

GAZETTE

Dear Friends,

In the midst of a veritable heat wave, Grace House was bombarded with phone calls and impromptu visits from concerned citizens who recently seen a family with several young children who were obviously stranded in Grand Rapids. Camped out near Wal-Mart in 90+ degree temperatures, the family's vehicle had apparently broken down, derailing their efforts to make it back to California.

A barrage of strangers called and dropped in at the shelter hoping we had room for the family or wondering how they could help. As has been the case for many months, Grace House was full and we were unable to accommodate them. But, because of the compassion and generosity of our community, the family was showered with food, offers of assistance and donations that enabled them to get back home.

The outpouring of concern and support for this family told me two things:

1. The spirit of "Minnesota Nice" is alive and well in our community; and
2. Outside of Grace House's volunteers, supporters and agency partners, the enormity of homelessness in Itasca County is grossly underestimated and misunderstood.

The number one reason for homelessness in our region continues to be a lack of available and affordable housing. According to an August 2013 report produced by the Minnesota Housing Partnership, **for every 100 extremely low-income renters in Itasca County, there are only 48 units available to rent.**

I have begun meeting with leaders from our local faith community to examine the need for additional overnight shelter when Grace House is full. Initial discussions with faith leaders indicate a high interest in having churches serve as overflow shelters during our bitterly cold months. I hope to convene a meeting in October where all Itasca County churches will be invited to discuss how we can work together to ensure that families, such as this one, have safe, temporary shelter.

Grace House is also part of a team of local agencies that is partnering with the Housing Institute for Greater Minnesota to create long-term solutions to the ongoing housing shortage in Itasca County. I will keep you posted on our efforts to secure funding for a future housing development project that will help prevent and reduce homelessness in our community.

Best Wishes,

*Sherry Shadley*

Executive Director

## Volunteer Spotlight

On behalf of Grace House's board and staff, we'd like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to **Vicki Andrews**. For the past six months, Vicki has graciously served as Grace House's Volunteer Coordinator. During this time, she's instituted monthly Volunteer Support Meetings, which have provided a wealth of feedback from the dedicated individuals who fill our daily volunteer shifts. She's spearheaded training efforts to increase awareness among our volunteers regarding new Grace House policies, guest rules and organizational procedures. Vicki also organized a much-needed Speakers Bureau to help with outreach efforts to churches, service organizations and the general public. In short, she's created a vital conduit of communication between Grace House volunteers and staff.

Vicki's involvement with Grace House runs incredibly deep. As an active participant of Action through Churches Together (ACT), Vicki played an instrumental role in helping to establish Itasca County's first and only homeless shelter in 2006. Since then, Vicki has become a trusted overnight and morning shift volunteer. She has also served on Grace House's Board of Directors for nearly three years. Vicki is a retired social worker with Child Protective Services. As an active social justice advocate, she regularly performs at a variety of community events as part of the Raging Grannies ensemble. Words cannot begin to convey our appreciation for Vicki's steadfast devotion to Grace House, and for the compassion, care and concern she's shown to the men, women and children who stay at our shelter. **Vicki, you are a true community treasure!**

### Please mark your calendars for these important dates

**September 25<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00 p.m.** — Evening Volunteer Support Meeting

**September 27<sup>th</sup> @ 1:00 p.m.** — Afternoon Volunteer Support Meeting

**October 14<sup>th</sup> @ 5:30 p.m.** — Volunteer Orientation Training

### **Top Five Critical Needs List (New or Gently Used Only):**

1. High-Quality Digital Camera
2. 13" TV with Built-in VCR & DVD Players
3. Microwaves (For Grace House and guests who are getting ready to move)
4. Adult T-shirts (Sizes Large Through XXX Large)
5. Sweat Pants or Fleece Pajama Pants (Sizes Medium Through Extra Large)

***Congratulations to Duane & Peggy Heikkinen on your 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary!***