

# openhouse

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

## FAREWELL

By Mikkell Beckmen

Words are important. They are the expression of our thoughts, beliefs and values. From our words flow the deeds and actions that create our reality. Are you satisfied with the current reality? Does it reflect your values and your vision for this community?

The words "Our mission is to end homelessness" have launched amazing programs, brought hard-working people to St. Stephen's, and changed lives. Our vision of a community free of homelessness is what drives us on.

There is a parable about a village that kept having to rescue people they found struggling to stay afloat in the river that flowed through the

*continued on page 7*



Interim Executive Director Kristen Brown and outgoing Executive Director Mikkell Beckmen

## GREETINGS

By Kristen Brown

It is my pleasure to be serving as St. Stephen's Interim Executive Director while our Board of Directors undertakes the search for our new Executive Director.

We want to thank Mikkell for his eight years with us and, moreover, for leaving us in a strong position for the future. We expect to end this year on budget, having attained key service goals, and celebrating one year in our wonderful new location on Nicollet Avenue.

I have been with St. Stephen's for six years, in a variety of roles, launching, managing, and directing programs. I currently serve as the agency's Director of Family

Programs. I was drawn to St. Stephen's because of its strong services for our community members who are homeless, its rich history of social justice, and its community engagement. I was drawn to St. Stephen's because of its many loyal and long-time supporters like you.

Thank you for continuing to support our work through this transition. Thank you for this opportunity to serve our community in this role. Please feel free to call me with any concerns or questions at 612-767-4754 or [kbrown@ststephensmpls.org](mailto:kbrown@ststephensmpls.org).

## 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 & Street Outreach

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 & 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.*



# Spread the Blessings Around



Judy Sausen, volunteer

*"I think it's such an important thing for people to have a home."*

Growing up in South Minneapolis, Judy Sausen has long been familiar with St. Stephen's and the services we provide to people experiencing homelessness. Judy first became involved in the 1980's but later moved to Duluth to work in a Catholic Worker community that provided hospitality to people experiencing homelessness.

After returning to Minneapolis, she wanted to continue working with people who have not had as many doors opened to them as she has had. "I feel very blessed in my life. I've had so many opportunities, and I need to spread the blessings around."

In 2007 Judy began volunteering overnight in the Shelter and has continued providing hospitality to shelter guests ever since. In addition to interacting with and learning from the guests, she appreciates the dedication and close collaboration of Shelter Advocates, overnight

volunteers, and meals groups who together create a welcoming space for our neighbors seeking shelter.

Just this year Judy expanded her involvement with St. Stephen's when she began volunteering with two additional programs. Her enjoyment of children attracted her to help with weekly childcare for kids at Kateri Residence. Kateri Residence offers safe and sober housing to American Indian women recovering from addiction. Judy also helps in our Family Rental Assistance Program as a greeter and facilitating the flow of information.

Judy is grateful for the opportunities that community members have to get involved in St. Stephen's work and change perceptions about the folks we work with. When asked by friends if she feels safe volunteering overnight in a men's shelter, she responds without hesitation. I tell them, "Yes. The men are always respectful and if there's ever a problem, other guests step in to solve it. It's a place I feel very comfortable."



# 2013 Legislative Wrap up



St. Stephen's staff, program participants and allies met with legislators to discuss funding for programs at "Homeless Day on the Hill" in March.

St. Stephen's Human Services works not just one-on-one with people experiencing homelessness, but also in collaboration with our partners to change systems that create or perpetuate homelessness. There was a lot to work on this session!

The 2013 Legislature adjourned on May 20th and we enjoyed some great successes this year!

- St. Stephen's and its partners in the Homes for All Coalition were able to secure \$7 million in homeless services (including the Homeless Youth Act, Emergency Services, Transitional Housing, and Long Term Homeless Services). Additionally, the Legislature approved \$25.9 million for homelessness prevention, rent assistance and the rehab and creation of affordable housing across the state. This is a total increase of about \$33million invested into our work to end homelessness!
- MinnesotaCare, a publicly subsidized program for people without access to affordable healthcare coverage, was in danger of being eliminated. Because of the hard work of many people, Minnesota is the ONLY state in the nation that is continuing a public

health coverage program in 2014 that will then be able to transition to the Basic Health Plan option under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2015. There were also some great improvements made to that program including premium reductions, a repeal of the \$10,000 hospital cap and the \$1,000 hospital deductible.

- 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. We advocated hard for a cost of living adjustment for our families and the Legislature passed a Housing Allowance of \$110/month for families who are not already receiving a housing subsidy.

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. **Thank you for doing your part, whether it was attending Lobby Day, calling or writing your legislators or attending forums about the issues.** Together, we can and do make positive change!

# HOMELESSNESS: MAKING

## zAmya Theater Project:

St. Stephen's zAmya Theater Project just completed its 2013 workshops and Annual Roadshow. As in past years, the play was created with people experiencing homelessness. Theater Director Maren Ward and Playwright Nicole Smith brought a cast of six women to the stage in a play focused on family homelessness. About half of the households St. Stephen's works with are families with children.

zAmya's goal is to amplify the voices and stories of people who have experienced homelessness. It is a wonderful tool for educating never-been-homeless people the multi-dimensional folks to whom this crisis happens. People who have been homeless, but who also have dreams, enormous strength and wisdom, and fantastic senses of humor.

In the *Hoperah Show*, *Hoperah* (who is Oprah's cousin) guides six women through telling and dramatizing some of their stories.



Cheryl and Jody find Katrina unconscious outside.



"The Hoperah Show" frames the play "Recovering the Me I Know I Can Be"

Cheryl talks about her long history of homelessness before committing to sobriety and getting a place to live. "I have been homeless as a young child. My mom abandoned me...then I ran away at thirteen... then eighteen, my twenties, thirties..."

Kristine tells of the difference that recovery and housing has made in her life. "Wow, I can hear the birds, I can smile, I can smell the fresh air, I have an apartment, I can eat and shower any time and I have a good relationship with my son today and that's all that matters."

This is zAmya's 10th performance and its most intimate. All the actors told their own stories which they had first written in journals. Many of the women said it felt liberating to be so vulnerable in the



Jody prays for help getting an apartment.

mission of educating people about the complexities of addiction and poverty. Cheryl says, "I wrote things down that I never wrote down before. It felt good to let some of that stuff out and share it."

"Recovering the Me I Know I Can Be" was created and performed for free in several venues thanks to a grant from the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council. The play may be remounted for performances this fall. Sign up for email alerts so you don't miss it or other zAmya performances! [www.ststephensmpls.org](http://www.ststephensmpls.org)

## Homeless Against Homelessness

For the third year in a row St. Stephen's and the Salvation Army operated additional "cold-weather shelters" from November to April. Shelters are teeming—so full that some people prefer to take their chances outside rather than face the noise and chaos that come with crowds. Newly homeless adults and families continue to struggle with the



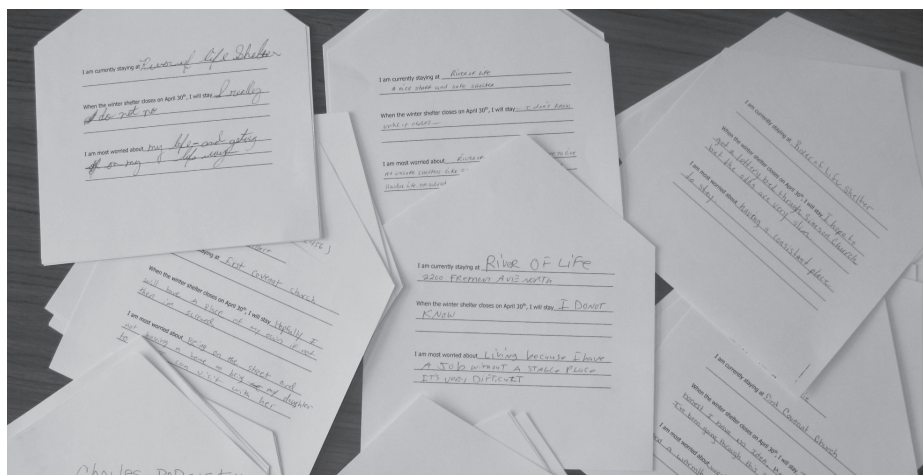
# OUR PAIN PUBLIC

longer-term effects that a slow economy have on the poor. The 2012 Wilder Survey on Homelessness in Minnesota shows a 6% increase in homelessness over the last survey in 2009.

Shelter is often—not always—more than a warm, safe place to stay the night. Ideally it is a place of stability for someone to get connected to advocates who can help them navigate their way out of homelessness.

Our community's Plan to End Homelessness, Heading Home Hennepin (<http://hennepin.us/headinghomehennepin>), like hundreds of similar plans across the country, call on efforts that deemphasize shelter and emphasize prevention strategies and the creation of affordable housing. Unfortunately, a nation's economy doesn't always cooperate with a nation's desire to improve the lives of its citizens. That's why Hennepin County has funded the additional 90 beds for adults from November through April for the past three years. The county is also committed to its policy of always sheltering families—even if it means securing hotel rooms after family shelters are full.

The 90 additional beds have likely saved lives each winter. As the April 30 closing date approached, some of the guests approached Homeless Against Homelessness (HAH) about organizing an educational action to let the public know how important shelter is. HAH is an ad hoc group of people who have experienced homelessness who work on community education and promoting self-advocacy. St. Stephen's provides



Notes from guests as the two shelters were closing.

administrative support for HAH. The action was held downtown Minneapolis with about forty attendees handing out information. Social services continually struggle with meeting emergency needs and working toward long-term permanent solutions. Both require

money, time, and community partners. It can be hard to simultaneously do both well. We are glad to have allies—most importantly those who have experienced homelessness—to help St. Stephen's work on all fronts.



MPD, a guest, Councilmember Don Samuels, and St. Stephen's staff at the Thank You Lunch to the northside community for hosting the River of Life Shelter.



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



Christine Jones, branch manager for TCF, presented Mikkel Beckmen with a check in support of our programs.



A St. Stephen's support group for formerly homeless folks holds a Pipe Ceremony in which tobacco is burned in a pipe, not to be smoked, but to show reverence and carry prayers to the Spirit.



Members of Pax Christi Catholic Church in Eden Prairie painted almost the entire interior of Kateri Residence!



St. Stephen's held a Spring staff picnic complete with barbecue...and snowstorm.



Our Board of Directors and members of Homeless Against Homelessness had dinner together and bowled a couple of games.



Hennepin County Judge Bruce Peterson (center) and his staff visited to learn about our work with the folks he also works with in his court.

*"Farewell" continued from page 1*

village. Finally someone in the village said, "Do you think we should look upriver at why all these people are falling into the river?"

St. Stephen's helps people who fall into homelessness, but we also look upriver to the causes of the problem, and work with the community and policy-makers to prevent people from falling in the first place.

This is why St. Stephen's has been

such an active partner in Heading Home Hennepin, the community's plan to end homelessness. The energy and planning around this initiative has spurred much of the growth and program development in our agency. That is why it is my honor to be taking the helm of this effort, as the new Coordinator for the Office to End Homelessness for Minneapolis and Hennepin County. I will continue to work with St. Stephen's,

obviously, but am eager to engage with all of the partners in this work, and those who have yet to join us as partners.

We will work hard. We will carry hope. We will walk together towards a beloved community that is the outward reflection of our values. Thank you for all you have been and all you will be in our work together. We remain in each other's care.

## 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:

- A half-size deep freeze! Help make our food last longer!
- New cleaning supplies (bath & kitchen cleaner, sponges, brooms/dustpans)
- Bedding (sheets, blankets, etc) and towels

### VOLUNTEER NEEDS!

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

- Childcare Assistance at Kateri Residence
- Information & Referral Assistance at our front desk

Please call Michelle 612-879-7627 for details!

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ending homelessness

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## Concerned about homeless people downtown?

Put this number in your cell phone:  
**612-879-7624**

This number connects you to St. Stephen's Street Outreach which helps people experiencing homelessness find affordable housing and other assistance.

If you encounter people who are homeless

- **Don't** ignore people—feeling invisible is terrible.
- **Do** smile and be kind.
- **Don't** give people money—it doesn't solve problems.
- **Do** call Street Outreach if someone is in trouble.
- **Do** give out these resource cards.

For more cards please call  
612-870-2276

St. Stephen's Street Outreach has secured housing for over 500 people. Even more have been connected to healthcare, mental health services, or addiction treatment. Together we can make a welcoming community for all of us.

If we are unable to answer the phone, leave a message. Messages are checked frequently. Leave a description of the person and exact location. Please know that we may work with people for a while before they are able to make changes.



Goal 9: End Street  
Homelessness in  
Downtown Minneapolis

ending homelessness

st. stephen's HUMAN SERVICES  
www.ststephensmpls.org

## This summer St. Stephen's launched an initiative to educate workers, residents, and visitors to downtown Minneapolis.

Our goal is more help for people who are homeless, and less worry for the people who encounter them.

We're hoping people call St. Stephen's Street Outreach if they want to help someone, instead of giving them money. If people really feel the need to give something, each poster holds a stack of tear-off cards that people can give folks with contact info for Street Outreach. Our goal is not to deprive anyone on the street of gifts of kindness; rather, we know that we can really help people change their situations if a professional can connect with them. Each year Street Outreach is able to connect over 100 people living outside with housing, and many more with other needed support. Please be kind, don't ignore or deride, and help us help people. That is a gift indeed. Contact Margaret Miles 612-870-2276 for more information.