



GRACE HOUSE
GAZETTE

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Dear Friends,

2013 proved to be an incredible year for *Grace House*—one filled with positive growth, greater financial stability, exceptional publicity and unprecedented community involvement.

Some of *Grace House's* 2013 highlights included:

- ❖ A 20% increase in new volunteers.
- ❖ Installation of a children's playground.
- ❖ A complete facility makeover during the June 21 United Way "Day of Action."
- ❖ A 50% increase in contributions from individuals, businesses, churches, civic groups and service organizations.
- ❖ Construction of www.gracehousemn.org, a new, user-friendly website.
- ❖ Creation of a new logo.
- ❖ Becoming the host site of weekly Narcotics Anonymous meetings for guests and community members who are pursuing recovery.

The addition of a designated Volunteer Coordinator resulted in the recruitment of nearly 30 new community volunteers in 2013 alone. More than 160 talented and loyal volunteers filled 1,092 shifts, contributed nearly 8,017 hours of their time, prepared 6,056 meals and provided compassion to the 193 adults and 23 children who stayed at *Grace House* last year.

Feature articles and consistent media coverage have significantly increased the public's awareness of homelessness in our community, and caused contributions from individuals, churches, civic groups and service organizations to **more than double in 2013!**

To raise awareness of homelessness in Itasca County, *Grace House* teamed up with Housing Issues Advisory Committee agency partners to help plan national Hunger & Homeless Awareness Month events in November. The highlight of these activities was the participation of 120 children, students, faith leaders, parents, social justice advocates and *Grace House* guests in the annual "One Night without a Home" walk along Pokegama Avenue and US Highway 2 in Grand Rapids.

Support from the business community grew exponentially this year. Nearly \$10,000 in corporate sponsorships was secured during Grace House's 2013 Dinner Dance, making this year's "Home Is Where the Heart Is" our most successful fundraiser to date.

In spite of these achievements, homelessness continues to escalate in our community. The number of individuals who have been turned away from Grace House due to a lack of vacancies has quadrupled in the past two years alone! In fact, Grace House was forced to turn away **538 people in 2013** simply because no beds were available at the shelter at the time these inquiries were made.

To meet the growing demand for emergency shelter, Grace House recently joined forces with the faith community to implement the Winter Overflow Shelter Plan. Seven churches have graciously agreed to open their doors and provide overnight sleeping accommodations when our shelter is full this winter. Staffed by volunteers, overflow shelter sites will host up to 10 additional guests per night, one week at a time through the end of April. So far, a surprising number of openings at the shelter have kept Grace House from needing to utilize the overflow shelter host sites. We continue to be grateful to have the support of churches and their volunteers in our efforts to provide additional shelter this winter!

One of Grace House's long-term goals is to implement new programming that will increase the self-sufficiency and employability of the shelter's guests. Grants from Blandin Foundation, United Way of 1000 Lakes, Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation, Lake County Power's Operation Round-Up and Northland Foundation will allow us to begin providing on-site workforce and independent living classes to Grace House guests through our Self-Sufficiency Training for Reaching Independence & Vocational Empowerment (STRIVE) Project. Business professionals, agency staff and nonprofit leaders have volunteered to teach a wide range of financial literacy, workforce preparedness and self-sufficiency skills classes that will enable our guests to lead more productive lives.

On behalf of our board and staff, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for supporting GRACE House with your financial contributions and your donations of time, food and other goods. Your generosity made 2013 an incredible year for Grace House and the guests we served.

Best Wishes,

Sherry Shadley

Executive Director

P.S. The next volunteer training & orientation session will be held at Grace House from 5:30-7:30 p.m. on Monday, February 10. We hope to see you there.