



Compassion Action Network

*Anoka County Human Services, Faith Communities and Non-Profits
linking resources to strengthen our community.*

When everyone brings something, there is more than enough.

December 2009

A Step in the Right Direction - Stepping Stone Shelter

Heather Ries is the executive director for Stepping Stone Shelter in Anoka. Throughout her session at the 2009 Fall Faith Forum we learned some practical details of what it means to be at a shelter. For instance, residents are required to follow a schedule and participate in chores, as well as working towards permanent housing. Heather says, "We believe in encouraging independence and empowerment."

Stepping Stone Emergency Housing is a non-profit that is committed to assisting adults experiencing homelessness to find permanent solutions to their housing needs. They have space for 5 women and 11 men.

I have seen how Heather makes very good use of the space in their building along with making it a home. Laundry, phone access, and informal case management, are all provided.

Practical errands and projects would really help the operation at Stepping Stone. If you have time to do some grocery shopping, help the residents prepare a meal and eat with them, or donate some personal hygiene items- this would really help!

This shelter is a fantastic resource to our community. If you know of an adult in need of housing, Stepping Stone could be a great solution for them!

For more information or to volunteer visit: www.stepsingstoneeh.org or contact Stepping Stone at 763-323-7006.

—Elisa Thibodeau

Compassion Action Network Board Member

Facts & Impacts: A Closer Look at Homelessness

Laura Kadwell, Director for Ending Long Term Homelessness in Minnesota, opened the Fall Faith Forum by providing some statistics and facts about homelessness in the United States, Minnesota and specifically Anoka County.

Ms. Kadwell leads the implementation of Minnesota's Business Plan for Ending Long-Term Homelessness which is seeking to create 4,000 additional permanent supportive housing opportunities by 2010.

The success of the plan depends on a multifaceted approach to this complicated issue. It's one thing to provide a roof over someone's head or a place to sleep; it's an entirely different thing for that person to maintain and retain that space. "It takes ordinary people willing to confront despair,

power and incalculable odds in order to restore some semblance of grace, justice and beauty to this world," Paul Hawken, author of Blessed Unrest.

It will take more than the federal, state and local government agencies instituting policies or plans to end homelessness – it takes a coordinated effort by healthcare, businesses, faith communities, and individual citizens to successfully offer viable solutions to long-term homelessness in our community. Ms. Kadwell described the homeless population as those who have the least and yet tend to be the most disconnected from our community. She challenged the audience to work collectively to end homelessness in Anoka

—Lyla Pagels

Compassion Action Network Board Member



**HAPPY
HOLIDAYS**

**May the Blessings of the Season be
with you from this day forward**

Ending Homelessness – Local Community & Faith Initiatives

With the number of people without permanent housing in Anoka County nearly doubling from 2008 (564) to 2009 (1,004), the question arises – what are we doing about homelessness in Anoka County? Representatives from Heading Home Anoka (**Barb Wold**, Anoka County and Commissioner **Rhonda Sivara-jah**) and the Family Promise-Anoka County Program (**Suzy Schultz** and **Steve Thomason**) shared their strategies for dealing with homelessness locally.

Heading Home Anoka (HHA) is a local initiative that has worked in conjunction with HUD and the state-wide Heading Home program to develop a plan specific to Anoka County to end homelessness. In 2008, with the input of community agencies and volunteers, HHA identified 4 target areas on which to focus – unaccompanied youth who are homeless, singles and seniors without permanent housing, homeless adults with children and raising community awareness about homelessness in Anoka County. HHA offered several causes for why people in Anoka County become homeless – low wages and an eroding job market that doesn't pay enough to afford housing, limited access to mental health services and chemical dependency treatment, lack of affordable housing, youth who age out of the foster care system and don't have the support or resources to live independently, and a lack of public transportation. Also, homelessness in suburban Anoka County looks different than it does in Minneapolis or St. Paul. People tend to live out of their vehicles or make temporary shelters in isolated, wooded areas instead of panhandling on street corners. The work of HHA has contributed to several significant changes in the community:

- The Emma B. Howe YMCA now has 2 staff who are dedicated to working with youth to obtain stable housing,
- Transitional housing options for people leaving local mental health treatment programs are being discussed,
- Stimulus monies were obtained to help reduce barriers to permanent housing such as back rent, rental subsidies and emergency assistance,
- Development of the Family Promise of Anoka County program,
- Prevention of homelessness through ACCAP's foreclosure prevention class and
- An increase in funding to renovate and sell homes to low income families

For more information on HHA, please visit <http://headinghomeminnesota.org/anoka>

Family Promise of Anoka County (FPAC) is an interfaith hospitality program based on the national Family Promise model. Their mission is to connect faith communities in a network to provide safe and immediate shelter for families without housing. 14 faith communities will take turns housing up to 14 people for 1 week, providing food and hospitality during the evening, over night and early morning hours. During the day, parents will be transported to a day center where they can access the resources necessary to help them get back on their feet and children will either attend school or go to the day center with their parents. The benefits of this program model are two-fold – families in real need will find the help and hope they need to create a safe and healthy environment for their children and an increased sense of community will emerge as people reach across denominational and religious lines to show God's love. FPAC hopes to begin providing service in spring 2010, but to do this, several significant components need to be in place:

- A van to transport families to the faith community and the day center
- Computers and phones for the day center
- Drivers for the van
- Ambassadors to spread the word among the faith community
- 10 faith communities to commit to partnering with FPAC
- Persons gifted at fund raising to secure the funds necessary to run and staff the day center
- A facility to use as the day center

To learn more about FPAC, go to <http://www.familypromiseofanokacounty.org/>.

So, what can you do to help end homelessness in Anoka County?

Faith Communities Can	Local Agencies/Groups/Businesses Can	Individuals Can
Host a Sleep Out	Have FPAC present at a meeting	Support Agencies financially
Share the Lesson of the Homeless Man	Advertise ACCAP's foreclosure prevention class	Dine out at Applebee's during fundraiser program
Invite FPAC to present at a meeting or service	Ask: what can my group do?	Ask your school how they handle needs of homeless students & what you can do to help
Advertise ACCAP's foreclosure prevention class	Donate space or van for FPAC	Attend Heading Home Anoka's Photo Exhibit in the Gov't Center during Nov.
Ask: what can my church do?	Donate computers & phones	Ask: what can I do?
Donate space or van for FPAC	Advertise for a Gifted Fundraiser to volunteer at FPAC	Donate space or van for FPAC
Donate computers & phones	Act as an FPAC ambassador	Donate computers & phones
Advertise for a Gifted Fundraiser to volunteer at FPAC		Spread the word about FPAC's need for a gifted fundraiser
Act as an FPAC ambassador		Act as an FPAC ambassador

—Gayle Alexander
Compassion Action Network Board Member

Are the Compassion Action Network's Forums Making an Impact?

Suzy Schultz from Christ Lutheran & Family Promise reported that as a result of the 2009 Fall Faith Forum, six churches contacted her asking for more information regarding Family Promise. So clearly we are having an impact on the community.

The Lesson of the Homeless Man (Author Unknown)

It was a cold winter's day that Sunday. The parking lot to the church was filling up quickly. I noticed as I got out of my car fellow church members were whispering among themselves as they walked in the church. As I got closer, I saw a man leaned up against the wall outside the church. He was almost laying down as if he was asleep. He had on a long trench coat that was almost in shreds and a hat topped his head, pulled down so you could not see his face. He wore shoes that looked 30 years old, too small for his feet, with holes all over them, his toes stuck out. I assumed this man was homeless, and asleep, so I walked on by through the doors of the church. We all fellowshiped for a few minutes, and someone brought up the man laying outside. People snickered and gossiped but no one bothered to ask him to come in, including me. A few moments later church began. We all waited for the pastor to take his place and to give us the Word, when the doors to the church opened. In came the homeless man walking down the aisle with his head down. People gasped and whispered and made faces. He made his way down the aisle and up onto the pulpit where he took off his hat and coat. My heart sank. There stood our pastor. He was the "homeless man." No one said a word. The pastor took his Bible and laid it on his stand. "Folks, I don't think I have to tell you what I am preaching about today....."

The Faces of Homelessness



Karrie Schaaf, the youth development director for the Emma B. Howe YMCA gave an insightful and inspiring presentation at the 2009 Fall Faith Forum. She noted that three of her younger sisters ended up on the street; so she knows homelessness first hand. Her PowerPoint presentation contained facts such as that on January 28,

2009 the homeless counts in Anoka County were 457 single adults, 272 adult in families, 385 children in families, 38 minor with an adult (17 or less), 54 youth without an adult (18-21) and 8 senior citizens (62 or older). Peppered throughout the presentation were REAL stories (see below) of youth who were homeless and how Karrie, with the support of the other organizations, found them permanent homes. Karrie also used voices of people calling in asking for help and giving reasons for their needs without identifying information. Karrie made us realize how many youth sleep on play ground slides, in outhouses, under skate board platforms, etc.

The audience was told that through the Anoka County Children and Family Council has one FTE outreach worker/Case Manager which is shared between Centennial and Spring Lake Park School districts. The organization is working with unaccompanied youth 16-21. They also provide resources, education and support to school staff, students, and parents.

The YMCA is working to support youth in school and re-enroll those who are not enrolled in school. Their needs are stable housing, school supplies, extracurricular activity supplies, prom, graduation fee and pictures, classroom supply fees, and special events. The percentage of homeless youth on their own, age 17 and younger, enrolled in school has climbed steadily, rising from 52% in 1994 to 89% in 2006 according to the Wilder Survey in 2006.

Karrie gave the attendees ideas of what actions they can take such as: organize a sleep out, volunteer at a shelter, make birthday party kits, create hygiene kits/back packs, donate to local non-profits etc. Karrie Schaaf can be contacted at Karrie.Schaaf@YMCAmpls.org or 763-717-1867.

—Mary Jo Loftus
Compassion Action Network Board Member

Karrie's Stories *(taken from ABC Newspapers—reported by Sue Austreng)*

"Ryan spent his nights living in the bushes near Northtown Mall."

"Nate slept under the ramps at Sand Creek Skate Park, the wooden fencing surrounding the park providing privacy from onlookers speeding past on Northdale Boulevard."

"The names used in the telling of these stories are not real. These stories are real, however – as real as the night is long."

"Ashley holed up in a porta-potty at Pheasant Ridge Park, a suitable shelter from the wind and rain, the cold and the stares."

"Jennifer had it best of all. Her 1986 Toyota was home for her. She could get around, had a place to keep the two plastic trash bags that held her things, could stretch out on the soft, dry back seat when night fell."

However, she had to take care where she parked, though. Stay too long in a "no parking" space and her home would be towed."

Community Impact Panel

The Community Impact Panel addressed how homelessness affects our children, families, and community from the perspective of local schools, Alexandra House, and Lee Carlson Center™ for Mental Health & Well-Being (formerly Central Center for Family Resources).

The Panel included:

Eric Fort – Diversity Coordinator at Fridley High School

Vicki Langemo – Licensed Professional Counselor for Lee Carlson Center™ who conducts Peer Support Groups at Fridley High School

Dawn Rutt – Violence Prevention Coordinator at Alexandra House

All three of the panel members discussed their work with kids and families who are experiencing homelessness.

Eric talked about his work with Youth and Children in Transition (Homeless Youth). He co-authored the Fridley District plan for aiding students, finding resources for students and families, and aiding in the transport needs of students experiencing homelessness. He said the definition of a homeless student is someone who is living in a car, shelter, park or is migratory. This does not include a student who is living with a family member.

Vicky, who works closely with Eric, stressed how important it is for teachers, counselors and administrators to align to support homeless youth and their families. Since Vicki is a licensed therapist, she conducts support groups and meets with youth one-on-one to help them deal with anger management issues and the loss of self-esteem associated with being homeless.

Alexandra House's Dawn Rutt, pointed out the connection between domestic violence and homelessness. She said "abusers typically use violence as part of a larger strategy to exercise power and control over their partners and isolate their partners from support networks. In fact, 47% of homeless school aged children and 29% of homeless children under five have witnessed domestic violence in their families."

Some of the suggestions on how you can help:

- ◇ Monetary donations, of course, are always helpful.
- ◇ Volunteer to help homeless youth and families at your local church or at the YMCA. The Emma B. Howe YMCA in Coon Rapids is available to meet with youth throughout Anoka County and is able to provide schools or other agencies resources and support in working with homeless youth. Karrie can be reached by calling 763-717-1867 or emailing Karrie.Schaaf@YMCAmpls.org.
- ◇ Mentoring or helping homeless youth with homework. Contact your local school to see how you can help.
- ◇ Host a homeless family by letting them stay in your home. Contact your church to see if they have a list of families in need.
- ◇ Provide toiletries, clothing, food, bus cards, gas cards, art therapy or cell phones.

Contact Karrie at the YMCA or call Alexandra House at 763-780-2330.

—Patty Halvorson
Compassion Action Network Board Member



2009 Fall Faith Forum

Mission Statement

To mobilize community organizations to recognize the value and benefits of working together, because when everyone brings something, there is more than enough.

Vision Statement

By working together to serve our community, every community organization will recognize and utilize its own unique gifts and resources.

Advisory Board

Mary Jo Loftus, Co-chair
St. Katharine Drexel Church

Gayle Alexander, Co-chair
Anoka County Human Services

Lyla Pagels
Mercy & Unity Hospitals

Ellen Raeker, Secretary
St. William Catholic Church

Elisa Thibodeau
Emmanuel Christian Center

Sue Kennell, Newsletter/Website
R.S.V.P.

Patty Halvorson
Lee Carlson Center for Mental Health

Contact Information

Email:
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Website:
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there is more than enough*

Save the Date!

April 22nd, 2010

Homelessness in Anoka County - Part II: Exploring Causes & Cures

Join us on April 22, 2010 when we discuss the many situations that lead to homelessness and what is happening in our local faith & social services community to address the root causes of homelessness.

We'll go beyond "poverty", the simple explanation for homelessness, & consider how other issues contribute to why people become homeless such as:

- ◇ The high incidence of veterans who experience homelessness
- ◇ How the cycle of domestic violence impacts housing for women & children
- ◇ What unstable mental health & uncontrolled chemical dependency have to do with homelessness

Compassion Action Network's Circle of Influence Meetings

Please mark your calendars for the 1st Thursday of each month to attend our Circle of Influence (COI) meetings.

The purpose of the COI meetings is to network together to better understand resources already in place and look for ways to make them stronger.

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Emmanuel Christian Center
7777 University Ave NE
Spring Lake Park, MN 55432
Enter Door #1 - Room 210



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