



# Building a more compassionate community one person at a time

# THE BEACON

Spring/Summer 2022

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

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Welcome to the 2022 Spring/Summer edition of Bethesda House's *The Beacon*



**A**s the end of our fiscal year approaches, I find myself in awe of what the Agency and staff have accomplished during the last twelve months. How fortunate I feel to be part of an Agency that demonstrates compassion and a deep, heartfelt purpose to serve the poor.

Even more inspiring is the energy staff continue to give during social and economic challenges. My enthusiasm

is reinforced by all of the life-changing work our staff do daily. The reliability and quality of the services we provide defines us.

Bethesda House's current structure involves three residential programs and support programs, which include: emergency and basic living needs assistance, crisis, housing, and financial case management, social work, medical care, psychiatric nurse practitioner, and chemical dependency services. The Agency is working on our capital project, which will result in a fourth residential program, and will open in 2023.

In 2023, under the umbrella of Bethesda House of Schenectady, Inc., the Agency will provide a variety of service programs and four (4) separate residential

programs. The residential programs are: Liberty Apartments, the Lighthouse, Beacon Apartments, and Cara House.

All permanent supportive residential programs incorporate the Housing First model. A total of fifty-seven (57) affordable housing units with comprehensive supports and resources, house Schenectady County's homeless single adults. Monumental efforts are put forth to maintain the quality and high-level of care that we provide.

Financially, like many nonprofits across the country challenged by current economic uncertainties, we continue to examine ways to be eco-friendly and reduce the use of consumables in our operations. We look to streamline processes to maintain sound fiscal practices. We maintain our strength with the changes we have made.

I am proud of the work that we accomplished this year and am looking forward to the next twelve months. Even with the successes of the year that is ending, there is still much work that needs to be done to house and stabilize the poor.

Bethesda House lives in a community of generous donors and supporters. I am deeply grateful for the support of individuals, foundations, businesses, and congregations who believe in and contribute to our mission. Without you, we would not be able to accomplish the level of services and work that we do. From my heart – Thank you!

*Kimarie A. Sheppard*

## DID YOU KNOW...

Based on a 5-year analysis of Schenectady County's homeless and poor..... individuals and families housed who have a continuation of stabilization wrap-around services for at least 12 months after being housed 89% remain housed. Wrap-around services include, financial case management, medical and mental health engagement, social work and case management connection, and basic living needs met.



From July '21 – May '22 over  
**13,500** meals were provided from our Food Pantry

**28,158** meals were served in our Soup Kitchen



Over  
**6,425** unique individuals were served



Over  
**850** street homeless people were provided sustenance, seasonal clothing, case management, & emergency services by the Agency's Street Outreach Case Manager

Case Managers provided over  
**7,500** contacts addressing emergency and permanent housing services



Social Work staff caseload  
**75** with over  
**9,000** contacts/interactions per month

# Connecting the Dots to Envision the Future

By Caroline Codd

In the last two years, there's been a reckoning with the social systems put in place to support our well-being. While our lives were on pause, we looked at them curiously and critically – maybe for the first time. We may still be left with more questions than answers, but asking difficult questions can give us insight to how we got to where we are – and where we can go from here.

For over 30 years, Bethesda House has worked to address homelessness at its roots, which are complex and many. While there is no one direct cause of chronic homelessness, we have observed patterns in three distinct areas – poverty, affordable housing, and racial disparity – as contributing factors to the likelihood of a person ending up on the streets. Cara House programs are a culmination of this vision to address the complexities of homelessness and will address these key components.

## Poverty

Poverty is one of the leading factors of homelessness on a global and local scale. In America, as the cost of living continues to rise and the wealth gap continues to increase, families and individuals are struggling to meet their basic needs. When the cost of healthcare is factored in, it is not uncommon for people to have to

choose between their healthcare bills, their housing, or their next meal.

The statistics paint a sobering picture:

- 64% of Americans are currently living paycheck to paycheck
- Almost 40% of Americans live below the federal poverty line
- 45% of all households in Schenectady County earn more than the Federal Poverty Level, but less than the basic costs of living
- Almost half (47%) of Americans believe that cost of living is the biggest threat to their financial security

Poverty is not a moral failing. It is not a result of inadequacy or lack of motivation or unwillingness to work. Unemployment after the COVID-19 crisis is decreasing, but workers' wages continue to flat line as living costs steadily increase. This is unsustainable and puts more people at risk of financial vulnerability every day.

At Bethesda House, we work to directly address the correlation between poverty and homelessness by offering the social safety nets needed to alleviate the burdens of poverty. We see it as a microcosm of a larger



system that leaves ex-offenders, people with disabilities including mental illness, and other barriers to gainful employment (such as lack of affordable housing, lack of transportation) at risk.

Cara House programs will directly increase the scope of social services offered while providing supported housing to vulnerable populations. Bethesda House has always been a safe haven for the impoverished and transient communities and we continue to grow in order to meet the needs of those we serve. Bethesda House offers an array of critical services on site in our efforts to effectively serve Schenectady. The goal is to empower and to encourage independence and wellbeing through facilitating a relationship of trust, engagement in services, and addressing the medical, mental health, and behaviors that led to chronic homelessness.

### **Affordable Housing**

While poverty is a driving factor of homelessness, it is intrinsically coupled with the lack of affordable housing. The US faces a shortage of over 7.2 million rental homes affordable to very low-income households. Schenectady County's 2021 Community Needs Assessment surveys affordable housing as "the most pressing need, by far, faced by the low-income population in Schenectady County."

Poverty and lack of social services do contribute to homeless populations, however, as we've seen, states with high income and large budgets for social services still have the highest homelessness rates. The measure that most closely predicts where homelessness is located is lack of affordable housing. Even where affordable housing is available, many programs have waitlists that are years long. These programs, especially housing lotteries, can also be stacked against those who need it most since there is more competition for lower priced units.

New York State has set a goal to bring 100,000 affordable homes, including 10,000 units with supportive services for vulnerable populations, to the state over the next five years. Cara House is projected to be one of those units. Bethesda House was awarded funding from the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Homeless Housing and Assistance Program for one such project, Cara House residential program. Additionally, significant commitments for the project were made from the City of Schenectady, Schenectady County, the Wright Family Foundation, the Neil & Jane, William & Estelle Golub Family Foundation, The Schenectady Foundation, the Carlilian Foundation, and the Arnold Cogswell Health Care Fund.

Part of building a vibrant Schenectady is creating affordable housing and re-building areas that were previously seen as unprofitable to develop.

### **Racial Disparity**

The latest data shows large disparities between the number of minorities and non-minorities who experience homelessness. The most striking disparity is that of African-Americans, who make up 13% of the US population but 39% of the country's homeless population. This is almost an exact mirror of our numbers here in Schenectady. It is a gap that is increasing over-time as a result of decades-old policies that have placed African-Americans at a severe economic disadvantage.

We know incarceration and criminal records play a heavy hand in the cycle of poverty and homelessness. Recently incarcerated persons are ten times more likely to become homeless than the general public. Since 2017, Schenectady has been without a dedicated re-entry program to help those recently released from incarceration that would benefit from a higher level of support and service access.

This barrier to personal stability evolves when we consider that nationwide, African Americans are imprisoned at more than five times the rate of the Caucasian population. In Schenectady County, there are 10 times the amount of black inmates in county jail as there are white inmates. The reasons for this are nuanced, but the fact is that there are 10 times the number of African American people who struggle to find housing and job security after incarceration in Schenectady County. A core component of the Cara House vision is to address this struggle which often results in re-incarceration, and create stability.

Redlining was a governmental policy in the 1930s that classified neighborhoods based on how "safe" it was to give out a homeowner loan in that area. Predominantly black and brown neighborhoods were typically deemed the riskiest, which meant it was nearly impossible for minority populations to get the financing to buy or remodel a home. While this policy was only officially in place for about five years and was outlawed in 1968 by the Fair Housing Act, the ramifications are still felt today. Home ownership is a large component of building generational wealth and to this day, white families are 75% more likely to own a home than minority families.

Racial disparity in home equity and income inequality is built into the fabric of Schenectady County. We cannot separate it from our fight to end homelessness and mission to provide economic prosperity for all who call it home. To end homelessness, we must also end racial inequalities.



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<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/schenectadycountynewyork/PST045221>  
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<https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=14/42.811/-73.947&city=schenectady-ny>

## ***BUY A PAVER* CAMPAIGN:** Your eternal support to end homelessness

You can buy a personalized paver for the Cara House garden and entranceway to help us create the new Bethesda House residence, Cara House. Once you selected the size of the brick to purchase, you will enter what you would like to have engraved on the order form.

Pavers will be placed near the building entrance or garden area.

We want to create an inviting, warm and beautiful welcome for our residents, guests and staff. Your special message will be part of Cara House for decades to show your support for caregivers and people in need.

<b>4" x 8" Brick Paver</b>	<b>\$100</b>	3 Lines of Text, 20 Characters Total
<b>8" x 8" Brick Paver</b>	<b>\$250</b>	5 Lines of Text, 20 Characters Total, Clipart Available
<b>12" x 12" Paver</b>	<b>\$1,500</b>	7 Lines of Text, 20 Characters Total Can include a Custom Business Logo, Personal Logo or Clipart (call us for details)

Please go to our website at [www.bethesdaahs.org](http://www.bethesdaahs.org) to place your order.



# Consistent Connection, Compassionate Care

By Caroline Codd

Before COVID, we began an innovative venture to bring medical care in-house to our homeless and vulnerable guests and residents. And while pandemic restrictions slowed down our ability to grow the program, we never lost sight of its vision. In-house physical and psychiatric care has allowed us to truly live up to our mission of being a safe haven for all who need it.

With restrictions lifted, we are able to increase the number of people who walked through our doors seeking care. Amanda, our newly hired registered nurse, has been working tirelessly to ensure the medical program is a quality service. Amanda works alongside our psychiatric nurse practitioner, Jackie, to address a wide range of medical needs among our clientele.

Twice a month, we hold a non-restrictive clinic that allows anyone seeking services to have their vitals checked, get help with making appointments, track health goals and learn about health resources available to them. The fall-out from the pandemic has created such a backlog in the healthcare system that many people are seeing months-long waitlists just to see a primary care doctor. For those with ongoing conditions like diabetes, hypertension or mental illness, this is not a sustainable option. They need care now with someone they can trust.

Trust is a core component of this medical program. The homeless and impoverished populations are highly skeptical of the traditional healthcare system, which can feel like an alienating and shameful experience - especially for those with substance abuse problems. Their medical care needs are complex and finding accessible, holistic care is a rarity. This creates a care avoidance that often perpetuates their health concerns and ultimately is a barrier to their own stability and autonomy.

The goal of Bethesda House's in-house medical program is to facilitate that trust through consistent connection and compassionate care. We look at the whole picture and understand that one's physical and mental health does not exist in a

vacuum. We've all had periods in our lives that were so stressful that taking care of ourselves felt like the last thing we had the time or energy for. The homeless and impoverished community are dealing with the pressures of everyday life on top of uncertainty around their next meal or shower or where they'll lay their heads at night. Physical and mental illness can also be barriers to job security if they're left untreated, which perpetuates the cycle of homelessness and poverty.

With the clients she currently sees, Amanda encourages a mindset of independence and autonomy. "Their whole lives are out of control," she says, "but taking care of their health is one thing they can control. What they eat, going for walks, taking their medications and making sure they show up to their appointments. It's one thing they can start doing, Today."

Every day is a new opportunity for us to better ourselves. At Bethesda House, we'll always take that opportunity to work toward becoming a more compassionate, holistic center of care for those in need. Thank you for standing with us for over 30-years, especially the last two, and helping to support that vision.





# Volunteering – The Gift of Time

By Caroline Codd

We all know the many ways that volunteering gives back to others, how it supports the community and helps those in need. We also know how good it makes us feel. Helping others is an essential component of our human nature. It could be something as simple as loaning someone a pen. Extending a helping hand creates bonds and fulfills our sociological needs to be part of a community.

The act of volunteering is typically seen as a selfless act. And in many ways it is. In our modern times where we never seem to have enough time, giving up your time freely for others is gracious. But what if we saw it more as a two way street? What if incorporating volunteering on a regular basis could be a key to our own well-being and an active way to prioritize our mental health?

A 2020 study<sup>1</sup> found participants who volunteered for at least a month experienced better mental health and well-being than those who didn't. It makes sense when we consider that volunteering can help increase confidence, build relationships and, even when working in stressful environments, can help lower one's stress levels due to the satisfaction and fulfillment we feel afterward.

Our community at Bethesda House is filled with those of you who deeply care about the less fortunate and want to make a difference. If you're new to volunteering or jumping



back in, know that you'll walk away from the experience filling your cup as well as others. The last couple years showed us how important it is to care for our own well-being. Volunteering can be one actionable step toward that goal. We'd be so happy to have you.

## Sources

<sup>1</sup> <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10902-020-00242-8>

## BETHESDA HOUSE 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 Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00 - 4:00 or by calling Bethesda House (518-374-7873) to make arrangements.

### Day to Day

#### Food

- Non-perishable items

#### Kitchen

- Spices, coffee and tea
- Can openers
- Pots and pans
- Cooking utensils

#### Clothing

- Gently used items for men/women
- Men's sweatpants, sweatshirts, T-shirts in various sizes
- Practical shoes
- Spring/Summer clothing
- New underwear and socks

#### Hygiene Products

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

#### Linens

- Sheets, towels, washcloths
- Blankets

#### Seasonal

- Home Depot/Lowes gift card
- Our Veterans' Program needs the following:**

- Twin sheets
- Twin comforters
- Pillows
- Bed bug covers (mattress, box spring and pillow covers)
- Blankets
- Hygiene kits
- Socks (varying in size)
- Underwear (varying in size)
- Undershirts (varying in size)
- Towels
- Wash cloths
- Hand towels
- Slippers (varying in size)

### 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 [bethesdaahs.org](http://bethesdaahs.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 at [www.bethesdaahs.org](http://www.bethesdaahs.org)**

## Friends up to \$100

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 The Arnold Cogswell Foundation  
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 Golub Family Foundation  
 The Schenectady Foundation  
 The Wright Family Foundation

Bethesda House is grateful to the individuals, congregations, businesses, and private foundations who donated from \$1 to \$100,000. 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@bethesdaohs.org](mailto:adminasst@bethesdaohs.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.

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## Memorial Names:

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 Robert Christoffel

Mary Christoffel  
 Marianne Sheppard  
 Eli Krieger  
 Ruth Seypino  
 Allen Matterdi  
 Beverly Roscoe  
 Joseph Morawaski  
 Marga Vandenburg

## Honorarium Name:

Alice McGhee



## 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.

## Board of Directors

Cathy Terwilliger  
President

Margaret Coker  
Vice President

Karen Roach  
Secretary

Andrew Clark

Michael Diffley

Richard Parsons

Abby Rockmacher

Kathleen Rooney

John Sapone

Jennifer Eslick

Philip Lucien

Arthur Butler

## Bethesda House Administration

Kimarie A. Sheppard  
Executive Director

Anne McGhee  
Deputy Director

Crystal Thatcher  
Director of Residential Services

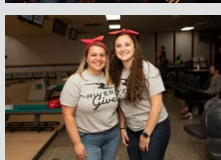
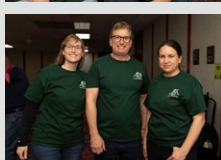
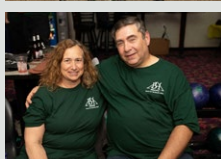
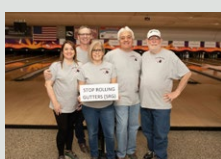


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# FUNDRAISING

*Fundraising is a shared journey to empower change one gift at a time.*



On May 6, 2022, Boulevard Bowl hosted Bethesda House's 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Bowl for Bethesda fundraiser "Strikes Against Homelessness."

After two years of pandemic-related silence, the roar of thunder was heard at the alley as bowling balls crashed into pins, knocking them down and sending them flying! Fifty bowlers and many spectators crowded the lanes to help end homelessness and bring dignity to at-risk residents in Schenectady County.

What a huge success this event was. Every year we are so grateful to those who come out to support our community and Bethesda House's mission of caring for people. Along with our bowlers, there were numerous sponsors of the event.

Together we can strike out homelessness! **A special Thank You to our seven (7) lane sponsors and six (6) Turkey sponsors.**

**Lane Sponsors:** GreenBush Tape & Label, Inc., Bennett Contracting, LLC, Frank & Sons Body Works, True Juice Café, Kevin McCormick, Annette Guido, and Kimarie Sheppard.

**Turkey Sponsors:** Richard and Eunice Werner, COINS, Stracher Roth & Gilmore Architects, Rivers Casino & Resort, John Sheppard, and Kimarie Sheppard.

This year we had awards for Best Team Name: Rivers Casino & Resort's "**Rush St. Riveters;**" Highest Scoring Team: Stracher Roth & Gilmore Architects' "**Stop Rolling Gutters;**" Women's High Score: **Sharon Lotano;** Men's High Score: **Eric Harrell;** Most Gutter Balls: **River Casino & Resort;** Team Raised the Most in Donations: Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church's "**Holy Rollers.**"

**Thank you so much to Boulevard Bowl,** who has hosted our event each year. Boulevard's management and staff are professional and accommodating, helping us each year to make this night a great time for everyone.

**NEXT YEAR'S BOWL FOR BETHESDA WILL BE MAY 5, 2023. MARK YOUR CALENDARS SO WE CAN SEE YOU THERE!**

