

GRACE House Gazette

March 15, 2013

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Dear GRACE House Friends,

Along with the snow and colder temps, this winter was marked by a pronounced increase in the number of individuals and families who stayed at our shelter. For four straight months, GRACE House operated at maximum capacity. Vacancies were short-lived and open beds were often filled in a matter of a few short hours.

Assistance from our incredible corps of dedicated volunteers enables our staff to focus on the immediate employment and housing needs of our guests. Our volunteers take care of preparing meals, doing laundry, cleaning and sanitizing sleeping cubicles, organizing storage spaces, and providing conversation and encouragement to our guests. This support helps decrease the average length of stay of our guests, and allows us to more readily serve people in the community who are experiencing homelessness.

GRACE House volunteers supply more than 50% of our workforce, and contribute an astounding 9,000 hours or more of service each year. GRACE House simply could not and would not exist without our amazing volunteers. If you are one of the 130 current GRACE House volunteers, please know that we're deeply grateful and appreciative of your service!

April is National Volunteer Month. We invite all of our volunteers to attend a **Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon on Saturday, April 13 from Noon-2:00 p.m.** GRACE House board members will serve up delicious homemade lasagna (including a vegetarian option), salad, garlic bread and pie to our volunteers. The event will include a short program and volunteer appreciation gifts. Please call us at 326-2790 to RSVP.

If you've considered volunteering at GRACE House, please do so now. We provide volunteer orientation and training on the second Monday of every month. The next volunteer training session will be held on April 8 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. Volunteer applications may be picked up in advance anytime between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

With Deepest Gratitude,

Sherry Shadley

Executive Director

The Power of Community Collaboration

When Charlie arrived at GRACE House, he was weak, emaciated, and suffering from frostbite on several toes. A soft-spoken, elderly gentleman, Charlie had been living in an abandoned building for five months without heat or running water. No matter how much he showered or ate, Charlie could not shake the affects of being homeless. It looked likely that Charlie's future included placement in a nursing home.

The staff of GRACE House worked in tandem with Northland Counseling Center and Itasca County Social Services to get Charlie placed at an adult foster care home that offered beautiful scenery, a large fireplace and other residents his age. Through collaboration and coordinated communication, this placement was accomplished in exactly one week, rather than the typical 6- month period.

Before he left the shelter, Charlie announced his excitement over the thought of curling up in front of a crackling fire, wrapped in the beautiful, handmade quilt supplied by GRACE House. with his caregiver's cat nestled on his lap. Finally, Charlie finally found a place to call home.

Volunteer Spotlight:

This month, we salute Gerri Mertes and Frances Barten for their volunteer service at GRACE House. Since the inception of GRACE House, Gerri and "Frannie" have been volunteering at least once a month during the late afternoon/evening shift for the past seven years.

Cousins and best friends, Gerri and Frannie have been volunteering together for many decades. In addition to their service at GRACE House, Gerri and Frannie can be found volunteering at Community Café, Loaves & Fishes and other events sponsored by their church.

Whether it's whipping up delicious meals, organizing our storage closets, or teaching guests the art of folding fitted sheets, Gerri and Frannie are always willing to tackle any volunteer project. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank Gerri and Frannie for their dedication, delightful personalities, and many years of service.

Critical Needs List: (New or Gently Used Items):

1. Jogging pants (M, L, XL)
2. Non-stick cookware
3. Men's deodorant
4. School desk with attached chair
5. Clothes hampers/laundry baskets

Saturday Cooking Club Volunteer Opportunities:

If you like to cook, please join us April 13 and May 18 anytime between 1:00 to 7:00 p.m. for the Saturday Cooking Club. Please bring your favorite recipes for delicious chicken casseroles and soups. Keep in mind that we are trying to use staples from GRACE House's well-stocked pantry to keep costs to a minimum. If your recipes call for a specialty ingredient, please consider bringing it from home.