

July 10, 2014 Volume II: Issue 9

Dear Friends,

What an amazing feeling it is to be part of a community that responds so quickly to Grace House’s needs and those of the guests we serve. Rather than ignoring the problem of homelessness or pretending it doesn’t exist, members of our community regularly ask, “What can I do to help?” This type of community responsiveness is rare and is typically found in communities reacting to natural disasters.

As homelessness continues to rise, we saw faith leaders and members of their congregations unite this spring to provide emergency shelters for 47 additional guests while our facility remained full. This faith-based overflow shelter program enabled Grace House to meet the immediate needs of people experiencing homelessness while generating unprecedented community involvement.

We are amazed by the almost instantaneous responses to specific requests on our Facebook page and website. In addition to groceries, hygiene products and other necessities, many people in our community donate TV’s, microwaves and other household items to help our guests when they leave the shelter. A widower recently donated enough small kitchen appliances, dish sets and cook ware to completely outfit several homes. Our guests are so eager to make a new beginning with these new-found treasures.

Grace House Fundraising Committee Member, Karyn Davidson, rallied her friends to organize a garage sale with a portion of the proceeds earmarked for Grace House. Some of Karyn’s clients and colleagues at REMAX Realty also donated furniture to a Grace House family who had very little personal belongings. The prospect of having a furnished home made the family’s move even more exciting. Thanks, Karyn!

Having seen our request for a donated dishwasher on the Grand Rapids Swap & Exchange website, I received a call from Lori Huber, general manager of our local Home Depot store. I explained that serving meals to 18-22 people each night during the overflow shelter season had really taken a toll on our dishwasher; one of the only appliances without a protection plan. Lori simply said, “We’d like to take care of that for you!” Our new dishwasher will be delivered this Friday. How incredible is that?

The outpouring of support and generosity bestowed upon Grace House makes our work all the more rewarding. To show our appreciation, we’re hosting a **Community Block Party from Noon to 2:00 p.m., August 23** with free hotdogs, brats, chips and pop**.** For more details or toRSVP, please call 326-2790.

Our thanks to you for making our community a great place to live!

All My Best,

Sherry Shadley

Executive Director

**Volunteer Spotlight:**

This month, we salute Mike & Ardy Flaherty for their impressive volunteer service. Although relative newcomers to our community, their commitment to Grace House and our guests is profound. After attending the November 2013 volunteer training session, Mike & Ardy made the conscientious decision to become overnight shift volunteers to help fill the void left when many of our seasoned volunteers headed south for the winter. With only two months of volunteer experience under their belts, they furthered their involvement by volunteering during the weeks St. Andrews Lutheran served as one of our overflow shelter host facilities. Over the past four months Mike and Ardy often pulled double-duty—filling overnight shifts at Grace House and St. Andrews sometimes multiple stints in the same week. During the height of the overflow shelter season, this dynamic duo also filled shifts at other host churches when their volunteers had scheduling conflicts or family emergencies. With all the hours they contributed over the past seven months, we thought they’d probably want to take a short hiatus from Grace House once the overflow season concluded in June. But, these loyal troopers continue signing up for several overnight shifts each month. Wow! That’s serious dedication. Mike & Ardy, we are so thankful for your decision to “retire” in our community and become treasured members of the Grace House family!

**Special Note:**

On behalf of Grace House’s board, staff and guests, we bid a fond farewell to Betty Brandt who is moving to the Twin Cities/Metro Area to be closer to her children and grandchildren. Thank you for your many contributions to Grace House and years of service to our guests. **You will be deeply missed!**

Grace House will once again participate in the Wild Rice Festival and Tall Timber Days parades. This is an important opportunity to publicly thank the community for their contributions to Itasca County’s only homeless shelter. We invite you to walk alongside our float or cheer us on from the sidelines as we proudly display our “Thank you for supporting Grace House” banner. Hope to see you there.

*It does not matter if we are forgotten; what matters is the effect we have on those around us and those who come after us. What natters is how our lives affect the larger, perpetual community of the living — Author Lynn Schooler*

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**Important Dates to Remember:**

**July 13 @ 1:00 p.m.—**Wild Rice Festival Parade, Highway 6 North/Division Street, Deer River

**July 14 @ 5:30 p.m. —** Volunteer Training & Orientation

**August 3 @ 1:00 p.m. —** Tall Timber Days Parade, Grand Rapids Fairgrounds

**August 23 Noon to 2:00 p.m. —** Community Block Party, Grace House Parking Lot

**Top 5 Critical Needs Lists**

1. Zippered, plastic mattress protectors (twin-size only) 4. Bags of candy for the parade
2. New or gently used tents and sleeping bags 5. Shredded Mozzarella cheese
3. Sweatpants for men and women (all sizes)