

 April 7, 2014 Volume II: Issue 6

Dear Friends,

Cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, *“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”* The same can be said for Grace House’s dedicated volunteer corps, which has grown to include more than 170 individual members!

Through compassion and conversation, our volunteers make a world of difference in the lives of the men, women and children who stay at Grace House. Whether it’s sharing a cup of coffee or a home-cooked meal, our volunteers help each guest feel safe, welcomed and valued. In short, they are the heart and soul of Grace House.

The issue of homelessness has united our community like never before, and demonstrated the importance of civic involvement. New volunteers continue to flock to Grace House, eagerly supporting Itasca County’s only homeless shelter. United Way’s 2013 Day of Action brought 144 community volunteers to Grace House to give our facility a much-needed facelift. 120 adults, children and youth banded together during the November 20 “One Night without a Home” awareness walk. And, 170 volunteers from eight local churches joined forces this winter to provide additional shelter when Grace House is full. Events like these prove that volunteerism is alive and well in our community!

April is National Volunteer Month. Over the next four weeks, thousands of volunteers across the country will be honored for their service. Locally, volunteers will be recognized for their incredible contributions to Grace House during the **Saturday, April 26 Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon.**

We invite **all volunteers** to attend this celebration of service, which will be heldat Grace House from **Noon to 2:00 p.m.** The luncheon includes delicious home-cooking, musical entertainment, awards and volunteer appreciation gifts. Please RSVP your attendance by calling Grace House at (218) 326-2790 or emailing Peg Christensen, Volunteer & Community Outreach Coordinator, at christensenpeg@yahoo.com.

We thank all of you for supporting Grace House and making our community a great place to live!

Best Wishes,

Sherry Shadley

Executive Director

For the past two months, Grace House guests have been attending workforce and independent living classes on a weekly basis through our new STRIVE (Self Sufficiency Training for Reaching Independence & Vocational Empowerment) Project. These classes have had a transformative affect on their lives of some of our guests. Here just one example:

***Striving For Success*** by Elana Warsen

*It was a typical lunch hour at the Grand Rapids South branch of Affinity Plus, when Debbie walked in. The excited expression on Debbie's face made it clear she had come to the credit union for something much more extraordinary than a simple transaction. She was there to share her hope, pride, and gratitude about something important that was happening in her life.

The evening before, my colleague Jozette and I had visited Grace House, where Debbie was a guest, to lead a resume building workshop. As usual, we left Grace House feeling as though we had only scratched the surface of the topic we were covering, and hopeful we had made some sort of an impact.*

 *Little did we know our workshop had inspired Debbie to immediately get started working on her own resume. She had come to Affinity Plus to show us the results of her labor: a beautifully formatted, carefully crafted, and sure-to-impress resume! Debbie told us she was on her way to apply for two jobs. The confidence and pride she radiated were felt by everyone in the room.

As she was leaving, Debbie left us with some encouraging words. "Thank you for teaching that class last night. It did a world of help for me. I am going to go to Grace House now and show everybody what I made."

Debbie's visit was a wonderful reminder that time spent helping others is always a good investment. It was a joy to witness the dividends of our community's investment in Debbie.*

**Update:** Later that day, Debbie got a call from the manager of a fast food restaurant: one of the two businesses that received her resume. She interviewed for the position and started her new job on March 25. Way to go, Debbie!

**Top 5 Critical Needs List:**

1). Ground beef, chicken and ham 4). Floor cleaner

2). Eggs 5). Shredded cheese

3). Glassware

**Volunteer Spotlight: Mary Ann Bartos**

Choosing Mary Ann Bartos for this month’s Volunteer Spotlight was a no-brainer. She has been involved with Grace House for many years, primarily as an overnight volunteer. Each quarter, she actively recruits parishioners from St. Joseph’s Catholic Church to fill shifts at Grace House during Church Week. She helps Dave Roerick coordinate the schedules of 50 other parishioners who’ve volunteered to cover overnight shifts during St. Joe’s overflow shelter weeks. Mary Ann serves on Grace House’s Fundraising Committee. During the holiday season, she can be found at Cub Foods tirelessly selling raffle and Dinner Dance tickets, and educating the community about homelessness. She raised nearly $4,000 in ticket sales and donations in 2013, making “Home Is Where the Heart Is” the most successful fundraiser in the history of Grace House! Thank you, Mary Ann, for your dedication and continued involvement with our shelter. We appreciate everything you do for Grace House!