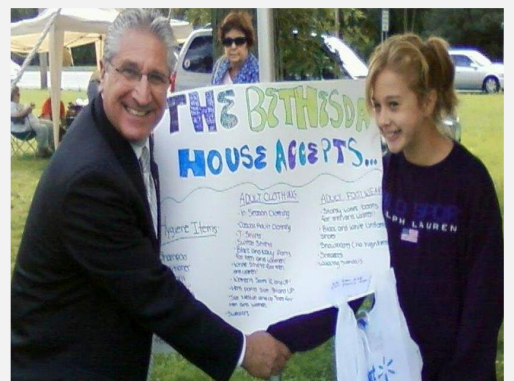


The Beacon

Fall 2011 /Winter 2012



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Employee Profile

Volunteer View

Holiday Wish Appeal

Donor List

News and Notes

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Dir. Property and Facility

A message from The Interim Executive Director

The fall and winter months are here and it's a time to come in from the cold, share hot, nutritious meals with our families and enjoy the simple closeness and friendship of those familiar to us, people we trust and love.

Imagine, as you close up your home against the cold, serve your family meals from bubbling pots, light a fire to warm a room, or throw an extra blanket on your bed, thousands of Schenectady citizens can't do this because they've lost their homes, jobs and subsequently, their families. Unfortunately, the numbers of the lost, homeless and poor are growing week by week, due in large part to the failed and struggling economy.

There has been a light, however, since 1992, as well as a door to walk through, for Schenectady's population who seek a sanctuary setting where they can rest safely for a moment or a day and replenish their personal strengths. They are individuals struggling to stay alive or rebuild their lives. They desperately need a helping hand.

For nearly two decades, Bethesda House has provided daily meals, emergency services and a hospitality center that builds community and respects human dignity to those who need it most each day, every day, including holidays.

Starting small, Bethesda House took on the energy of its staff, and propelled itself into a larger arena. Subsequently, operations grew into two locations with 26 residential beds available for the homeless and a day shelter, which offers an extensive array of emergency services, case management, and a daily meal. Bethesda House will continue to help lift up individuals who seek help and come to its doors.

During the 2010-2011 program year, Bethesda House welcomed 38,818 homeless people and working poor, who sought refuge from dire, and many times, life-threatening circumstances.

During our new year, which began over the summer, Bethesda House has already provided more than 9,000 guests with its services.

This success and humane support reflects the belief at Bethesda House that life's great challenges are best met when a community comes together to solve its problems. Bethesda House has been blessed for the past 20 years and continues to be blessed with friends and supporters who have shared and supported its vision.

Now, as we begin the seasons that typically bring us joy, peace, and celebration, I ask that you remember the Schenectady citizens who have lost much of what brought them joy in the past.

As a friend and supporter of Bethesda House, I ask that you continue to open your heart to the homeless, the working poor and the growing number of people affected by the economy. Please offer your hand, and help Bethesda House prepare for the cold season ahead.

If you are learning about Bethesda House for the first time, and want to help us fulfill our mission with a heartfelt gift, big or small, you will be joining ranks with our faith-filled and merciful Bethesda House friends, who are making a social difference for many people. We thank you in advance for joining us, and we look ahead to working with you in the years to come.

Kimarie A. Sheppard

The Beacon is published quarterly to provide news to friends and supporters of Bethesda House

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834 State. St.

Schenectady N.Y. 12307

Phone 518-374-7873

bethesdahouseschenectady.org

Find Us on Facebook!

Program Profile: Residential Services

Our greatest strength is our staff

Anne McGhee, Director of Residential Services for Bethesda House, oversees sixteen individuals who live at the Liberty House Apartments and ten who live at The Lighthouse. McGhee, originally from Iowa, said staff and residents at Bethesda House are like family. She sat down recently to talk about her job.

Anne McGhee works directly with residents at Bethesda House, which means she's never sure how the work day might unfold. "People who live here are very independent. I assist them with whatever they need," said McGhee who has been with Bethesda House since December 2010. "We are always trying to motivate the residents."

The Residential Services Department serves a combined total of 26 individuals in Liberty House Apartments and Lighthouse.

McGhee works with all residents in all aspects of their lives, whether it's going with them to a doctor's appointment, helping with a job search, transportation, or understanding social services, which can be confusing. "Residents face different challenges," said McGhee. Some have substance abuse issues, which they are trying to resolve. Others are trying to reconnect with their families or find a job.

McGhee said Bethesda House is in the process of rejuvenating its vision and mission. "It's an exciting time for both staff and residents as we go forward."

"The theme as we move forward is freedom and the staff work side by side with the residents, offering words of encouragement with each small advance," said McGhee.

Several residents have moved on, some to a more independent living situation and McGhee said staff are eagerly awaiting the arrival of several new residents. "We are ready to welcome new staff to our team as we carry out our vision and our mission for the future," she said.



"Residents are making a concerted effort to take control of their lives and be more independent, they set their own goals, they plan and facilitate their house meetings and they plan their own recreational activities, all with the least amount of assistance from staff as is necessary. The residents are also learning to cope with their steps forward, as well as their steps backward, as they regain control of their lives," said McGhee.

The summer was a busy season with many activities. Three residents reconnected with family members over the summer. Residents also enjoyed shopping excursions, trips to the library, a residents' only picnic and a trip to the United Buffet. The summer's highlight was the Hudson River luncheon cruise where everyone sang and danced and enjoyed delicious food. "A good time was definitely had by all," said McGhee. Residents and staff also attended the Bethesda House picnic and McGhee said while there were rumors of a massive water balloon fight, staff and residents alike behaved and everyone had a good time.

McGhee said it becomes like a family at Bethesda House and she shares all the ups and downs with the residents and staff, just like a family.

"Everyone watches out for everyone else on both sides," said McGhee. She said she loves the staff and residents she works with and is humbled to be part of Bethesda House.

Making Lives Better: One Person at a Time

Every Volunteer Makes a Difference: A Chat With Ellen MacNeal

“Just pile them up over there if there’s room,” Ellen MacNeal tells her crew of volunteers, who were on hand to help unpack donations for the Clothing Room at Bethesda House.

MacNeal has become a fixture at Bethesda House, where she’s volunteered for seven years, overseeing the Clothing Room, a place where anyone is welcome and can find a coat, warm sweater or a pair of shoes or boots at no cost. Since she started volunteering at Bethesda House, MacNeal has met many people, made many friends and most importantly, made a difference.

“Every once in a while, someone comes to Bethesda House who tugs at your heart,” said MacNeal. “You really feel when they leave that you helped them and made their life better. When you get into the day-to-day blahs, it’s that one person who keeps you going.”

Visitors to the Clothing Room will find MacNeal sorting through clothes that have been donated, stocking shelves, cheering on other volunteers, or helping someone find a shirt, sweater in just the right size.

For years, MacNeal and her husband worked at GE Schenectady. They retired and after her husband passed away, MacNeal spent time taking care of her home, gardening and getting caught up on the soap opera General Hospital. Before she knew it, she was anx-

ious to do something outside the home, something that would make a difference in the community.

She answered an advertisement in the newspaper for help at Bethesda House. That was seven years ago, she said with a smile.

She’s been at Bethesda House ever since, putting in seven-hour days, four days a week.

“It’s an eye-opener,” MacNeal said of her experience. “I don’t think you realize how much the little things, like shampoo and personal items, things we take for granted, mean to people. Right now we have 16 people upstairs who would otherwise be on the streets. At the Lighthouse there are ten others.”



Ellen MacNeal (right) enjoys her time at Bethesda House.

Bethesda House is seeing an increase in need for its services. Approximately 4,066 individuals came to the Clothing Room this past year, she said. The demand for clothes and footwear is constant, especially in a tough economy and MacNeal said donations are always welcome.

Interim Executive Director Kimarie Sheppard said MacNeal is one of the unique people who volunteer at Bethesda House. “She is viewed by staff, other volunteers, guests and residents as ‘volunteer extraordinaire’. She is absolutely amazing,” said Sheppard. For all the years she has been involved, no matter who you speak with they say: “I don’t know what we would do without Ellen.”

2011 Holiday Wish Appeal

It's time for Bethesda House's Holiday Wish Appeal! Each year we compile a list of gifts for friends and supporters in the community who wish to donate for the holidays. 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 as well as seasonal items. Bethesda House will hold its annual Holiday Party for guests in December. At that time, each guest will receive a gift. Items needed include gloves, hats, socks, children's toys/gifts (all ages). Donations accepted 9:30am-4:30pm. Please call 518-374-7873 for details.

Day-to-Day

Food

Non-perishable food items

Clothing

Gently used men's and women's clothing

Practical shoes and boots

Warm winter clothing: coats, hats, gloves, sweaters, and long johns

Underwear and socks – new, all sizes

Hygiene Products

Regular and hotel size shampoo, deodorant.

Toothpaste, bars of soap, razors, toothbrushes

Linens

Sheets – all sizes

Towels, wash cloths

Blankets

Seasonal

Rock Salt or ice melt (gift certificate to Home Depot)

Walk-off mats

Adopt Our Food Pantry. A \$50 donation = \$200 worth of food purchased at the Regional Food Bank.

\$100.00 donation = \$500 worth of food purchased at the Regional Food Bank.

BETHESDA HOUSE OF SCHENECTADY, INC. Friends of Bethesda House– Profile Update/Gift

Name _____

Company/Organization/Group _____

Address _____

Daytime Phone _____ Fax # _____ E-Mail _____

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

Are you a G.E. Employer or Retiree? () YES () NO

BETHESDA HOUSE IS A G.E. MATCH RECIPIENT

WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AT BETHESDA HOUSE?

() YES () NO

ENCLOSED IS MY GIFT OF () \$100 () \$150 () \$200 () \$250 () \$500 () \$1,000

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You can also donate at www.bethesdahouseschenectady.org and click **Donate**



Another Shot at Life: A Resident's View



He's traveled and worked all around the country, hitchhiked to Las Vegas three times, lived in New York City, Florida, Nevada and Connecticut and slept in junk cars and hallways along the way.

Today, John Fisher, 72, calls Bethesda House home, for a while anyway. He's been living at Liberty House Apartments for a year and is working to get his life back. John's goal is to move back to his hometown of Middletown. "They were kind enough to let me in. It's a blessing to be here at Bethesda House. It's great, I got another shot at life."

His life story is an interesting one, fraught with challenges, but he remains positive. One of eight children, Fisher's parents were alcoholics. "I never went to school, but taught myself to read and write," he said. When he was 10 years old, he was sent to a state institution. It was a harsh environment. He learned quickly that it was best to stay out of the staff's way. If you broke the rules, you'd be punished. Eventually, John's mother visited and when she saw staff members abuse another resident, she transferred Fisher to a different institution. However, it wasn't much better. He worked the farm from sunrise to sunset in the summer. During the winter, he was sent north to work as a lumberjack and had to roll logs in frigid water and lift logs onto trucks in sub-zero temperatures.

He ran away after five years of abuse and returned to Middletown. On an impulse, he stole a car and was sentenced to a 'day to five years in prison'. He served five years and after he was released, he hit the road and traveled around the country. "I lived on the road for a long time. You get used to it. Now I'm at the age where I couldn't do it. I'm lucky my bones

don't hurt from sleeping in the cold all those years," he said. Despite adversities he's faced throughout his life, Fisher has maintained a strong work ethic and held many jobs. He remembers working at the Coca Cola plant in Brooklyn. He rode the ferry boat back and forth for a nickel and he'd get a room for \$2. He worked at Winchester Arms in Connecticut polishing receivers for Winchester rifles. He was a custodian in Florida, delivered sheet rock, and labored on the highways. "I always worked, if you don't work you won't have anything in life."

Along the way, Fisher married and had three children. He remains in contact with them and sees them for dinner and other events. "My kids love me and that's a beautiful thing." He also has a brother and sister he sees occasionally.

Fisher had a scare a few years ago, when he had a heart attack, but he said he plans on taking care of himself and being around at least ten more years.

John said he couldn't live on the streets anymore and can't afford a regular apartment, but with the Social Security benefits he receives, he can afford an apartment at Bethesda House. Fisher said he's always worked to pay his own way. He enjoys the privacy Bethesda House offers and said he keeps his place so clean "you could eat off the floors."

Fisher said that he tries to be humble, learn something every day, avoid conflict and be around people who are positive. He hopes that whatever life he has left, he's comfortable. "I realized people aren't that bad. All they need is guidance. Bethesda House gives them a chance to get back on their feet, if they want it."

"He is one of the people who brings a smile to your face when you see him," said Anne McGhee, Director of Residential Services, who explained that all residents pay 40 percent of their income to stay at Bethesda House. It gives many people, like John, a chance.



Helping Schoharie Flood Victims

Payne's Prism

Bethesda House reached out to others on Sept. 26, 2011 when its guests, residents, volunteers, and staff traveled to Schoharie County to help flood victims. "The day was overwhelming, yet rewarding and filled with a sense of camaraderie as we interacted with Schoharie's residents," said Program Director Danny Payne. "We helped them locate their belongings and clean up their property. We are committed to a Community Day each month, designed to go into communities and help those in need," said Payne.

Bethesda House is experiencing an increase in the need for emergency services by those hardest hit by the downturn in our economy. We are happy that many from our community generously gave us the gift of their time, said Payne. Our Day Shelter is able to meet the increasing needs of our consumers as a result of our volunteers.

The Program Department worked with one of its key volunteers to establish an educational program that focuses on nutritional education and basic living skills. Bethesda House has collaborated with Cornell Cooperative Extension, and "Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables" (JSY) to offer an ongoing comprehensive six-week program.

Bethesda House's emergency services program offers hope, a friendly face, and a safe haven, even if it's for a day. The recent downturn in the economy has affected the guests Bethesda House sees each day. With the increasing need for services program supplies are quickly depleting. Bethesda House is in need of emergency services items: Non-perishable food pantry items, hygiene kits and gently used clothing. "We hope that you find it in your heart to give generously during this critical time and holiday season," said Payne.

The View from Here: Butch Fogg

We have been busy since our last letter, said Butch Fogg, Director of Property and Facility Operations. Outside projects at the State Street location have been completed. "We now have a patio with picnic tables, umbrellas lots of planters full of colorful flowers to raise your spirit," said Fogg. The Garden of Goodness had a variety of herbs, vegetables and several tomato plants. The yield

was bountiful. "Each item was used in our kitchen (can't beat fresh). The Lighthouse's main building has had several projects: new interior doors, fresh paint in the bedrooms and new flooring," said Fogg.

Case Management Corner

The Case Management staff is usually the first contact in obtaining services and referrals. Each day, guests seek relief from their crisis situations. We are seeing a significant need for emergency services by individuals who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless. We see the faces of the souls who stand on the fringe of society who hope to make it through the day. With our services, these individuals are encouraged that it is possible to have longer term goals. Our Representative Payee program has helped clients manage their income, gain housing, and for others remain housed. Even with our successes there is an enormous amount of people that need our help.

We are indebted to our volunteers who provide many hours of service, without their presence we could not fulfill the needs of our guests. During the upcoming season of spiritual giving, we hope that you will keep the ministry of Bethesda House in your thoughts. With you, we are successful.



College of Saint Rose student volunteers

Consumers Served 2010-2011

<u>Program</u>	<u>Total</u>
Guests	38,818
First Time Guests	2,428
Homeless Guests	3,388

Fundraising and our Mission

Development Corner: Sharran Coppola

Fundraising - an eleven letter word at the cornerstone of every "not for profit". Each organization approaches fundraising differently, but in the end the dollars speak loudest. Why does fundraising strike fear into most and yet is so important to an organization?

At the heart of fundraising is the mission of the organization. Fundraisers should embrace and believe in the mission and be willing to create new partnerships with all of their fundraising endeavors. In today's economy fundraising has risen to an art form and competition for every available dollar.

Bethesda House is a faith-based organization dedicated to the homeless, poor and those disenfranchised in the community. Each and every person that enters Bethesda House is made to feel safe and welcome. Fundraising for these underserved citizens is important, challenging and necessary. Grants and donations are very important to the organization however they can't meet all needs.

The Bethesda House Board and staff decided to take on the challenges of fundraising with great determination and a willingness to illuminate the beacon of hope for those who need assistance. Our goal is to reach out to the community and increase awareness for a population that has multifaceted needs

Our fundraising event, A Mystery Dinner Theater entitled "A Cruise to Die For" was held Oct. 13 at the Stockade Inn. We reached out to business partners, friends, family and colleagues for support.

The "ship" set sail and the "plot" thickened; and the night was filled with laughter and intrigue. Most importantly we accomplished our fundraising task and increased awareness for Bethesda House. That eleven letter word that can make some head for the hills became a welcomed challenge.

Fundraising – challenging yes, beneficial and rewarding absolutely. Thank you to everyone that supported the Mystery Theater, we look forward to your continued support in the future.

Sharran Coppola

The Murder Mystery Theater Fundraiser on Oct. 13 at Schenectady's Stockade Inn was a great success and fun evening for all. We plan to do it again next year! **A special thanks to our the Sponsors:** Interior Resources, Malone and Tate Builders Inc., Lombardi, Walsh, Wakeman, Harrison, Amodeo, Davenport, P.C. and our **Honorary Committee:** Michelle Armstrong, Vida Durnfod, Sharran Coppola, Butch and Karen Fogg, Golub Family Foundation, Alex and Betty Hallenstein, Anne McGhee, Louise O' Leary, Robert Long, Ellen MacNeal, Paul Nelson, Genghis and Nahla Khan, Richard and Elaine Ognibene, Danny Payne, Randall and Patricia Roeser, Priscilla Richter, Allee Rosenfield, Robert and Helen Ringlee, Kimarie Sheppard, April VanHeusen, Barbara Vivier, Richard and Eunice Werner, Tom Weiss, Robert and Joanne White, Susan Williams and Doreen Wright



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Stryjski, Olga

Sutton, Owen D

Slot, John

Smith, Janice

Snyder, Jennifer

Spina, James

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Bethesda House is most grateful to these individuals and organizations who donated from \$1 to \$50,000.

The generosity allows us to continue our mission and help others during the holiday season and throughout the year. We thank you.

Since 1992, Bethesda House has had a single goal: To end chronic homelessness in our community. Would you consider helping? To find what you can do visit:

www.bethesdahouseschenectady.org



Louise O'Leary Gets a Hug



Captain Conroy, Danny Payne

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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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