
NEW CHILDREN'S CAR SEATS

←

St. Stephen's transports families from shelters to their new housing and we always seem to be scrambling to find car seats. If we had two or three on hand staff could check them out each time they need to transport a child. We've identified a version which is adjustable for kids from newborn to 40 lbs at Target for \$99.00. Or, with your donation, we're happy to do the shopping! (Sorry, we can't take used car seats—they're required to be new.)

Contact: Margaret Miles 612-870-2276 if you can help.

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OTHER NEEDS

- Please bring to 2211 Clinton Ave, front door 8:30 to 5:00 M-F
- Working Vacuums
 - Towels, pillows, sheets, blankets
 - Diapers & baby wipes
 - Bus tokens or passes
-

WHILE YOU'RE DOING YOUR HOLIDAY SHOPPING...

St. Stephen's has registered a list of high-importance items at  **TARGET**

Yes, a gift registry for our programs! The items on the list are simply examples. Any style or brand—or, in most cases, the second-hand versions of same!—would be welcome. In stores or online, enter “St. Stephen's Homeless Programs” to access our list.

THANK YOU!

open house

a news update from
ST. STEPHEN'S HUMAN SERVICES

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**HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM
ST. STEPHEN'S HUMAN SERVICES**