

open house



a news update from
ST. STEPHEN'S HUMAN SERVICES

Summer 2009

TAKING OUR LEAD FROM THE PEOPLE

As a nation, we find ourselves in an economic desert. When I chat with people in the community, anxiety dances around the edges of conversations about scarce resources and the horizon presents a very bleak desert-like picture.

Times are indeed uncertain, but I like to remind people that homeless folks have been in this economic desert for some time now. Perhaps it wouldn't hurt to look to them for leadership and inspiration and learn from those who know this landscape intimately.

The first thing they can remind us of is that **we lack resources, not resourcefulness.**

Resourcefulness is the practice of using what you have intelligently and creatively. The people we know visit the free store, barter goods and services, re-use "throw-away" things or turn two junked bikes into one usable bike.

Second, the people we work with remind us to **practice generosity.** Poor and homeless Americans are incredibly giving. Bureau of Labor statistics shows that the poorest Americans give the largest percent of their incomes to charity. The lowest-earning fifth of Americans earn an average of just of \$10,531 per year, yet they give 4.3% of that to charity. The men who stay in our shelter show each



Mikkel Beckmen, Executive Director

other incredible generosity. They share what they know with despairing newcomers. They rely on each other for information and resources about employment or opportunities to get medical care, food, and other necessities.

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STARTING OVER AND GIVING BACK

I worked in construction in Florida for fifteen years and there are no jobs there right now. No jobs at all. I've got two young kids so I needed a job and benefits to cover my family.

I moved up here first and I was staying with friends while I looked for work. I found a job, but things at my friends' place got shaky, so I had to leave. So now I was working and I didn't have a place to stay. I got a list of shelters from Hennepin County and found out about your shelter's Savings Program where I could get a guaranteed bed every night if

I would save a certain amount of money with a plan to move on. I took the opportunity. I told staff my goal was to save first and last months' rent, light bill, and so on. Enough to get going and so I wouldn't have to come back here. I was also sending money back home, so I was here about five months saving up, every week putting money away.

Homelessness is rough. You can try to be perfect. You might be perfect. And it can still happen to you. I was raised right and I'm a hard worker and it still happened to me.



Anthony, Former Shelter Guest

The thing about the shelter is that you got a bunch of personalities you have to deal with. You got to set your mind to where you're at: you're in a shelter, not in

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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

Kids' Resiliency Education providing early education to preschool-aged children who are experiencing homelessness.

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

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

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

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



Marissa Pherson,
Volunteer Coordinator



Shelter volunteer plays
chess with a guest



Volunteers give program
offices a face-lift



Volunteers make dinner for
our guests

WE WANT YOU... TO VOLUNTEER!

Greetings! I'm St. Stephen's Volunteer Coordinator through an appointment with AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America.)

While St. Stephen's has benefitted from profoundly dedicated volunteers for years, my position was created to establish a cohesive volunteer program to increase and focus volunteer opportunities.

My hometown is St. Peter, Minnesota and after tornadoes devastated much of the city in 1998, I saw how volunteers made such a huge impact on helping the city recover. Our house was deemed unlivable and we moved into our new home almost a year later. When tornadoes hit another city two years later, my dad and I volunteered to help there. My dad said that other people had taken the time to help us when we needed it and this time it was our turn. That really stuck with me. My mom also inspired the value I place on service as my Girl Scout troop leader and a religious education teacher at our church. As a teen, I served on a board which ran a youth center and exposed me to AmeriCorps*VISTA. I knew it was something I wanted to do after college.

I like working with people who want an opportunity to be part of something bigger—people who want to improve their communities and the lives of others. I've found that St. Stephen's volunteers are incredibly compassionate towards our clients and eager to help.

We have many different volunteer positions at St. Stephen's that I would love to talk with you about. Please contact me at mpherson@ststephensmpls.org or 612-879-7627. We also have position descriptions and a volunteer application on our website at www.ststephensmpls.org.

Every Day is Thanksgiving Day at St. Stephen's!

It is St. Stephen's great fortune to work side by side with a small army of enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers. From one-time groups to weekly helpers, our volunteers help us with everything from staying overnight in our shelter, to painting and cleaning projects, to hosting collections for household items at their church, mosque or synagogue. Please think of us if you have time or talent to offer. We probably have an opportunity that fits what you're looking for.

Around the winter holidays volunteering really picks up with many people looking for opportunities to serve. Sad to say we have to turn many away because we only have the capacity for involving a limited number of people on Thanksgiving and Christmas. We'd always love to hear from you, but please don't forget us in the middle of summer. You'll find that for people realizing their dreams of housing, employment, recovery, and hope for the future, every day is Thanksgiving Day at St. Stephen's.

EXTRA HELP FOR EXTRA-HARD TIMES

St. Stephen's has been heartened by the proactive way that funders have come forward to help those most affected by the economic downturn. Our program participants have recently benefitted by extra help from the **Minneapolis Foundation** and the **Otto Bremer Foundation**.

The Minneapolis Foundation raised money for a special Crisis Assistance Fund to assist agencies who could work to quickly provide food, housing and heat-assistance to people in trouble. St. Stephen's was granted \$70,000 to assist



Housing Services Program Director, Richard Amos (center), guest speaker at the Minneapolis Foundation's annual meeting last year

An example of a request for Homeless Prevention funding:

Date: June 2009

Subject: Need help

Good morning. We have a pending sheriff sale of our home next month. We have been working with our mortgage company to get a loan modification and we are not sure that this will occur prior to that date. We have calculated that we will be able to come up with most of the money we owe, but not enough to save our home. We are also working with a financial counselor and creditors to create a budget that will be workable. We are not in a good financial position, but we are working on it so as to avoid bankruptcy. My boyfriend is self-employed with the economy we are virtually living off of what I make. We need to save our home so we don't have to find someplace for us and our children to live. I'm hoping you might be able to help us with the remainder that we will need or a portion of it. We are willing to pay it back or volunteer to work it off or both. Thank you.

households who we move from shelters to housing in our Rapid Exit program. This funding enables us to subsidize housing longer than we would under more stable economic conditions since our program participants now face increased difficulty in securing livable wage employment to become self-supporting.

Similarly, a one-time Emergency Fund grant from the Otto Bremer Foundation has enabled St. Stephen's Homelessness

Prevention Program to help more people avoid becoming homeless due to economic hardship. As with the Minneapolis Foundation funding, St. Stephen's serves as a pass-through agency to distribute funding directly to people in crisis. Our Homeless Prevention Program grants financial support to people who are facing homelessness due to foreclosure or eviction.

"Resourcefulness" continued from page 1

Finally, these folks teach us that if you are in a desert, you need to **know where you're going and how to get there**. People we work with rely on the tools of immediate direction: St. Stephen's *Handbook of the Streets* and the rules and best practices to obtain housing, employment, and recovery. The example they set in goal-setting and determination to succeed is inspiring.

St. Stephen's is following the leadership of folks on the streets and it is serving us well. We will travel through this desert by trusted and tested maps. We helped create and are committed to the community's roadmap for ending homelessness. Our recently completed strategic plan renews this commitment and focuses on our strengths and partnerships.

It is true, though sometimes hard to see when you're in the middle of one, that every crisis brings opportunity. Current conditions could make us panic, grow cynical, or throw in the towel. But we ask more of the people with

whom we work and they certainly ask more than that from us. We choose to welcome this opportunity to be creative and seek innovation, to trust in the blessings of generosity, and to stay committed to this work of ending homelessness. May we rest easy knowing that we remain in one another's care, come what may.

A MATCHING GIFT OPPORTUNITY!

St. Stephen's received a fundraising challenge from the Otto Bremer Foundation. Donations we raise for our operations, up to \$37,500, will be matched! Please use the enclosed envelope to double your gift!

Thank You



LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS:

ST. STEPHEN'S PROGRAMS TO END LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS

People are considered to be “long-term homeless” if

- they have been homeless for at least one year, or
- they have been homeless four or more time in the last three years.

These are the guidelines, but they're pretty “homeless lite” if you consider that the people working with St. Stephen's Programs to End Long-Term Homelessness have spent an average of *ten years* homeless.

That there are people who for years have cycled through emergency services like shelters, hospitals and jail is old news to frontline staff, police, and the court system. The challenge has been: How do we break the cycle?

St. Stephen's Executive Director Mikkell Beckmen says, “The cost to the community of “housing” people in jails, emergency rooms, and shelters is incredibly high. Over the past four years, the community spent \$4,000,000 on just sixty long-term homeless people staying in shelters, detox, and detention for misdemeanor crimes. We can do better by people and we can do it for a fraction of the cost.”

Old service models dictated that people first become healthy (stop using alcohol or drugs, take medication if needed, find a job, and conform to a number of rules); then agencies would get them a place to live. The old model rarely worked.

St. Stephen's subscribes to the Housing First model for long-term homeless individuals. Launched in the 1990s by New York's Pathways to Housing, the model



A junked hide-a-bed behind a commercial building is used by someone sleeping outside.

suggests that the old model was backwards. We should first help a person secure the housing stability that will help him or her then address other issues like mental health or employment. It works. Most people are able to maintain their

236 people have found a home since St. Stephen's collaborative work on long-term homelessness began in 2005.

housing with support from staff, and further, their high usage of shelters, emergency rooms, detox, and the law enforcement system plunges dramatically.

Housing First doesn't always work right away for everyone. There was the woman, homeless since fourteen, who felt so uncomfortable in her new bed that she slept in the middle of the floor for the first month. Or the fellow who'd never had a place and had to be taught to use



A mattress on the floor in a local shelter

a deadbolt and a thermostat.

The key, says Kristen Brown, Director of St. Stephen's Programs to End Long-term Homelessness, is perseverance. “Our participants have lived outside society to some degree. While they can go on to successfully live on their own, the intensive support and flexibility to try things until something works is critical. They begin to realize that they can't shake us loose, but they also begin to believe that we actually care about their well-being.”

Around 2500 people in Minnesota are considered “long-term homeless.”

Typical demographics:*

- have lived in some type of institutional setting
- experienced neglect or abuse as children
- did not finish high school
- have a disability / mental illness
- live in the Twin Cities metro rather than in greater Minnesota

**Wilder Survey 2006*

FINDING THE WAY HOME

Certain program components work with specific people. The Collaboration on Housing Resources (COHR) program works with longtime shelter users referred by advocates as good candidates. This collaboration with our partner providers ensures that COHR participants' barriers are matched best with the most appropriate services.

St. Stephen's FUSE (Frequent Users Service Enhancement) Program works with people who have been identified as the top users of county shelters, jail and the workhouse—chronic offenders (committing largely livability crimes) whose offenses drop off with stable housing. In a unique twist, St. Stephen's provides partial funding to Hennepin County to employ a designated probation officer who works with these folks—someone who understands the long-term barriers as well as the plan for helping them attain lasting stability.

Kristen Brown says, "Our participants have a long history of failing or being dismissed from services. They have no faith in providers or in their own ability to succeed. One of my clients messed up, so I located him so we could try something else. He was surprised I wanted to keep working with him. He said, 'Really? I get another chance?' And I said, 'Allen, I'm not going anywhere.'"

Cost per night:*

Jail	\$363
Detox	\$192
Hospital.....	\$2,800
AdultShelter.....	\$32
YouthShelter.....	\$125

Supportive Housing \$21

**2007 local survey in Hennepin County*

STORIES FROM THE END OF LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS

George was referred by a shelter he'd visited over eight years. George has a lengthy criminal history, was not in contact with any family, panhandled to support himself (he proudly showed the staff the shoes he had purchased with his earnings), and was regularly using crack. George told staff he used to receive social security benefits, but he couldn't remember why. The reasons soon became evident. Shortly after we helped George move into an apartment, he started reporting that his things were being moved. He thought someone was entering his apartment when he went out, so he stopped leaving unless absolutely necessary. Staff were in regular contact with the property manager to make sure that he was aware of our work with George and willingness to mediate any concerns. With staff support George has started addressing his mental illness with a therapist and psychiatrist. He's also contacted his siblings who thought he was dead because they hadn't heard from him in years. Today, George talks with his family regularly and shows off pictures they've sent him. George has not used crack or had police contact since moving into his apartment, which he's had for two years now. He keeps it immaculate.

Bill was homeless on-and-off for several years after a back injury cost him his warehouse job. He also suffers from major depression and sleep apnea, which has been particularly impossible to address while homeless. We worked with Bill to secure housing, but also wanted to get him a comprehensive medical screening, since staff suspected there was more to Bill's story. Doctors confirmed that Bill is developmentally disabled. We were



St. Stephen's staff, staff from a partnering agency and a landlord at our annual breakfast celebrating the property owners who work with St. Stephen's to provide rental opportunities for people with housing challenges.

able to secure Social Security Disability benefits for Bill and he is now living capably on his own.

Sharon had been homeless for five years. She was addicted to heroin, but has been on daily methadone treatment for several years. Sharon has been unable to access housing because of her criminal record including this aggravated robbery: one day Sharon went to get her methadone and due to an insurance mix-up was told it wasn't covered and she couldn't have it. Sharon panicked, afraid of relapse, so she tried to steal a dose of methadone. She was arrested and pled guilty, but has been unable to access housing since then. Sharon was thrilled when staff helped her get an apartment, yet shortly after moving in she started having panic attacks and obsessing about her belongings. Staff knew that, odd as it seems, having housing after so long without a home can actually be traumatic for people. We connected Sharon with mental health professionals and she's doing great. She'll soon be celebrating one year in her apartment.

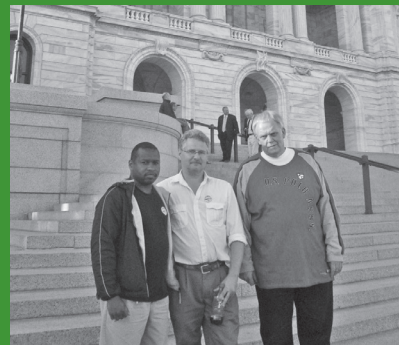
STAYING BUSY THIS SPRING AT ST. STEPHEN'S...



KTIS Radio delivers 100 blankets to our Family Housing Program from their "Share the Warmth" blanket drive.



Larry and Columbus provide table service at the Alliance of the Streets annual Italian Dinner



Robert, Sam, and Henry testify at the capitol on behalf of St. Stephen's Street Outreach program on the effect that the governor's elimination of General Assistance Medical Care will have on their health and finances.



Carl Granberg delivers nonperishable items to the shelter from the Edina Country Club Mother's Day Food Drive



Parents in our welfare-to-work program participate in a Nutritious Meals class



Street Outreach staff greet visitors and volunteers at Project Homeless Connect where 1,700 homeless individuals or families received services on May 11th.



Area residents and precinct police officers attend a community meeting hosted by the shelter to discuss neighborhood issues.



Members of Pax Christi Catholic Community work side-by-side with staff, clients and shelter guests to give the Kateri Residence backyard an Extreme Makeover!

GET ON THE BUS!

St. Stephen's is celebrating the passage of recent legislation! Our organization is proud to have participated in the successful enactment of a bill that will provide people experiencing homelessness with affordable public transportation.

The Discount Transit Passes Pilot Project, signed into law this spring in the Transportation Omnibus Bill, will enable nonprofits serving homeless people to purchase half-price transit passes on behalf of clients.

Staff and volunteers with St. Stephen's Human Rights Program helped to craft the language for the bill and collected over 400 videotaped testimonials from homeless people and those who serve them.

We are confident that the six-month Pilot Project will demonstrate positive community benefits with minimal negative impact on Metro Transit income and will become permanently available to all metro nonprofits serving the homeless.



Chuck and Elsa, who have experienced homelessness, testify with Senator Scott Dibble (far right) on how affordable transportation is to people in poverty. Photo courtesy of Senate Media Services

"Starting Over" continued from page 1

a Motel 6, so you have to follow the rules. Don't get me wrong, I didn't like all the rules because I'm a grown man, but I understand why they have to have rules, why it's a sober place, and so on. You've got to focus, keep your head up, stay on your game plan.

I had my mind set before I got here: get in and get out. Some people staying here get comfortable, or they can't work or they're just too troubled and all you can do is pray for them. I was healthy enough to work and I looked at it like this: somebody may really need this bed, wandering around wondering what they're going to do. I needed to move forward and free up the bed for someone else.

The staff gave me a listing of places to rent. I did a lot of footwork. Some places I didn't like because I got a family and it needs to be an area I'll be comfortable with. I found a place and moved in this week. The way my job is going, I've already had one promotion and I see another promotion coming. I want to find a future here. I'm not even a native, and Minnesota has given me blessings and opportunities for the better. (Well, I survived my first winter after never even seeing snow in my life, so maybe I am a true native now!) I just think I've been blessed and now I can share my blessings back with people here.

WISH LIST!

→ URGENT NEED: DIAPER DECK ←

The moms and dads we work with are in dire need of a Diaper Changing Station! The kind that attaches to the wall is around \$150 online or at Sam's Club and elsewhere. Or, with your donation, we're happy to do the shopping!

Contact: Karin Bolwahn 612-874-0311

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
Toilet tissue, toothbrush/paste, lotion
Socks, underwear

KATERI RESIDENCE

Please bring to Kateri Residence at 2408 4th Avenue South
Fans—any type!

MEN'S SHELTER

Please call Allysen to arrange a drop-off, 612-870-2263.
Towels, pillows, other linens
Chest freezer

ADMIN OFFICES

Please call Karin to arrange a drop-off, 612-874-0311.

Sofa or loveseat for meeting room (washable fabric or leather a plus!)

ALL PROGRAMS, ALL THE TIME!

Please bring to 2211 Clinton Ave, front door

Diapers & baby wipes
Bus tokens or passes
Blankets
Rainbow/Target/Cub gift cards
Snacks & drinks for meetings and clients

Thanks!

open house



a news update from
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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF
ST. STEPHEN'S MISSION TO END HOMELESSNESS**

pictured left to right: Katie, Loretta, Joshua, Khadra, & Cynthia