



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

Spring 2017

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

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the 2017 Spring Edition of the Beacon!



All of us at Bethesda House would like to thank you. **Thank you** for your financial gifts, in-kind contributions, your time, and continued dedication to ensuring that the agency continues to provide excellent case management, social work, program, and residential services to Schenectady County's most vulnerable citizens. We strive to help stabilize housing and income while bringing a sense of hope into the lives of those that are impoverished.

You are the investors... investors in the change we need in our society. You have helped to make a difference.

Through continuous hard work, Bethesda House has the reputation of being a frontrunner in innovative methods to serve the homeless and impoverished when working with a non-traditional model of treatment and services. Bethesda House's Social Work Department is a "no appointments" necessary model which has proven to be very successful.

We are celebrating **25 years of providing services** to the homeless and impoverished people of Schenectady County. Our newly designed website provides up-to-date and historical information about Bethesda House and on April 4th we held our **Open House**, providing an opportunity to tour our facility and speak with staff and residents. Our Annual Bowling fundraiser, May 5th, was filled with fun and healthy competition.

It is because of your support that we can continue to carry out our mission that was established 25 years ago.

We are in a very good place, but we *cannot* become complacent. We need to maintain and continue to build upon our support in order to provide services and reduce homelessness in our community.

I am filled with gratitude and thank you, our investors, for all you have given throughout the year. I look forward to partnering with you as we plan and prepare for the future.

Thank you!
Kimarie A. Sheppard

Kimarie A. Sheppard

Twenty Five Years Ago ... the US refuses to sign the UN convention on Climate Change, Rioting breaks out in Los Angeles following the acquittal of police officers in the Rodney King beating, South Africans vote for political reforms to end apartheid and create a power-sharing multi-racial government, Windows 3.1 is released

continued on next page



1992 - 1st Location Friedens United Church of Christ, Franklin Street



1997 - Moved to 418 Liberty Street



2008 - Volunteer Nancy G

Twenty Five Years Ago ...

by Microsoft, AT&T releases video telephone for \$1,499, the first Nicotine patch is introduced, DNA fingerprinting is conceived, and Bethesda House of Schenectady, Inc. opens its doors to the homeless population.

From its modest beginnings, at the rear of Friedens United Church of Christ on Franklin St., Bethesda House provided a safe haven to Schenectady's homeless, providing a cup of coffee and a friendly face. Five years later, the agency became incorporated, moved to Liberty Street, and increased services to include case management, emergency services, and a daily meal. In 2002, after receiving an incredible gift of property and housing, we opened our first 10- bed residential program for chronically homeless singles using the Housing First model – considered the best practice model by the federal government.

During the first ten years of Bethesda House's existence, strong and cohesive relationships were formed with area congregations. Spiritual leaders were invested in the ministry of Bethesda House and played a significant role in the development of our mission, strategic plan, and services provided to the homeless and impoverished citizens of Schenectady County. Government officials, aware of the importance of the role Bethesda House played in providing stabilization in the lives of the poor, provided needed support for our interfaith ministry.

With core values in place and a strong foundation, Bethesda House grew. In 2010, we opened a 20,000 square foot building, which quickly developed into what is known as today- the "hub", the "point of access" to all services provided by Bethesda House and an entry-way to hundreds of services offered within Schenectady County. Inside the walls of this building are 15 efficiency apartments, providing permanent supportive housing for 16 chronically homeless adults. The year



2011, brought considerable changes to Bethesda House, which included enhancing services; we took away case management limits and began to provide on-going support and essential wrap-around services. Staff embraced the limitless approach to

servicing the most vulnerable in our community while housing and stabilization milestones were accomplished.

Bethesda House received a spiritual blessing in 2014 when we were fortunate enough to have a retired licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) walk through our doors wanting to volunteer. Eighty-five percent of the homeless and impoverished populations we serve have a degree of mental illness; many are dually diagnosed with substance abuse as the secondary. Our LCSW was instrumental in developing our Social Work Department, which has made incredible strides in engaging and connecting people to much needed services.

While the agency's strength began with a formidable cornerstone, we could not be successful without partnerships and collaborations. The partnerships go beyond simple linkage agreements to formal relationships that include joint grant applications, shared resources, and staff from multiple agencies functioning as a team.

Cooperation, collaboration, shared resources, ideas, leadership, and vision are necessary to combat the systemic challenges of poverty and homelessness.

Twenty-five years ago an idea was born, to be part of societal change, to serve the vulnerable, to provide choices and to help make a difference. Staff, Board members, volunteers, donors, community supporters - all have made the idea come to fruition. Thank you for being part of positive change in Schenectady. Thank you for your spiritual generosity.



2010 - 834 State Street Building Opens



2011 - Niskayuna Group Performing Holiday Songs



2012 - Former Resident Ricos C



In my glory,

I am reminded of a story, one of my past. My eyes closed, I see my youth - my how it disappeared so very fast.

I grew up in an abusive home. Today, I still feel the pain I experienced when I saw my beloved mother being physically abused by my father and subsequently verbally abused by my brothers. At the time, I was 10; I thought that my family was normal. That abuse toward women by men was acceptable and that was what I should expect my life to be. I was never happy and I felt my life was doomed. I often wondered what those love songs were really about, because they couldn't be about real life. Disney World, fantasy world, not real, not my life, not my mothers or my sisters lives.

I married into an abusive relationship, my children were abused and they saw me being abused. One horrible day, I lost my mind. I thought if I take one more beating, one more time my children seeing me

covering in a corner, protecting my face – they would have no chance at a better life... I acted. I made the call and my children and I escaped. But did we? It seemed the court system was against me; the exhausting process of proving that he was the abuser, the exhausting a process of protecting my children from him. The process that left me feeling as if I could not go on. It is a daunting process for those that are innocent and need to be protected from their abusers.

I was fortunate to find solace in a friend – a friend who directed me to Bethesda House. I was uncertain and nervous – unsure if I could be helped.

I have been a resident in Schenectady all my life. I heard about Bethesda House, but my family and I were not homeless and we felt that we had enough money to get by; we never felt like we were impoverished. Growing up in the community I knew many who accessed Bethesda House's services and saw how their lives had been changed.

Fifteen years later, I realized that it was my turn. I met with a Bethesda House Case Manager who encouraged me to attend Women's Group, which is facilitated by YWCA and Bethesda House staff. There I told my story and quickly sensed connections to other women in our group. My strength grew and I climbed out of the dark hole I had crawled into. Within five years, under the guidance of case managers, I obtained employment, went to college and earned an Associate's Degree. I instilled in my children the lessons I learned about self-respect, hard work, and not to be afraid or too proud to ask for help. Today, my family is strong and I believe - in my family – we have stopped the cycle of generational poverty.



2015 - Congressman Paul Tonko helps with Thanksgiving meal



2016 - Holiday Volunteers



2017 Bethesda House Staff Volunteers Day Guests Donors Open House

Our Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment

By Kate Harris

Standing at the bus stop, waiting, checking my phone, feeling the sun and breeze on this beautiful spring day. As the bus stopped, I moved forward only to stop short – where did these people come from? All disheveled with torn clothes, a hint of alcohol, and noticeable evidence that a shower was long in the distant past. I wondered if they had been standing with me all along. *Too many times* I walked down a street not seeing the poverty or the tragic nature of the people experiencing homelessness. *Too many times* I was caught up in my own safe world and did not give a thought to my neighbors that do not have a place to call home.

Each and every day, the invisible walk through Bethesda House's door with needs that are great and varied. Over the years, we have been providing a safe place to rest, food, clothing, counseling, housing, and financial

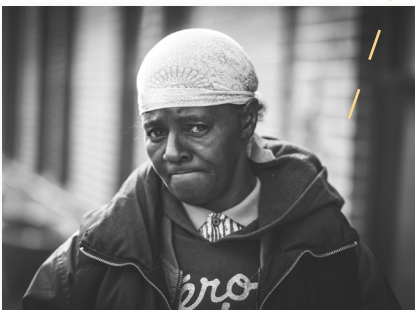


management. In October 2016, with our new DSRIP funding, we are able to engage with individuals and connect each to health insurance, primary care doctors and mental health providers. Our DSRIP staff attends doctor appointments, provide transportation, provide outreach and on-going counseling with the goal of establishing a routine for regular medical appointments and reduce emergency department occurrences.

And we have done just that!

What a whirl-wind we have had in our DSRIP program. Within six months we have engaged with and connected over 100 people to primary care and behavioral health services and have over 980 contacts.

Bob has lived the majority of his life on the streets and surviving day by day. Untreated Hepatitis C has ravaged his body and proved to be a bigger threat to his survival than any danger he has faced on the streets. Trips to the emergency department have put a Band-Aid on his symptoms, but his refusal to seek treatment has taken its toll. With each passing day his quality of life diminishes and his will to survive lessens. *DSRIP* services have allowed staff the time to work with Bob and to show him that he is not destined to live and die a life of pain. Our Social Work staff set Bob up with a specialist and a course of treatment has been implemented, with constant oversight being provided to ensure compliance. However, old habits die hard and Bob is not always compliant with his treatment. *DSRIP* allows him the flexibility to evaluate and change his habits while getting the treatment he so desperately needs.

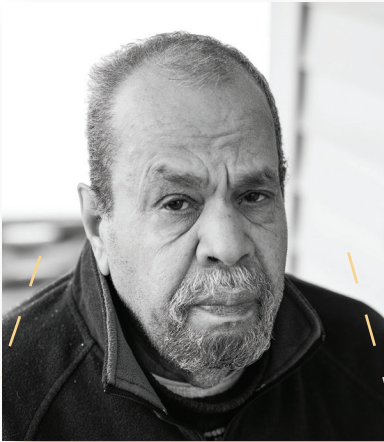


(L-R) Crystal Thomas, Asst Director Residential Services, resident Mattie



(L-R) Board Member Cathy Terwilliger and Board Secretary Louise O'Leary

(DSRIP) Programs Connect People to Services



Staff first met **Peter**, a twenty-four year old homeless man through Bethesda House's DSRIP 2 transportation program. He was discharged from the Crisis Unit at Ellis Hospital with untreated mental health issues and was also suffering from a bone infection. After hearing Peter's story it was clear that he just needed help getting back on his feet. Peter held part time positions since he was a teenager and went to the emergency department when he started experiencing suicidal and homicidal thoughts. Staff worked to connect Peter to mental health services and to obtain permanent housing. Staff continued to assist Peter with managing his medical appointments, as well as transporting him to his appointments to further

stabilize his life. Peter has only missed one appointment while working with the DSRIP team. In March, Peter came in to inform staff that he has secured a part time job and to thank us for all that we have done for him.

Taylor was referred to ED triage (DSRIP 2) in February – he had just been discharged from detox and did not have anywhere to go. After talking with him, it was discovered that he had just moved here from Kentucky. It was also learned that Taylor has struggled with alcoholism since he was a teenager and was finally interested in being referred to a substance abuse center for treatment. Before a treatment center could be located, Taylor secured a position through Peopleready and seemed to be on a path to recovery. However, it was not long before alcohol was back in control of his life and he had lost everything



he had gained. One morning, police escorted Taylor to Bethesda House at 7:00 in the morning, according to the police officer, he was found behind the wheel, intoxicated. His car had been impounded, and he lost his new job because he was unable to get to work. DSRIP staff worked quickly to secure inpatient substance abuse treatment for Taylor and he was immediately transported before he could change his mind. After successful completion of the program, Taylor is about to be discharged and staff will work with him on a smooth transition to outpatient substance abuse treatment, so that he can continue his path to recovery.



(L-R) Kimarie Sheppard, ED, and Carlene Dodson, Program Assistant



Back Row (L-R) Volunteer Terry Strouble, Chef Karl Taylor
Front Row (L-R) Volunteers Jill O'Neil, Nancy Ahola, Board member Karen Sapone, Administration Assistant Tammara France



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Thank You!

Bethesda House is grateful to these individuals who donated from \$1 to \$60,000. Your generosity allows us to continue helping others by providing for basic needs in an environment that encourages and supports positive life changes.

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 Tammara France at either adminasst@bethesdahouseschenectady.org or (518) 374-7873 so we may correct our records.

A 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.

We are deeply grateful for your continued support.

In-Kind Donors:

Congregation of Agudat Achim	Sharran Coppola
Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church	St. George's . St. Stephen's of Schenectady
Friendship Baptist Church	St. Georges' of Clifton Park
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Our Redeemer Lutheran	The Ladies Philotochos Society of St. George Greek Orthodox Church
Panera	Union College
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Price Chopper	

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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FUNDRAISING -

Bethesda House's 5th Annual Bowl for Bethesda was held May 5, 2017 at Boulevard Bowl, Schenectady. The day was cool and rainy but the thunder of balls as they rolled down the alley and the cracking of pins falling down made our bowlers' and guests' laughter fill the room as we all enjoyed the fun-filled night.

A special Thank You to our twenty (20) lane sponsors and team fundraising. Lane sponsors: AMF Refrigerated Products, Armer Funeral Home, Bennett Contracting, BL's Tavern & Grill, Civitellos Italian Pastry Shoppe, COINS, Coldwell Banker Prime Properties, Frank and Sons Body Works, Genghis & Nahla Khan, Heatcraft, Islamic Center of Capital Region, Jones Funeral Home, KCS Land Research Corporation, Legacy Title Services, LLC, M&T Bank, Rick & Kathy Mausert, Schenectady Fire Department, Schenectady PBA, Sharran Coppola, and Tom Weiss.

Thank you to Boulevard Bowl, who has hosted our event each year. The alley's team is very professional and accommodating; they help us each year make this night a great time for everyone.

SEE YOU NEXT YEAR! MAKE YOUR CALENDARS MAY 4TH, 2018

We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.
-Mother Teresa



1 (L-R) Jack and Mary Ann C., Barb, Kathy, Rick M. and Mark T

2 ICM Rachael C

3 Rivers Casino Team

4 (L-R) Barb, Kimarie, Ryan and John

5 COINS Teams

6 (L-R) Resident Paul and Former Board President Sharran Coppola

7 (L-R) Day Guest Louie and Day Program Supervisor Melissa Zampino

8 ICM Qinesha A

