

GRACE House Gazette

December 10, 2012

Volume I, Issue 3

Dear GRACE House Friends,

The holiday season brings a flurry of activities: shopping for the perfect gifts, making travel plans, putting up lights and decorations, baking goodies, and visiting loved ones. At GRACE House, this time of year is marked by an outpouring of generosity from the community.

Many of you have already inquired about donating presents to help make the holiday season a little brighter for our guests, especially for families with young children. If you are interested in participating in this gift giving tradition, here's how you can help:

1. Send a check to GRACE House with "Guest Gifts" written in the memo line;
2. Drop off Target, Wal-Mart and other gift cards at GRACE House prior to Dec. 21
3. Call us at 326-2790 the week of December 17th for a list of suggested gifts.

Because there are several families who will be at GRACE House over the holidays, making sure they have gifts under the Christmas tree is a top priority. Your gifts will make a world of difference to our guests, many of whom are separated from family, friends, and all that is familiar to them.

Recruiting new volunteers to fill 90 monthly shifts continues to be GRACE House's top necessity! The next volunteer training and orientation session is scheduled for **Monday, January 14 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.** Please consider joining our extended family by becoming a volunteer today.

Thanks to all of you who attended the 7th Annual "Home is Where the Heart Is" Dinner Dance, and to all of the businesses and individuals who donated items for our silent and live auctions. The event was a major success! The generosity of the greater Grand Rapids area continues to astound me, and makes me proud to call this community my home.

May your holidays be filled with peace, love and joy!

Sherry Shadley

Executive Director

Generator Fund:

As you may recall, the July 2, 2012 storm caused more than \$15,000 in damages to our basement when our sump pump failed. Our insurance claim was denied because GRACE House didn't have a back up generator in place. Fortunately, Saiger's Steam Clean provided an extremely generous, in-kind service donation, which kept our out-of-pocket expenses around \$5,000.

Initial bids for a new generator begin at \$10,000, an unanticipated building expense we simply cannot afford. GRACE House is now accepting donations for a recently established **Generator Fund**. To make a donation, earmark your check with the words Generator Fund in the memo line.



Volunteer Spotlight

This month, we tip our hats to Joe Rust, who has been volunteering at GRACE House since we opened our doors in 2006. He typically volunteers for overnight shifts, and he can always be counted on to fill shifts when other volunteers are unavailable. We depend on Joe to fill shifts at last minute when other volunteers have to cancel due to family emergencies or unexpected work conflicts.

Joe is a very active community volunteer. Joe is a member of the Grand Rapids Kiwanis Club where he helps with their fundraising efforts. He also volunteers his time to drive people who are elderly and those who are disabled to medical appointments.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Joe for his tireless dedication to GRACE House, and his enduring dependability.

Editor's Note: *In last month's Volunteer Spotlight, we misspelled Gwenn Smith's name. We also incorrectly stated that Gwenn is a substitute teacher in Deer River, MN. She has retired from teaching. We regret and apologize for these errors.*

Volunteer Opportunities

The next Volunteer Orientation and Training Session is scheduled for Monday, January 14th at 5:30 p.m. GRACE House is looking to fill the following volunteer shifts:

Breakfast Shift—6:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.: Wake guests, set out breakfast foods, and oversee the completion of morning chores.

Afternoon/Evening Shift—4:45 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.: Prepare and/or serve evening meal, help with chores and laundry, watch movies and play games, and read books to guests' children.

Overnight Shift—9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.: Ensure guests are complying with bedtime policies. Provide assistance to guests who may need assistance during the night. Please note: Due to the added level of security provided during these shifts, volunteers must complete three Afternoon/Evening shifts before becoming eligible to work overnight.

Please call Ami or Tara at (218) 326-2790 to sign up for one or more of these shifts or stop at GRACE House between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. to see what shifts still need to be filled.

Saturday Cooking Club:

Additional volunteers are needed to work 1-2 hours from 1:00 to 7:00 p.m. on **Saturday, December 15**. Volunteers should bring recipes that include chicken as a primary ingredient. Volunteers will prepare soups, casseroles and main entrees that can be frozen and prepared at a later date. GRACE House's pantry is stocked with pasta, rice, beans, spaghetti and tomato sauces, canned tomatoes and other vegetables, and canned creamed soups. If your recipe calls for fresh vegetables, please consider bringing these items from home or call GRACE House to see if we have them in stock. If you're interested in becoming a Saturday Cooking Club volunteer, please call Misty Hanson at (218) 999-5444.

A Year in Review:

December 26, 2012 marks GRACE House's first anniversary in our new facility. During this season of giving, GRACE House's board and staff thank the following foundations and agencies for providing the funding that enabled us to purchase our homey, new shelter:

- ◆ Blandin Foundation
- ◆ Itasca County Health & Human Services—IM Care
- ◆ Lake Country Power—Operation Round Up
- ◆ MN Department of Human Services—Office of Economic Opportunity
- ◆ Minnesota Power Foundation
- ◆ Nick & Nancy Eltgroth Fund
- ◆ Open Your Heart to the Homeless Foundation
- ◆ Robert & Esther Helvig Fund (administered by the Grand Rapids Area Foundation)
- ◆ United Way of 1000 Lakes

Understanding Homeless in Our Community:

Homelessness in Itasca County has increased by 22% over the last three years. The word homeless evokes a variety of images in our minds. For some, the word conjures up pictures of hobos of yesteryears, hopping from one train to another. For others, it stirs up images of people with dirty hair, tattered clothing, who sleep on park benches or under bridges.

There are many reasons that lead to homelessness, but the **predominate factor in Itasca County is the lack of available and affordable housing**. There are very few affordable rental properties, especially in the Grand Rapids area. For low-income families and individuals who are living below the poverty level, finding suitable and reasonably-priced housing in our region is nearly impossible!

During the intake process, our guests are asked to describe how and when they became homeless. The following are some of the primary reasons that bring our guests to GRACE House:

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| *Home foreclosures | *Lack of living wage jobs |
| *Estrangement from spouse/significant other | *Job loss/economic factors |
| *Inability to assimilate after military service | *Divorce |
| *Dysfunctional family life | *Mental illness |
| *Severe illness or disability | *Criminal convictions |
| *Lack of basic living or work-related skills | *Substance abuse issues |
| *Lack of reliable transportation (to hold down a job) | |

Regardless of the reasons, most of our guests never planned or expected to become homeless. That's why we're dedicated to helping our guests move from homelessness to stable housing before they leave GRACE House. We are committed to helping people in Itasca County who are experiencing homelessness by connecting them to resources and services in the community that will help them get back on their feet again. **Whether you have volunteered or provided a contribution, your support and involvement helps GRACE House accomplish its mission. THANK YOU!!!**

"Give to the Max Day"

A heartfelt thanks to all of you who made donations to GRACE House during the November 15 statewide "Give to the Max Day". We received nearly \$2,000 in donations through this designated day of on-line philanthropy, which is more than triple the amount raised last year! This generosity will support the development of new in-house programs designed to enhance the basic living and workforce skills of GRACE House's guests.

Meeting the Needs of Children in Our Community:

Families represent the fastest growing segment of Itasca County's homeless population. Many families who stay at GRACE House include infants and small children who have additional needs outside of the food and shelter we provide during their 30-day stay.

Members of the Charity & Justice Commission of St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Grand Rapids spear-headed efforts to establish a new **Children's Fund** for GRACE House. The idea came from a parishioner of St. Joseph's congregation who approached a member of the Charity & Justice Commission to ask if a holiday centerpiece she had created could be used to raise money for children in need. Further conversations with a variety of people led to the idea of creating an on-going fund, supported by area churches, that could be used to meet the needs of children adjusting to the loss of home and familiar surroundings.

A table displaying the centerpiece was set up at the church. Parishioners were invited to donate money to the fund and to enter a drawing for the centerpiece. St. Joseph's parishioners were very generous and more than \$1,000 was raised.

Charity & Justice Commission Member, Kay Furlong, explained, "I believe that many people want to help the children of our community who are going through tough times and we hope the Children's Fund can become a project that all churches of our community will participate in."

We are deeply grateful to the Charity & Justice Commission and St. Joseph's Catholic Church for helping to meet the needs of children whose families are experiencing homelessness. Through this new fund, parents living at the shelter will have access to financial resources that will enable them to purchase necessities for their children, such as medications, footwear, eye glasses, coats, diapers, etc.

If you want to make a contribution to support this new endowment, include the words **Children's Fund in the memo line of your check**. If you are interested in initiating this giving endeavor at your church, contact Vicki Andrews, Children's Fund Advisory Committee Chair, by calling her at (218) 259-4254 or emailing her at: vicandr@mschi.com.

GRACE House's Top 5 Critical Needs List (New or Gently Used)

1. Christmas gifts for our guests
2. A pair of high-back or reclining chairs (for downstairs living room)
3. Coffee maker and ground coffee
4. Men's & Women's long under ware (Medium, Large and X-Large)
5. Large, artificial Christmas wreath