

openhouse

a news update from st. stephen's human services HOLIDAY 2011

A STEADFAST HEART



Mikkel Beckmen, Executive Director

I write this in the dark stillness of winter. All is quiet except for the steadfast companion that is my beating heart.

Our history of song and poetry has portrayed the human heart in so

many ways. I like to think of my own heart as a steadfast companion that will only ever leave me when it is time for me to go to the next place.

What does it mean to be steadfast? Let me tell you this. 30 years ago, on December 8th, 1981, St. Stephen's hastily converted a parish library into a homeless shelter. It has been open, thanks to this community's care and support, ever since. When hearts join together in common purpose they create loving and caring projects in the world.

St. Stephen's has been a steadfast heart these past decades. We are here for you. We are here through

economic- or weather-related tornados. We are here for whatever befalls and bedevils this community. Whether it is you, a struggling family member, or that stranger on the corner you wonder about. We are here at the ready with solutions for our neighbors' suffering.

To be steadfast is also to stay focused. You know what St. Stephen's does in the community. Our mission is to end homelessness and we don't drift from that. While our laser-focus is on permanent solutions for changing lives and improving our community, the bottom line is that we are here for you no matter what. We keep the doors—and our hearts—open.

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Circle of Happiness

Bipolar disorder runs in my family, and I have coped with it since early adulthood. During this time, I have taken a variety of prescription drugs and was hospitalized several times due to severe bipolar episodes. Slight chores such as cleaning or getting groceries became major mountains. It was hard to plan anything – when I was well, I was well, but when I was sick, it was hard to get out of bed in the morning.

I had lost my job, exhausted my savings, and was on the brink of becoming homeless. St. Stephen's helped pay my rent and avoid being evicted until we could figure out a new plan. They helped me sign up for benefits and for housing for seniors and people with disabilities. They made sure I had a financial plan to get me by. I'm doing really well right now – the medication I am taking makes me



Berni

feel fully recovered. I started writing again and am working on a few poems and a play about the social and political issues of our time.

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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 Exit partnership helping families and singles move quickly out of shelters, supportive housing in our Long-Term Homeless program, 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 & Street Outreach

Educational opportunities for the housed community to promote a greater understanding of homelessness, including through our zAmya Theater Project and A Day in the Life Program. 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.

Shelter & Emergency Services

Shelter and advocacy for adult men in our Shelter. Additional emergency assistance is available to the community, such as clothing through our Free Store, help obtaining birth certificates, and representative payee service.

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.

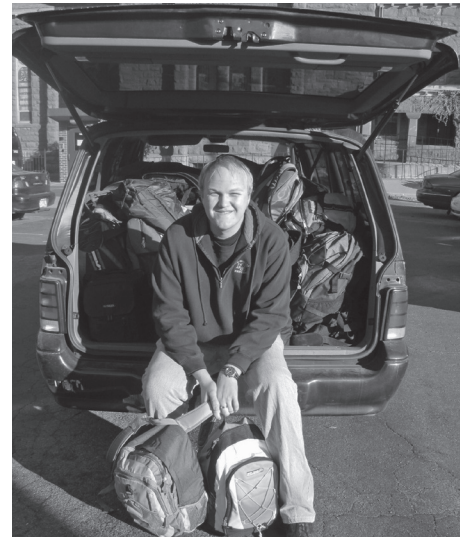


Eagle Scout Creates Survival Packs

Joel Simonson was looking for something meaningful to do for his Leadership Service Eagle Scout project. "I was thinking about hunger because, as a big eater, food has always been important to me," he smiles. "But I wanted something solid that I could do from start to finish and I thought of homelessness and all the things that homeless people need, especially in the winter."

Joel knew about St. Stephen's Street Outreach because he attends Our Lady of Lourdes Church where Street Outreach volunteer Jerry Fleishacker also attends. A friend connected them and they discussed the needs of people on the street.

The Service Project all prospective Eagle Scout must do is required to be meaningful, challenging, and to harness other community resources. "You're not supposed to use your own money," Joel says. So everything for the winter survival packs he put together was donated, including enough money for other items St. Stephen's Street Outreach distributes. Joel received donations from members of Our Lady of



Joel Simonson and some of the Cold Weather Survival packs he distributed.

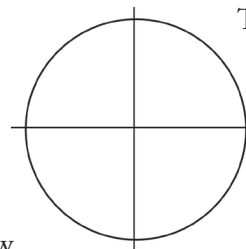
Lourdes and St. Pius X as well as from local businesses.

Each backpack had a winter cap, gloves and scarf, a razor, hand warmers, band aids, tissues, snacks, and more.

Jerry Fleishacker took Joel out on his rounds so he could personally hand some of the backpacks out to people in need. "People kept thanking me—even before they got the bags," Joel says. "It's very gratifying to be able to help."

"Circle of Happiness" continued from page 1

Now that I'm better, I appreciate things tremendously more. I have immense gratitude to those who have helped me. The things that carved out my sorrow when I was ill have filled up with joy now that I'm well. I'd also like to offer an insight to anyone who is undergoing hardships, such as a mental health illness.



This is my "circle of happiness." The horizontal line represents your commitment to others, something larger than yourself, the legacy you will leave when you die. The vertical line represents your unique talents which enable you to leave this legacy. The "circle of happiness" is found by devoting your main talents to your main goals!

Every day St. Stephen's helps someone move into a new home.

Now it's St. Stephen's turn to move.



St. Stephen's Human Services is relocating all administrative offices and 80% of program services in the summer of 2012. Programs are currently spread over five Minneapolis locations. We expect to sign a lease very shortly on our new site which will bring programs together to provide:

Ample, safe and dignified space to accommodate the increase in the number of services we have available to people.

Smarter spending on operating costs by moving from a variety of types of buildings to one created to more efficiently office employees and serve program participants.

A secure future for our Kateri Residence which we hope to purchase from St. Stephen's Catholic Church to ensure its future as safe, sober housing for Native American women.

Designated spaces of calm for people in crisis who are distraught and their frightened children who may need a quiet place to rest or play.

St. Stephen's Overnight Shelter and Kateri Residence will remain in their current locations.

Special Features of Our New Location

The Ed Flahavan Welcome Center

Named for Ed Flahavan, Pastor of St. Stephen's Church 1976–1988. As homelessness became widespread in the early 1980's, Ed Flahavan and his parish community threw open the church doors to people in need. St. Stephen's became the city's first church-based shelter not because it had the resources or expertise, but because we are called to ease our neighbors' suffering. In recognition of Ed's openhearted love and humanity, St. Stephen's Human Services welcomes all people with a deep hospitality and abiding hope.

The Rev. Patrick Griffin Career Development Center

Named for Pat Griffin, Pastor of St. Stephen's Church 1988–2004. Pat Griffin's leadership guided the expansion of St. Stephen's Human Services

in addressing larger economic justice issues that perpetuate homelessness. Pat and the Board of Directors led the programs through the process of becoming an independent nonprofit with expanded opportunities for people to find livable wage jobs and other permanent solutions to their homelessness.

The Sisters' Solidarity Room

We name this room in recognition of the important role that women of faith, particularly the Sisters of St. Joseph Carondelet, had in the formation of St. Stephen's philosophy of intentional community with our neighbors. Our solidarity with the people with whom we work, our many collaborations, and our eagerness for dialogue is founded in this spirit of open-hearted willingness to be in relationship with others to find our common way.

The Arc of Justice Boardroom

As the other rooms recognize St. Stephen's legacy, this room is a commitment to St. Stephen's future. In honor of our mission to end homelessness and see the day when all people know economic justice, the boardroom will be named for the words of Martin Luther King: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."



FOR EVERY CRISIS,

Circumstances conspire to bring tragedy to people's lives in a confounding variety of ways. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for someone's homelessness. And there is no single agency that possesses all the necessary tools. The goal of St. Stephen's programs is to be as creative, flexible, and knowledgeable of available resources as possible. In this way we prevent or end homelessness, one housing crisis at a time.

The following is an effort to give you an idea of the wide variety of issues and impediments people bring to St. Stephen's. Thanks to you, our supporters and partners, each crisis is matched with a solution.

- A family came to us facing eviction. They'd been paying their rent in cash and the landlord hadn't been paying the mortgage and didn't tell the family he was being foreclosed upon. St. Stephen's made fifteen phone calls in English and in Spanish until we found the bank that owned the property. We were able to get the family a month extension to find new housing as well as a \$4,000 relocation allowance for leaving the property in spotless condition.
- A woman contacted St. Stephen's because her recent chemotherapy led to a forty pound weight loss. Her winter clothes no longer fit and she is very low income and embarrassed to return to her job in oversized clothing. We welcomed her to our Free Store and told her about other options
- when we didn't have everything she needed.
- A gentleman heading into inpatient treatment for chemical dependency had a service dog that was not permitted there. He had been told to relinquish the dog. Staff fear that the loss of his companion will harm his health and commitment to his sobriety. They scrambled to find a program that permits service dogs, but came up with nothing. Finally they located a pet foster care program. When the gentleman moves from treatment into sober housing his dog will be waiting for him.
- even harder in a new place. When she returned her only option was to go to a shelter. St. Stephen's helped find Jasmine an apartment, made sure her son was enrolled in school, and helped Jasmine work on job-seeking. Jasmine wanted to go to community college, but she was worried about encountering former friends who were unhealthy for her to be around. Staff helped her identify other affordable college options.
- A group from a local company contacted St. Stephen's to say they'd seen a former colleague downtown and know he's homeless. They'd like to find him so they can help. Staff discuss confidentiality restrictions with the group, but offer that their friend is connected with services. We also offer to pass on a note to him so he can reach out to the group if he would like to.
- A Laotian-American man has been homeless for nine years in the shelters on Currie Avenue. He speaks limited English, and has issues with mental health and alcoholism. Staff fluent in Laotian connect with him and learn that his entire family was murdered in Laos. As a child he was sent to a refugee camp and presently has no connection to the Laotian-American community. As a first step we find him an apartment through the Currie Avenue Partnership. At his request staff helped him enroll in ESL classes and a program to address his drinking.



A SOLUTION

- A mom and her two children were staying in a shelter. While she had some housing challenges none seemed insurmountable. Then she told staff she was having difficulty remembering things and wondered about a recent head injury she'd had. We connected her to the Traumatic Brain Injury Center. She found low-skills employment, which was a good fit given her concerns, but meant her housing would need to be very affordable. Staff were able to find an apartment near her job which meant transportation would not be an expense and also enabled her children to remain in their same school. St. Stephen's will continue to work with the family to ensure long-term stability.
- A married couple was looking for housing, with the husband recently released from prison. They both had good jobs with the ability to pay \$1,000 per month in rent. They could not find a property owner to rent to someone with a felony record. While this is a dismally common problem with far too few options, St. Stephen's works with a couple of landlords who—with case management by St. Stephen's—are willing to rent to ex-offenders. One of them had an opening and agreed to give the couple a chance.
- The mother of one of our program participants passed away in Nebraska. There are few community resources for this type of expense, but thanks to an

Emergency Fund provided by the Spirit of St. Stephen's Catholic Community, we were able to purchase a bus ticket so he could attend the funeral. At his request we also helped him find a donated shirt and tie.



- **Richard** is a 73 year-old veteran whose drinking got out of hand and cost him his apartment due to failure to pay the rent. When he came to St. Stephen's Shelter it was his first time homeless. He said he was "as scared as I'd ever been and completely embarrassed," but the staff, he said, was "super-sonic". He owed five months of rent to his landlord. With our assistance he wrote a contract agreeing to pay this debt back with monthly payments. He is sober and active in AA and saving money. Next month he moves into senior housing and is excited to be able to go back to singing in his church's choir.
- A formerly long-term homeless

individual is pleased to have a home, but told staff she is lonely and sad because, "Everyone who is ever with me is paid to be with me." Staff connected her to volunteer activities, a peer support group, and a book club.

- An individual working with our Human Rights program mentioned regret about an upcoming election saying he had not voted in twenty-five years because he'd had a felony. Staff told him that if he'd completed the terms of his sentence he could vote. He was so proud after voting and staff witnessed him helping other homeless folks to vote.
- Staff will tell you there is nothing more gratifying than finding the right solution. But it's also pretty special to experience people's gratitude when you do.
- A woman encountered by our Street Outreach team needed emergency help paying for a prescription. Staff verified with her doctor while she researched the cheapest pharmacy. A month after we helped her with \$50, she sent the money plus an additional \$100. She'd since gotten a job and wanted St. Stephen's "to be able to help the next person."
 - A program participant needed to go to court, but had extreme anxiety, so staff accompanied him. He apparently noticed staff plugging the meter outside District Court, because the next day he dropped off four quarters taped to a note of thanks.

RECENTLY AT ST. STEPHEN'S...



Director of St. Stephen's Street Outreach and Community Engagement, Monica Nilsson, was awarded the John Fischer Rotary Hope Award.



Like proud parents everywhere, residents at Kateri sent their children off to the first day of school.



Neighborhood salon, Jungle Red, gave guests in our shelter free haircuts.



Tonya Brownlow of St. Stephen's Ending Long-term Homelessness Programs presented some excellent results from our housing for long-term homeless and addicted folks.



The Downtown 100 Collaborative was honored by the Association of Prosecution Attorneys as one of the ten best prosecution programs in the country. Collaborative partners are Minneapolis City Attorney's Office, Hennepin County Attorney's Office, Hennepin County Probation Downtown Improvement District, Minneapolis Police Department, Salvation Army, and St. Stephen's Street Outreach and Ending Long-term Homelessness programs.



Paul Adelman of Xcel Energy Foundation presented a gift to Grant Specialist Chelsea Hibbard.

More Shelter

For the second year in a row St. Stephen's Human Services will operate an additional shelter on Minneapolis' north side to accommodate an increase in people who have become homeless. The trend of increasing numbers of overflow shelter nights is concerning—especially since human service agencies have had great successes finding permanent housing for these folks during this same period. This uptick is directly due to the current economic crisis.

In past years the Salvation Army Harbor Light Center has not turned away anyone in need of shelter—even letting people sleep in the hallways and chapel after all shelters are full. While this means that people are indoors on winter nights, the crowded

conditions are less than conducive to making healthy life changes.

In summer 2010, the Shelter Efficiency taskforce of Heading Home Hennepin identified the need for an additional 100 beds from November to April in order to keep people safe in cold weather. Last year, and again this year, Hennepin County contracted with the Salvation Army to operate a shelter in Covenant Church downtown Minneapolis and with St. Stephen's to operate a shelter in the River of Life Church on Minneapolis' north side. Minneapolis zoning codes permit homeless shelters to be located only in religious places of assembly.



Emma, who is formerly homeless, holds a photo of the floor of the crowded Salvation Army Shelter where people are asked to sleep right next to each other to maximize space.

St. Stephen's temporary winter shelter is simple: fifty six-inch mats on a floor in a large gym. Sheets, blankets, and a pillow are provided. There is a shower and meals. Advocacy, housing placement and referral services are also provided to help individuals leave homelessness as soon as possible.

WISH LIST!

URGENT NEEDS:

Winter Wear

Long underwear, gloves, hats, scarves, all age, gender & sizes.

Volunteer Meal Groups

The Temporary Winter Shelter that St. Stephen's is operating on Minneapolis' north side needs a group to bring and serve supper on a Saturday or Sunday from November through April. Meals should be prepared-in-advance and serve 40 men. We would ask that your group commit to a once/month meal if possible. A great opportunity to learn about homelessness and meet some exceptional people.

Please call Becca at 612-879-7627.

OTHER NEEDS

Please bring to 2211 Clinton Ave, front door 8:30 to 5:00 M-F

- Towels, pillows, sheets, blankets
- Diapers & baby wipes
- Dishes, silverware, pots & pans
- Alarm clocks
- Bus tokens or passes

"A Steadfast Heart" continued from page 1

The holidays help us renew relationships and remember who we are to one another. Remember what is most important in this life. Stay heart-centered and keep faith. May our warm hearts find common purpose and cause to celebrate our steadfast care for one another in this season. We are here for you.

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A reality game show with a million dollar prize? It's the American Dream! Or is it just a dream? May-be it's a revolution of the heart and soul... televised! With humor, drama, and a song and dance or two, we're cracking open the conversation that starts with real stories from homeless folks, but also speaks to how the current economy affects all of us. "The Reality Roadshow: Who Wants to be a Homeless Millionaire" inspires audiences with words, wit, and definitely wisdom!

**St. Stephen's zAmya Program
has a new play!**

**Bring it to your school, faith
community or workplace by
calling 612-879-7638.**