

# openhouse

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

## THINKING AHEAD

*"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."*

*---The Great Law of The Iroquois Confederacy*

Good programs here at St. Stephen's get developed and nurtured along by simply trying to answer two fundamental questions. "Why?" and "Who cares?"

If I were to tell you that last night as I wrote this letter to you, 700 kids slept in a homeless shelter in our community, I hope you would ask, as we ask ourselves: "Why?"

Family homelessness has always been about economics. The marketplace does not deliver enough affordable housing units to match the incomes of the

poorest households in our community. This means that for some families, the math simply doesn't work. When you add in any personal vulnerability--such as a mental health concern or lack of education--the risk of becoming homeless soars.

Right now there are almost 11 million poor households in America and only 5.4 million affordable homes available to them. When I was a kid in the 70's, there was a surplus of affordable housing. Today there is a growing deficit. If we are going to tackle the issue head on we need to find the political will to create housing that families can afford.

The second question, "Who cares?" We care because children without

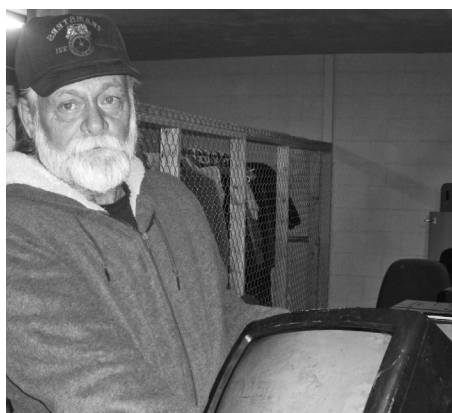


Mikkel Beckmen, Executive Director

homes are kids without a future. We care because it costs more to keep families in shelters than in housing. We care because our community

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## GIVING BACK



Robert

I was sleeping outside for ten years. I tried the shelters, but you're on a mat on the floor four inches from the next person and even in Vietnam I didn't have to sleep four inches from somebody.

About two weeks after St. Stephen's Street Outreach found me I was in an apartment. They helped me get furniture, but they can only give you so many things and those

things don't include a television or a vacuum. Well, when I was homeless I was a scrapper—I'd find copper and aluminum and sell it by the pound for money. I still do it for a little income, but now if I find vacuum cleaners or TVs when I'm out there, I call St. Stephen's and they give them to someone who was in my situation.

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

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



## Collecting, Competing, Caring



Volunteer Coordinator Michelle Perrin (left) accepts an enormous donation of needed items from Healthland.

A dose of friendly competition goes a long way for donation drives. This past December, the Community Action Team from Healthland sponsored a two-week drive for St. Stephen's Human Services. Healthland provides electronic health record systems to hospitals and other providers. The eighty employees at the corporate office split into a Red Team and a Green Team and were given a list of items to collect. Each item counted as one point, and the winning team was promised a celebratory lunch in January. However, after seeing the huge success of both teams, the Community Action Team decided to reward all employees for their generosity. In the end, St. Stephen's was the real winner, receiving three carloads of cleaning supplies, winter necessities, toiletries, kitchen items, socks, and more.

This was the second year that Healthland collected donations for

St. Stephen's. Ashley Klatte, the Marketing Coordinator, said "The first year we donated was such a rewarding and wonderful experience that we knew we had to make this a tradition for years to come." Since the drive, Healthland's Community Action Team has already begun thinking of ways to improve the program for next year, and we can't wait to see what's in store.

It's easy to sponsor a drive! With a little marketing, enthusiasm, and a few big collection boxes, your support can make a lasting impact on the life of someone experiencing homelessness. If you are interested in coordinating a drive at your place of employment, please call Michelle at 612-879-7627 for more information. Thanks for your support!

# Legislative Lookout

St. Stephen's Human Services ends homelessness for people every day. Our overarching goal is the day when homelessness is preventable and ended entirely in our community. For this reason, we work not just on social service programs, but in collaboration with our partners on changing systems that create or perpetuate homelessness.

The 2013 Legislative Session began in January and the following issues are those that we are following most closely:

- St. Stephen's and its partners are asking the legislature to direct \$50 million toward affordable housing and support services for folks transitioning out of homelessness.
- MinnesotaCare, a publicly subsidized program for people without access to affordable healthcare coverage, is in danger of being eliminated. In addition to protecting this program, we are working to expand Medical Assistance to more low-income Minnesotans.
- The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) is a statewide program for low-income families with children that helps them move into work. MFIP includes both cash and food assistance, but the amount of money a family receives has not increased since 1986. Therefore, we are advocating a cost-of-living adjustment.
- Finally, we are working on election reforms that expand

proof-of-identity options for folks without stable housing.

St. Stephen's works to enhance the safety net system so that we can move people out of poverty and engage them in the life of society. You can help! Contact your local representatives and ask them to support programs that benefit people experiencing homelessness. Find your representatives at <http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/districtfinder.aspx>.



St. Stephen's administers the advocacy group Homeless Against Homelessness composed of homeless and formerly homeless people and their allies.

## ST. STEPHEN'S ANNUAL ITALIAN DINNER

.....  
Tuesday, May 21  
Come any time 5:00-7:00 p.m.  
Spirit of St. Stephen's Church  
(First Christian Church)  
2201 First Ave S Minneapolis  
Sliding scale \$20-\$30 per plate





# GENERATIONAL HOMELESSNESS:

## Generational trauma

People working with homeless families have noted a disturbing trend over the past decade. The trend is reflected in the findings of the tri-annual Wilder Surveys on homelessness in Minnesota.

*In 2009 thirty-four percent of homeless parents had themselves experienced homelessness as a child. This is a significant increase from the 25 percent of parents in the 2006 study.*

Homelessness is traumatic for everyone it affects, but the depth of that trauma on children has been shown to be more significant than can be healed by securing stable housing. Homelessness exposes children to experiences--violence, inadequate nutrition, inadequate sleep, and disrupted relationships, to name just a few--that cause toxic levels of stress which can take a toll on their physical and emotional growth and their ability to learn. Half of Minnesota's homeless children are 5 or younger. It is during these most formative years that the risks associated with homelessness are most likely to negatively affect development.

Wilder's findings also showed that parents who had been homeless before compared to those experiencing homelessness for the first time reported higher rates of health problems, more experiences of violence, and lower employment rates. They also reported higher levels of emotional and behavioral problems among their children. Obviously, homelessness is engendering cycles of dysfunction. Parents with unaddressed trauma are

inadvertently passing it on to their own children.

## Family supportive housing

Twenty years ago St. Stephen's Human Services helped pioneer a nationally recognized re-housing model for sheltered families. "Rapid-re-housing" works by moving families quickly from shelters to avoid the deepening of their crisis while they languish in shelters. The premise is that by supporting families in housing for three to six months while they get on their feet, we give them the hand up they need. This model works for many, especially with a cooperative economy where people can get work and afford housing. There are families for whom this is not enough. That is where St. Stephen's Family Supportive Housing Program comes in.

*Children under five are the poorest age group in America, and one in four infants, toddlers and preschoolers are poor during the years of greatest brain development.*

*--Marian Wright Edelman*

Family Supportive Housing supports families with multiple barriers to self-sufficiency. Most have been long-term homeless. (Lacking a permanent place to live continuously for a year or more or at least four times in the past three years.) In addition to helping them secure and retain their housing, we work with them on goal planning, providing financial literacy training, and promoting educational opportunities and employment.

## So! How are the children?

We work with 115 families with 88 children under 5 years old. This year we're launching an intensive effort to work with these 88 kids and their parents to provide additional support in the home for young children. A grant from Hennepin County will enable St. Stephen's to hire an early childhood development specialist. Every parent has questions about their child's development and how to parent; these parents are less likely to have joined Early Childhood and Family Education groups or consult with physicians. Those who experienced homelessness as children may know no other way of being family than in chaos with uncertainty and negative discipline. The specialist will help parents complete an Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) to look at the

strengths in their children, note any behaviors of concern, educate parents about developmental milestones, and identify any need for further assessment. This builds skill and confidence for parents and gives structure and support for the children.

Further, we are hopeful of securing funding for a well-known program, The Incredible Years, which helps parents learn and use skills such as effective praise, establishing

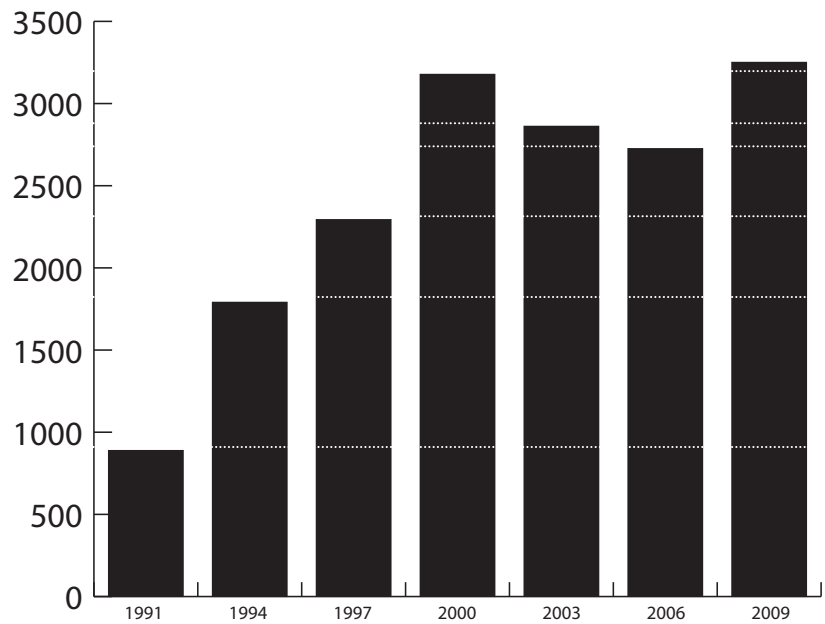
# STOPPING THE CYCLE

predictable routines and rules, and effective limit-setting with their children to enhance social competence and reduce behavior problems.

The average shelter stay for a family costs approximately \$3,000 per month. Helping families—for as long as it takes—to develop the skills of self-sufficiency and healthy families is not just the right thing to do, it's a smart thing to do.

Children live what they learn. Clearly, if we do not break the cycle of generational homelessness, the numbers of homeless families will increase exponentially. What a terrible loss of human potential this would be when we know how to prevent it from happening.

## Homeless Kids in Minnesota



Data from the 2012 Wilder Survey will be released in April 2013.

## The Opportunity to Succeed

About four years ago I was living with my mom, but she ran into some problems and I had to move out. This left me without stable housing for a month or two while living with a relative.

There was a lot going on, and I couldn't attend school because my son wasn't in daycare. It was hard to find a place that provided transportation, so I watched him. I worried about his communication with other kids and wanted to make sure he learned how to play well with others. I soon found out that I would receive a subsidy and could move into my own place. I then started getting everything back on track by enrolling my son in daycare and going back to school regularly.

He's very advanced and can write his own name. Now that I feel settled, I'm able to give him and his little brother more attention.

It'd be really helpful to have someone come and let me know where my kids are at and where they should be. Sometimes you don't know exactly how far along they are, so it would be nice to have a professional help figure it out. I'm going to school this next semester to be a medical assistant, which I think will be good for me and my kids. My living situation is way better than it was, and living on my own has taught me a lot about managing money and paying bills.



Rakiya and her sons of the Family Supportive Housing Program

My case manager at St. Stephen's is very nice and offers a lot of resources. Not everybody gets the opportunity to be in a program like this, but I am thankful that I did.

## RECENTLY AT ST. STEPHEN'S...



Writer Carolyn Holbrook and her son Steven read together about Steven's struggle with addiction and homelessness at a fundraiser for our programs hosted by Patrick's Cabaret.



A volunteer interviewed a guest in our Shelter for the 2012 Wilder Homeless Count, an in-depth face-to-face survey done every three years with all people experiencing homelessness in Minnesota.



Representatives Karen Clark and Susan Allen visited local shelters to hear from constituents.



Members of St. Stephen's "Homeless Against Homelessness" advocacy group helped people register to vote.



Milo Fine, the son of artist Agnes Fine, donated her work after her death so people moving from homelessness into housing (above) could have artwork on their walls.



A young man in our Kateri program was paid a visit by an old man from the North Pole.



*"Thinking Ahead"*  
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works better for all of us when everyone has the security and stability of a home.

While the housing deficit is bad news, the good news is that we know how to end family homelessness. Does it cost something? Of course, but it costs less than homelessness. Moreover, it gives the next generation a chance, and that is priceless.

*"Giving Back"*  
continued from page 1

Sometimes I need to fix things up first. I'm an ex-Navy Seal, Vietnam Vet, and I've always been good with my hands so everything is easy to fix. People throw away vacuums that just need a belt, brand new toasters, and plates and dishes still in the box they came in! I don't believe in wasting anything. People ask why I pick up this stuff. I say if you see a twenty dollar bill on the road, would you pick it up?

I had to rent a garage to work on all this stuff. I can pay for it, though, by selling the metal from the things that are too broken to fix. Then I can save the old parts and maybe use them in fixing up something else.

St. Stephen's helps everybody the best they can, but they can't do everything. If I can help somebody else, I'm going to do it. And I am not going to disappoint St. Stephen's and lose my place. I've had it five years and because of it I've given other folks a bunch of TVs, microwaves, a dozen vacuums. I like to help the next person.

# YOU! did it !

You helped St. Stephen's earn \$75,000 by donating gifts to be matched and double-matched by the Frey Foundation! Our abundant thanks!



## WISH LIST

### 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.

### We are in need of:

Bedding (sheets, blankets, etc) and Towels  
Kitchenware (silverware, pans, dishes) and cleaning supplies  
Men's socks & t-shirts

### VOLUNTEER NEEDS!

#### Our biggest volunteer needs right now are:

Transcribe oral histories  
Childcare assistance  
Provide and serve a shelter meal

Please call Michelle 612-879-7627 for details!

## FOLLOW US ON:

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ending homelessness

st. stephen's HUMAN SERVICES

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Dorothy & Toto  
are homeless?!  
*OH, MY!*

.....

THERE'S NO  
PLACE LIKE HOME

PRESENTED BY ZAMYA THEATER PROJECT

Tuesday March 12, 7:00 p.m.

at St. Stephen's Human Services

2309 Nicollet Mpls 55404 | \$10 or donation

Please RSVP to [zamy@ststephensmpls.org](mailto:zamy@ststephensmpls.org) or 612-760-4804

April 21-27, 2013 An All-New Show!

Free performances all week at various metro locations!

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[www.ststephensmpls.org](http://www.ststephensmpls.org)