

Dear Friends,

More than any other time of year, the holidays remind us of the importance of humanity and goodwill toward one another. For people who are experiencing homelessness, the holidays may intensify loneliness and the need for the familiar comforts of home. Thankfully, the generosity of our volunteers and donors will help our guests feel like they're "home for the holidays" during our December 23 holiday party.

Grace House is vastly different from most homeless shelters in Minnesota. We offer a structured, supportive environment in a homey setting. Our staff offers guidance, supervision and connections to resources that make it possible for our guests to achieve their housing, employment and personal goals. Sharing close quarters, meals, chores and conversations help foster a sense of belonging within the walls of our shelter. In short, Grace House becomes a home-away-from-home for our guests, and we provide the motivation and encouragement they need to get back on their feet again.

Another dynamic that sets Grace House apart from other homeless shelters is community support. Donations from individuals, businesses and service organizations will allow Grace House to pay off the mortgage on our new facility later this month. This feat was accomplished in less than three years only because of the tremendous generosity of our community.

Grace House would be unable to function without the legion of community volunteers who keep our sheltering running strong all year-round. They serve up healthy portions of compassion, camaraderie, and of course, delicious home-cooked meals. Without their involvement, Grace House would need to hire 4.5 full-time staff members to do the work our volunteers make look so effortless.

Our new, onsite training program simply would not be possible without strong backing from our local business community. Staff from Affinity Plus Credit Union, Northern Opportunity Works, U of MN Extension Service and others have taught a variety of STRIVE Project classes to nearly 150 guests in 2014. Through their efforts, our guests are gaining essential independent living and occupational skills that enable them to successfully transition from homelessness to stable housing and employment.

Last, but certainly not least, is the incredible support Grace House has received from the faith community. By serving as emergency overflow shelter sites, area churches help increase our capacity so we are able to serve twice as many guests during the coldest months of winter.

As 2014 draws to a close, we'd like to thank everyone in our community who has supported Grace House over the past year. We are deeply grateful for your support!

Best Wishes,

*Sherry Shadley*

Executive Director

### **Unique Quilt Raises Funds For Homelessness Prevention**

Through the ingenuity of The Salvation Army's Kathleen Saelens, the House of Grace Quilt was unveiled during our December 6 "Home Is Where the Heart Is" Dinner Dance. This beautifully hand-crafted tapestry features 120 brightly patterned houses and apartment complexes that are available for sponsorship. The quilt symbolizes the future homes and hopes of those in our community who are experiencing homelessness.

If you are looking for the perfect gift this holiday season, consider buying one of the 114 vibrantly colored houses, which sell for \$100 each. If commercial real estate interests you more, you may opt to buy an apartment complex for \$300. Sixty vacant lots adorn the border of the quilt, and may be purchased for \$50. Quilt sponsors have the opportunity to personalize their homes by adding the names of their business, church or family members.

To raise awareness of homelessness in our community, the House of Grace Quilt will be on exhibit at churches participating in the Winter Overflow Shelter Plan. The Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation and other businesses have also indicated an interest in displaying the quilt.

Once fully sponsored, the House of Grace Quilt will be installed at the shelter where it will remain on permanent display. More than \$16,000 will be raised for Grace House's homeless prevention programs through this one-of-a-kind fundraising tool.

If you would like to purchase a house, apartment complex or lot, please call Grace House at (218) 326-2790. Don't miss the chance to buy a house and give the gift of hope to our guests.

#### **Important Dates to Remember:**

December 23, 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.: Grace House Holiday Party

December 24 & 25: Grace House is closed.

December 22 @ 1:00 p.m.: Coffee, Chocolates & Conversation—afternoon volunteer support meeting

January 5 @ 1:00 p.m.: Church Coordinator Meeting

January 12 @ 5:30 p.m.: Volunteer Orientation & Training

#### **Top 5 Critical Needs:**

1. Coffee
2. Butter
3. High Efficiency Laundry Detergent
4. Thermal Underwear (S, M, L & XL)
5. Gently Used Bath Towels