

Dear Friends,

We have exciting news to share. Recently we learned that Grace House is eligible to receive up to **\$43,000 in Thrivent Financial Choice Dollars!** But, time is of the essence. We need your help to facilitate this important charitable giving opportunity.

Through Thrivent Choice, eligible members can make recommendations to their local Thrivent boards on the distribution of these charitable grant funds to eligible nonprofits in the community. If you are a member of the Kootasca Chapter of Thrivent Financial, we urge you to contact financial consultant Brad Nelson at (218) 326-0068 **before March 31** to direct a portion of these funds to Grace House. Any funds left undesignated by March 31 will be distributed to other enrolled organizations nationwide.

You may also take these five quick, easy steps to direct Choice Dollars:

Step 1 — Visit Thrivent.com/thriventchoice.

Step 2 — Click on the blue **"Get started now"** link located on the right portion of the screen under "Direct Choice Dollars®" and log in.

Step 3 — Click on the **Search for participating charitable organizations** link highlighted in purple text.

Step 4 — Enter Grace House of Itasca County in the **Search Organizations** field.

Step 5 — Enter an amount in the field or select "Direct All", then click "Direct Now".

If you are not a member of Thrivent Financial, you may still donate to Grace House by simply mailing in a check or by visiting www.gracehousemn.org. On average it costs more than \$21,000 per month to run our shelter. Although we've paid off our mortgage, operating a stand-alone homeless shelter is very expensive. The addition of overflow sheltering has nearly doubled our monthly utility bills and significantly increased building, food and staffing expenses since we are serving up to twice as many people.

In-kind donations from individuals and businesses also help supplement Grace House's annual budget. For example, Grace House received more than \$10,000 of in-kind donations last December from a variety of individuals, churches and businesses! We'd like to recognize members of the Christianson-Ross families for their donations of household goods, personal care items and other gifts for our guests. We are grateful to this "pay-it-forward" thinking family who also provided a substantial financial contribution that enabled us to purchase two stainless steel food preparation and serving tables.

The generosity of our community is undeniable. It's the reason why we're able to provide programs that effectively help our guests move out of homelessness and lead stable, productive lives.

Best Wishes,

Sherry Shadley

Executive Director

"A Veteran's Stability Restored" by Elana Warsen, Program Director

Only in his early twenties, Nick has already experienced more adversity than many folks confront in a lifetime. Nick's struggles began during his childhood. A strained relationship with his parents prompted him to move out while still in high school. The lack of a stable living environment ultimately proved unhealthy for Nick. He explained, "I started to get into some really negative behaviors and ended up going to treatment [for substance abuse] instead of my senior year of high school."

Following treatment, Nick worked hard to regain self-sufficiency, finishing his high school diploma and enlisting in the US Army. Unfortunately, Nick's return to civilian life was bumpy, as is the experience for far too many of our country's veterans. "I came back from the Army and moved into the same unstructured place I had been living before," he says. "I fell back into my old ways and I needed to go to treatment for a second time." After completing treatment, Nick was ready for a change. "I realized I couldn't live that way forever," he said. "I was finally ready to commit to changing my circumstances for the better."

Despite his determination, Nick was painfully aware of the Catch-22 that holds many people in a perpetual state of homelessness. "If you want to have a stable existence you need at least one of three things: a place to stay, transportation, or income," he observes. "If you are missing any one of those things, it's extremely hard to access the other pieces of the puzzle."

In Grace House, Nick found access to food, temporary shelter, and transportation. With those pillars in place, he was able to obtain employment, eventually networking his way into a job with career potential. Thanks to his new source of income, Nick managed to save enough money to purchase a low-cost vehicle from a Grace House volunteer.

For the first time since childhood, Nick had all of the elements of a stable life, and he had achieved them through his own hard work—with support and encouragement from Grace House staff, volunteers, and donors. "Grace House is everything you need it to be in order to get what you need in life," Nick said with emotion. "As soon as you decide you don't want to be homeless anymore and are willing to work for it, your life starts to change for the better."

Important Dates to Remember:

March 23 @ 1:00 p.m. — Coffee, Chocolates & Conversation—afternoon volunteer support meeting

March 24 @ 5:30 p.m.— **CPR Training** with Simon Gretton, MEDS 1. **Please RSVP—limited to 15 people**

April 6 @ 1:00 p.m. — Monthly Church Coordinator Meeting

April 13 @ 5:30 p.m. — Volunteer Orientation & Training

April 27 @ 1:00 p.m. — Coffee, Chocolates & Conversation—afternoon volunteer support meeting

April 28 @ 5:30 p.m. — Coffee, Chocolates & Conversation—evening volunteer support meeting

Top 5 Critical Needs List:

1. Long Distance Phone Cards
2. Screwdriver Set
3. Drawing Pads & Art Supplies
4. Women's & Men's Socks (New)
5. Flip Flop Sandals (M-XL) for Bed Bug Prevention