

**2015 Annual Report**

Dear Friends, Volunteers and Supporters;

This was a year of change in the leadership and management of Grace House. In June Ron Oleheiser was hired as the Executive Director, he was familiar with Grace House as he served on the Board of Directors for four years as a member and Treasurer. In July Jessyca Bardzel was promoted to the Program Director position, she had been an employee since August 2014 serving as the Administrative Assistant. A month later, Jessica Mohn was promoted to the Volunteer Coordinator position after coordinator Peg Christensen decided to leave the position. Mohn had been an employee since November 2013 serving as one of our Site Supervisors. All of these changes proved to be positive and have given a clear direction to all staff and volunteers as to the individual duties of each position. Other staff include Heidi Madsen, Site Supervisor since May 2012; Pam Dowell, Site Supervisor since June 2014 and Tracey Schultz, Site Supervisor since May 2015. The strength of our staff has been important in fulfilling our mission and serving the guests who have stayed at Grace House in 2015.

Our mission is ***“to provide safe, temporary shelter to individuals experiencing homelessness and connect them to community resources.”***

This year we served 160 guests providing them with 2679 nights of shelter and 4709 meals. The total guests include 138 adults & 22 children, 86 females, 72 males and 2 transgender with 53 percent of guests from Itasca County and 18 percent from adjoining counties. Grace House is a ten bed facility with room for families and individuals who are homeless and in need of safe temporary shelter and meals. This year we were 73 percent full with an average stay of 17 nights. Grace House collaborates with many local agencies such as Northland Counseling, Kootasca Community Action, Itasca County Health & Human Services, The Salvation Army, Second Harvest North Central Food Bank, First Call for Help/CRT/211, Circles of Support, Advocates for Family Peace, Veteran’s Service Office, Access North, Range Mental Health and several others. Through these partnerships 60 percent of our guests have secured stable housing and 20 percent have found employment and most have received services and support from several of our partners.

Our area church community is a major partner as well and they serve in many ways. Church volunteers serve at Grace House, contribute to fulfill our mission and our Homeless Prevention Fund (HPF) and serve as host sites and volunteers for our Winter Overflow Shelter Program (WOSP). We are sincerely grateful for all the churches do to help us fulfill our mission. The HPF funded by area churches and administered by Grace House provides emergency assistance to guests and to people ineligible to stay. In 2015 HPF provided $4,700 in assistance for items such as gas cards, motel vouchers, license/birth certificates/social security card replacement, rental application fees, other misc. items.

The WOSP was developed in 2013 and fully implemented in early 2014 with the intent of additional emergency shelter for our area. Eight local churches take turns serving as overnight host sites when Grace House is full and additional overnight shelter is needed. WOSP runs from November-April and was not utilized in 2015.

Unfortunately we still have some people turned away from Grace House for many different reasons. We have significantly reduced the total turn-away number in 2015 to 179 from 361 in 2014. The 2015 total of 179 includes 94 people who did not meet our guidelines and 81 people who were turned away because of no vacancy. This is a disturbing number especially when 69 of the 81 were in family units. In 2016 we will review what we can do to reduce these numbers and will do that by reviewing our intake guidelines and our options when we are full. The no vacancy numbers were during the summer months when we did not have the WOSP in place.

Grace House has been a member organization of the Itasca County Housing Institute Team, which was instrumental in the planning and development of Beacon Hill. Groundbreaking for this 48-unit development (20 apartment units of supportive housing and 28 townhome units of affordable housing) was held in August with expected completion and occupancy in August 2016. Beacon Hill will provide housing for families and individuals whose limited incomes make it difficult to afford or maintain stable housing. Beacon Hill is located on 21st St SE, Grand Rapids and offers community inclusion, housing security and a place to call home for people of all ages, abilities and income levels.

Volunteers are extremely important to the overall success of Grace House. Over 200 volunteers provided 6776 hours of service this year. Volunteers help in preparing and serving breakfast and evening/dinner meals to our guests. They serve as the overnight on-site host for our guests and do many chores inside and outside the building including lawn & garden care in the summer to snow removal in the winter. We recognize our volunteers every April with a special event and our thanks.

Grace House funding for 2015 increased almost 6 percent with the largest increases coming from area churches and individuals. Grants continue to be strong with grants being accepted from the MN Department of Human Services-Office of Economic Opportunity, Blandin Foundation, Itasca County, United Way, IMCare, Diocese of Duluth-Catholic Relief Services and Open Your Heart to the Hungry and Homeless. Our annual fundraiser “Home Is Where the Heart Is” was a great success with much of the increased revenue coming from local businesses, area clubs and organizations.

Individual and business donations of food and supplies increased by $5,000 this year and these donations are much appreciated by our staff, board and most importantly our guests.

In April of this year the Board of Directors met to create our 2015-2017 Strategic Plan. This document will guide us into the future of Grace House and in fulfilling our mission ***“to provide safe, temporary shelter to individuals experiencing homelessness and connect them to community resources.”***

The 2015 Board of Directors included Dave Roerick-Vice Chair, Jenny Wettersten-Secretary, Julie Werner-Treasurer, Barb Sanderson, Pat Medure, Steve Teff, Larke Huntley and Barb Veit.

Ron Oleheiser Madelen Schuemann

Executive Director Chair of the Board