



# Building a more compassionate community one person at a time THE BEACON

Winter 2018

A Semi-Annual Publication of Bethesda House Schenectady, Inc.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Welcome to Bethesda House's 2018-2019 Fall/Winter Newsletter



**W**e have harvested the fruits of our labor and, as we prepared our table to give thanks for our family and friends, we reflected on the valleys and peaks of our relationships and the community we live in and take pause to contemplate our growing pains and accomplishments. Within the last eight years,

Bethesda House expanded the number and level of services we offer to the homeless and impoverished citizens in Schenectady County. The Bethesda House family has embraced the multitude of changes taking hold of enhancements which helped to further stabilize the poor.

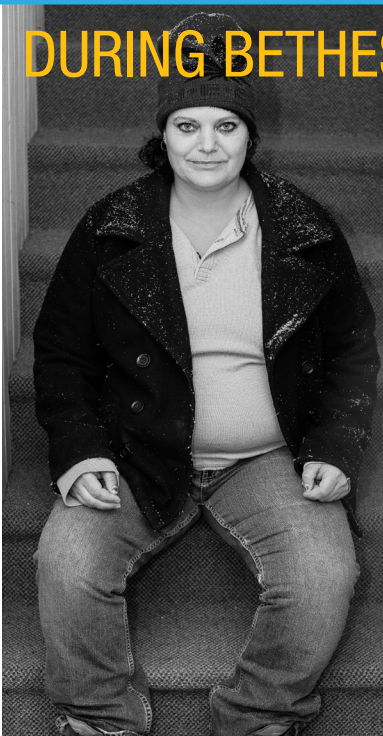
The harvest door closes as the colorful leaves dance low and high on the changing winds. The chill in the air gives way for the spiritual excitement of the winter holiday season.

During this time of year especially, we think deeply of others. It is important for our humanity to give the gifts of joy, love, comfort, and hope. The generosity of time and effort we give to others is also a gift we give to ourselves, and it is often immeasurable for both the giver and the recipient. I am deeply grateful to our donors who have supported Bethesda House for the last twenty-six years and our new donors and friends. I am encouraged, especially during trying times, by the enormous integrity and strength put forth to bring light into the lives of the homeless and poor in our community.

Many Blessings to you and your family and friends,

*Kimarie A. Sheppard*

### DURING BETHESDA HOUSE'S 2017-18 OPERATING YEAR:



**Soup Kitchen:**

Number of meals provided:

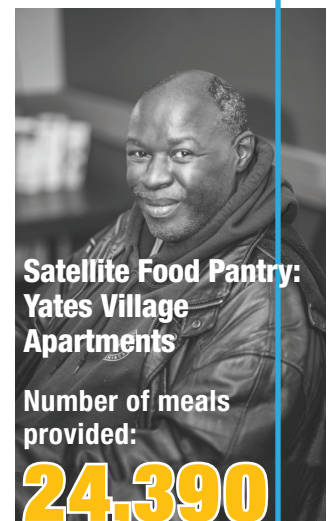
**35,142**



**Main Food Pantry:  
State Street**

Number of meals provided:

**15,844**



**Satellite Food Pantry:  
Yates Village  
Apartments**

Number of meals provided:

**24,390**

# MEDICAL CARE AND HOMELESSNESS, A RUTHLESS REVOLVING DOOR

By Caroline Codd

**B**ethesda House's doors have been open for 26 years to offer a House of Mercy and place of refuge for Schenectady County's impoverished and homeless. From day shelter to permanent housing to year-round overnight emergency shelter, we have remained committed to staying ahead of the curve with our programs and services. By proactively assessing the community's needs, Bethesda House has become a safe place not only for basic food and shelter needs but also for long-term, sustainable and effective re-entry into society for those isolated by their circumstances. Our goal has been and always will be to end the cycle of homelessness for individuals completely instead of simply sustaining them through the system.



For over 20 years, Bethesda House has worked with area provider third parties to connect the homeless and impoverished with medical and behavioral health services. In 2015, we received funding to provide in-house intensive case management, which has dramatically increased our ability to maintain long-term client stability. This year we are tackling another crucial piece of the puzzle: medical care.

The homeless and impoverished populations, insured and uninsured, are at severe risk of various medical and behavioral health conditions. It is typical for individuals in this population to battle multiple, severe ailments simultaneously, compounded and exacerbated by their living conditions. Vulnerable and disconnected, they are trapped in a downward spiral, without access to basic care and resources. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, they are five times more likely than individuals, who are not at risk of homeless, to be admitted to a hospital inpatient unit and stay on average four days longer, at a cost of \$2,000 to \$4,000 a day.<sup>1</sup>

This is not only a massive drain on hospitals, which absorb at least two-thirds of the cost of all uncompensated care<sup>2</sup>, but it launches the sick and homeless into a relentless revolving door between the street and a hospital bed. Once discharged from the hospital, due to lack of funding and staff resources, it is rare that they receive the proper follow-up care to ensure a successful treatment plan.

Additionally, this is a population with a deep distrust for the medical care system and little incentive to take preventive measures for their health by keeping appointments and taking medication. Battling severe

behavioral disorders and chronic illnesses is a full-time job in itself, requiring one's full commitment and an embedded network of support. For the homeless and severely impoverished, the cards are stacked against them. In regards, to social determinants of health and managing their health, is a near impossible mountain to climb. Succumbing to their unstable conditions, it is not long before they find themselves back in the emergency room.



As vicious as this cycle seems, there are tangible strategies to intercept and redirect the most vulnerable before they enter the revolving door. Thanks to the recent *Alliance Innovation* funding, last month we launched our own in-house medical care program partnering with Ellis Medical Center's Residency Program. Disenfranchised individuals come through Bethesda House's doors because they know they will be treated with dignity and respect. Our dedicated case management team has put in the hours day after day, year after year, to form trustworthy, genuine, and reliable relationships with those seeking help from our services. This is the key to effective, long-term treatment with the goal of re-entry and stabilization into the work force and a greater interconnected society.

Through our day program and overnight shelter, we are making connections with over 100 guests daily. Before the launch of our medical program, our primary focus was to engage with and connect clients to area medical care providers. Our experience has been either to schedule an appointment for a future date or wait hours with clients for a walk-in appointment. Agency staff have witnessed that waiting for an extended period of time has an adverse effect on our clients and often has a negative outcome.



Now we have the ability to connect clients to direct medical care and provide follow-up. Resident doctors have the opportunity to witness first-hand the patients' behavior and circumstances outside the hospital room and work directly with the Medical Care and Social Work staff who know them best. Twice a month, guests who are not currently connected to a medical provider will meet with the doctors

for immediate medical attention. Agency staff will work with each person providing appropriate follow-up and connection

to area providers. Furthermore, through our agency's transport program, homeless persons discharged and referred directly from Ellis Hospital will be able to use our in-house medical program as part of their follow-up care.

Although the program is still in its beginning stages, we are anticipating a palpable shift in its ability to further assist in ending the cycle of homelessness for the population we serve. One of our Intensive Case Manager notes, *"The medical program, fully operational, would be a great addition to the existing programs and services at Bethesda House. Many of my clients struggle with managing their medications, and managing their chronic conditions. Although most of my clients attend their appointments regularly and are also connected to classes and clinics that provide education on managing a particular chronic condition (COPD, diabetes, asthma, etc.), many of my clients cannot manage their illness independently. While these appointments are effective, there is a gap in services between appointments. I do the best I can to review my clients' medication boxes, and encourage those with diabetes are checking their glucose levels regularly; however, having an on-site medical program, where my clients can be seen within a few weeks, by medical professionals, would help this population greatly. I believe that these individuals would be more successful at managing their chronic conditions, which would further stabilize them. Many of my clients use the emergency department inappropriately as well and I believe this program would serve as another alternative to the emergency department, to reduce inappropriate emergency department utilization."*



Our sole focus at Bethesda House has always been to address the root, not just skim the surface, of chronic homelessness and poverty in our community. We cannot build stability from chaos and without a stable foundation, all efforts at progression merely fall through the cracks. We believe the best and most effective way to help people is to meet them where they are at, and for many of Schenectady's most vulnerable, that place is right here within this House of Mercy.

#### References:

1 <https://www.healthcarediver.com/news/hospitals-tackling-homelessness-to-bring-down-costs/510631/>

2 <https://insight.kellogg.northwestern.edu/article/who-bears-the-cost-of-the-uninsured-nonprofit-hospitals>

By Rachael Chabot

**Elroy,** a New York City resident for most of his life, was employed until his mid-twenties when mental illness robbed him of his clarity, sense of self, independence, and sense of safety. Lost in a fog for years, he found shelter, food, and kindness wherever he could. His severe, persistent, and untreated mental illness challenged providers, whose mission was to help stabilize Elroy. Over time, Elroy traveled north to Schenectady in an effort to find his daughter. Since, he has been in and out of homelessness with chronic medical and untreated mental health concerns.

Elroy was referred to Bethesda House's Overnight Emergency Shelter program and over the last four months has worked diligently with program staff to obtain stable housing and to connect to mental health treatment. Elroy, now 70, responded well to staffs' guidance as they attended appointments with him and helped him work towards stabilization. He was attending and participating in his daily group sessions at the Ellis Mental Health Clinic, he was taking his psychiatric medications reliably and independently, and he kept all of his medication reviews with his psychiatrist.

Eventually, Agency staff were able to reduce their intense case management and provide phone call check-ins every week, while coordinating his service plan with his mental health counselor and psychiatrist. After a few months of stability, Elroy's dear friend was admitted to the hospital for few weeks. This was a traumatic time for Elroy, as he always looked after this friend and she looked after him. Due to this life crisis, Elroy stopped attending his groups, threw his month's supply of medications in the garbage, and stormed out of a medication review, cussing at his psychiatrist. Agency staff quickly increased their level of intensive case management services in an attempt to re-stabilize him. His Intensive Case Manager (ICM) began providing home visits two to four times a week to keep Elroy re-engaged. Due to the intense work, Elroy was open and agreeable to begin services again at the Ellis Mental Health Clinic. His ICM attended Elroy's sessions with his PROS counselor, and his medication reviews with his psychiatrist. With the regular, professional partnership and collaboration between medical entities and Agency staff, Elroy was agreeable to treatment. Together, his psychiatrist and ICM created a service plan for his medication management to ensure Elroy was medication compliant. Elroy is starting to attend and participate in groups again, and is regaining his independence with his medication management.

Elroy's story is a testament supporting the on-going need for medical entities and community based organizations to continue partnering and collaborating strengths, to better serve the vulnerable people in our community. We are deeply grateful for the partnerships that have been cultivated and strengthened over the last eight years.



# FUNDRAISING

On October 18, 2018, Bethesda House's 8th Annual Fall Fundraiser was in full action! How exciting it was to have a full house of supporters, who have been part of the Agency for 26 years, and many new friends and sponsors.

We had a night full of raffles, TRIVIA, prizes, and FUN!

JD, knightslive@rocketmail.com, led the TRIVIA festivities. Great conversation, laughter ringing throughout the room and an abundance of positive energy as the competition heightened.

**Thank you to our Event Sponsors:** Nancy Nicholas & Ralph Blackwood, John Daley, Gary & Kathleen Dunkerley, Kevin McCormick, Paul & Dolores Nelson, Richard & Eunice Werner, Susan Williams, and Schenectady PBA. **Thank you to our Table Sponsors:** Robert Christoffel, Rivers Casino & Resort, The COINS Foundation, and SRG Architects.

**Thank you to our Honorary Committee members:** Keith & Pat Barney, Nancy Nicholas & Ralph Blackwood, Susan Bouton, Rachael Chabot, Robert Christoffel, Robert Clement, Margaret Coker, Anthony & Helen Coppola, Sharran A. Coppola, William & Cheryl Gerstler, Alex Hallenstein, Leonard Herman, Richard & Mary Jo Homenick, Mary F. Isabella, Rev. Robert Long, Ellen MacNeal, Richard & Kathleen Mausert, Leina Minakawa, Walter & Edith Morlock, Louise O'Leary, Jill O'Neil, Rev. Richard Parsons, Danny Payne, Laetitia Rhatigan, Karen Roach, John & Karen Sapone, June Schermerhorn, Kimarie Sheppard, M J Teresco, Cathy Terwilliger, Crystal Thatcher, Nancy Vaccaro, Paula Waselauskas, and Andrew & Anne Wood.

**Mark your calendars for October 2019 for our 9th Annual Event!**









**A great opportunity awaits you.** Are you interested in furthering your career, implementing new ideas, and strengthening your leadership skills? Giving your time and talents will enhance your career, build your skills, and add value to your time.

Think back to the first time you volunteered, made a monetary donation, stopped to help someone cross the street or sheltered a lost animal. Were you inspired to make a difference? How did you feel helping others?

Bethesda House's volunteers provide relief, empower the poor to live more independently, and lend a supporting hand. Sometimes it is hard to see the big picture when you are only working on one task or in a particular area of the agency. Members of our volunteer team have the opportunity to work in various programs and provide varying levels of work. Be the leader of our volunteer program, oversee our food programs, assist with data entry, or be a significant voice on our development team.

Since 2011, Bethesda House has increased the number of services offered, by 125%. Our volunteers and donors are woven into the fabric of the Agency and strengthen our commitment to our mission to serve the poor. Join us! Make a commitment now to make change in our community, to end homelessness and social injustice.

Please contact Kim M. at either [adminasst@bethesdahouseschenectady.org](mailto:adminasst@bethesdahouseschenectady.org) or (518) 374-7873, ext. 116.



## BETHESDA HOUSE HOLIDAY WISH APPEAL

It's time for Bethesda House's Wish Appeal! Each year we compile a list of gifts for friends and supporters in the community who wish to donate. Bethesda House gratefully acknowledges the generous gifts we receive that help us support the needs of so many. The items on our Wish List reflect our day-to-day needs. Donations are accepted between 9:30am - 4:30pm.

### Day to Day

**Food**

- Non-perishable items

**Kitchen**

- Spices, coffee, iced/hot tea, lemonade

**Clothing**

- Gently used items for men/women

**Practical Shoes**

**Fall/Winter Clothing/Dresses**

**New Underwear and Socks**

**Hygiene Products**

- Regular and hotel size shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, soap, razors and toothbrushes

**Linens**

- Sheets, towels, washcloths
- Blankets

**Seasonal**

- Home Depot/Lowes Gift Card

### Adopt Our Food Pantry

A \$50 donation gives us \$200 in food products from the Regional Food Bank.  
A \$100 donation gives us \$500 in food products from the Regional Food Bank.

### Adopt An Apartment

Visit [bethesdahouseschenectady.org](http://bethesdahouseschenectady.org) for details.

### Gifts that Keep on Giving

Deferred gifts to Bethesda House can have a lasting effect on our future strength & sustainability. Please give serious consideration to:

- A bequest to Bethesda House
- A donation of a life insurance policy
- A gift of appreciated asset (stock, property)



**Bethesda House of Schenectady, Inc.**  
Friends of Bethesda House/Profile Update/Gift

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Please make checks payable to Bethesda House)*

Credit Card: MC Visa AMEX Discover

No: \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Sec. Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a GE Employee/Retiree? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No  
*(Bethesda House is a GE Match Recipient)*

Would you like to learn more about volunteer opportunities at Bethesda House? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

**You can also make donations using PayPal at [www.bethesdahouseschenectady.org](http://www.bethesdahouseschenectady.org)**



## Bethesda House Donors: May 2018 - October 2018

### Friends up to \$100

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 Bour, Robert  
 Brown, Alvin  
 Brugeman, Rachel  
 Bruno, Chris  
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 Clayton, Mark & Linda  
 Connolly, Bruce  
 Connor, Evelyn  
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 Davis, Elizabeth  
 Davis, Tasha  
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 Guzzo, Judy & Peter  
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 O'Connell, Kathleen  
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 Robbins, Patricia  
 Rose, Kenneth & Janice  
 Sargent, Steven  
 Schardt, Thomas  
 Sheppard, John  
 Shuff, William & Pat  
 Smith, Janice  
 Smith, Mattie  
 Spingarn, David  
 Stageman, Delanne  
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### Sponsor up to \$499

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 Burns, James & Judith  
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 Chabot, Rachael  
 Chouffi, Audrey  
 Christman, Anne

Clement, Robert  
 Coker, Margaret  
 Coppola, Anthony & Helen  
 Cramer, Steven & Bonnie Macwhinney-Cramer  
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 Denisoff, Gail  
 Duesterdick, Paul & Tracey  
 Farrell, Ann M  
 First Baptist Church Of Schenectady  
 First Baptist Church Of Scotia - Berea Class  
 Fitzgerald, Mary  
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 O'Neil, Jill  
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 Roach, Karen  
 Roeser, Randall W & Patricia  
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 Schultz, Ellen  
 Sparks, Linda  
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 Porter, Don and Lois  
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 The Community Foundation  
 Union College - Kenney Center  
 Werner, Richard and Eunice  
 Williams, Susan M

### Advocate up to \$10,000

Blackwood, Ralph and Nicholas, Nancy

Bethesda House is grateful to the individual's congregations, businesses, and private foundations who donated from \$1 to \$10,000. Your generosity allows us to continue helping others by providing for basic needs in an environment that encourages and supports positive change.

We thank you and look forward to another successful year. Every donor is important to us. Our goal is to list each person or organization as the donor wishes. If your name does not appear, as you would like it to, please contact the agency's Administration Assistant at either [adminasst@bethesdahouseschenectady.org](mailto:adminasst@bethesdahouseschenectady.org) or (518) 374-7873, ext. 116 so we may correct our records.

A very special Thank you to donors contributing through United Way, we are grateful that you chose to direct your donor dollars to Bethesda House of Schenectady, Inc. Thank you to donors who participate in the GE Match.

Thank you to donors who participate in Amazon Smiles, Clynk and other Hannaford fundraising initiatives.

Your gifts of spirit and generosity are deeply appreciated.

### In-Kind Donors:

Congregation of Agudat Achim	St. Kateri Tekakwitha
Eastern Parkway Methodist Church	St. Joseph's Catholic Church Scotia-Glenville
Friendship Baptist Church	Temple Gates of Heaven
Immanuel Lutheran	The Ladies Philotochos Society of St. George Greek Orthodox Church
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Niskayuna Boy Scout Troop 34 - Scouting for Food	Unitarian Universalist Society Burnt Hills - Ballston Lake Women's Club
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Our Redeemer Lutheran	Manhattan Bagel
Panera Bread	Bruegger's Bagels
Price Chopper	United States Postal Service
Rivers Casino & Resort	Capital Roots
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St. George's of Clifton Park	

# ACROSS ALL SPECTRUMS: THE POWER OF CHOICE IN ACTION

By Caroline Codd

Take a moment to reflect on the last time you were angry. Did somebody cut you off on the highway? Was your trust betrayed? Maybe you felt like you were not given a fair chance at something, at whim of the assumptions of somebody else's prejudice. Or maybe you simply weren't being listened to when you really wanted to be heard.

Take a moment to reflect on your actions out of this anger. Did you lash out with words, vow to hold grudges, or draw a line of judgment in the sand? Think of how this anger – for a moment, a day, or for years – has inspired you to look at another human being as "other".

This is perfectly normal - in fact, it is instinctual – but it has been taken out of context. Anger is a manifestation of anxiety, which is triggered by our brain's response to life-threatening circumstances and environments. *Life threatening.* This response system has not evolved much since we were looking for food in the wild and scanning diligently to see where the lions were. Today in our modern society, we wake up in a warm bed, have our meals delivered and prepared for us, find our water supply in our Brita filter, and carry a device which answers all our questions and keeps us constantly connected – a prerequisite for safety and security. Most of us do not truly find ourselves in daily life-threatening situations, but we are still reacting with life-threatening responses. This is not to say we do not experience true hardship and heartbreak when the money is tight or when we experience deep loss, but when it comes to basic survival we are fundamentally safe.

*"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." – President Franklin D. Roosevelt*

The population we serve at Bethesda House – the devastatingly poor, chronically homeless, mentally ill, survivors of abuse, the displaced and disconnected – are truly fighting to survive. We designed our core mission of service and housing first model to provide a safety net and network of connection, creating a launching pad for integration and long-term stability. Yet even when they are worrying about their next meal or seeking shelter from the deathly cold, these same individuals have shown an incredible capacity to express the highest nature of humanity through grace, humility, empathy and humor. With nothing left to lose, there is nothing left to grasp onto, nothing left to control. When food and shelter are a legitimate concern, there is no room to hold grievances over mundane inconveniences or fret over the power plays of politics. All that matters is getting through another day.

In our current state of affairs, the world can feel scary, hostile, and threateningly divisive. We live in a constant state of fear, and the lions have become our fellow human beings. Fear does not pick and choose; it does not categorize based on class, race, gender or income. Fear is felt across all spectrums – but we have the power to choose how we act in the face of it. When our basic survival needs are met, we have the power and the capacity to choose whether we lash out in anger or lean into empathy. We can choose to sit in righteous judgment or we can choose to see our own faults, fears, and wonderfully complex shortcomings in the actions of another. At Bethesda House, we are tirelessly working to provide safety and stability to disadvantaged populations so they too will have a sense of autonomy and the power to choose. We relish your time, your commitment, and your passion in supporting our mission year after year, choosing to share your resources with those in desperate need.

We may not be able to control how we instinctually feel out of fear, but our choices of action are crucial to creating a world that is kind, just, and holds equal opportunity for all. Every day is full of opportunities to make these choices and there is no better day than today to begin.



## Bethesda House

Is an interfaith ministry to the homeless, disabled and economically disadvantaged citizens of Schenectady County, building a just, hospitable and inclusive community one person at a time by affirming the dignity and addressing the needs of each guest entering this House of Mercy.

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