

CONTINUING TO CARE

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It is nearly impossible to not write about spring, hope and newness. Outside my office window the blue birds are busy nesting. In addition, our beautiful courtyard is sprouting green down close to the ground in a thousand different places. At home the deer are nibbling the ever so tiny new sprouts of grass and moss. By the time this newsletter hits in our homes spring should be nearly in full array.

I want to sincerely thank you all for your open door policy in regard to those who find themselves without shelter, the homeless, here in the greater Bloomington area. We have just concluded as of March 31st another winter of providing food and shelter in our building for three out of the seven nights of the week for a five month period of time. It takes about 35 volunteers a night. Sara Frommer has been our volunteer coordinator again this past year and she quite simply is stellar at making sure our Monday night/Tuesday mornings and occasional Saturday nights have been fully staffed. But, to all of you who routinely make providing shelter for others a priority.....thank you from me and from our guests.

We have been fuller this winter than we would have expected. Many times through the winter we found ourselves with as many as seventy (70) men and women asking to spend the night in our shelters. There a lot of people who desperately need a place to sleep and eat. All those sleeping in our shelter are in the face of the reality that the Crawford House apartments and the associated program has taken over housing nearly sixty (60) of the most chronically homeless.

There remain so many people who are homeless due to mental illness related dilemmas. Of course, there are a lot people for whom alcohol is a big addiction. However, even many of those are quite simply using alcohol as a medication for any number of mental health issues. Family structures have failed for so many of the people we provide shelter. We do not see many expensive drug habits. Our guests cannot afford them! But, alcohol and addiction problems cost society a tremendous amount when one counts police calls, ambulance and emergency room visits which we all end up paying for either in taxes or in higher fees for medical care. Every study I read points out that communities like Bloomington would find it far cheaper to provide inexpensive shelter than to continue to amass costs the way it is done now.

It is never politically popular in our culture to be on the side of providing increased care to the homeless. But, we are involved and we need to be prudent about noticing how our tax and charitable dollars are spent. It costs so very much to have police and emergency services providing care to the homeless populations and it is an ever occurring circle of service. Folks who are homeless do better in shared

housing situations. They get sick less, use emergency services less and end up in jail less. Our culture loves to send people to jail but JAILS ARE UBER EXPENSIVE! Jails do not help people get better.

In Bloomington there is an election coming upcoming. Please ask of your candidates how they are going to work to actively assist solving the issues related to homelessness. Just saying, "Jobs, jobs, jobs" is not the answer. So many folks are simply broken and will not be able to take anyone's job until they are cared for significantly and many of our folks will be broken for a lifetime. What will our next mayor propose doing with truly innocently broken people? While I am sure that churches ought to be doing what we are doing by providing shelter, the greater community's tax dollars are still being poorly used and our community could do better in partnership with us. Please use your vote wisely! Elections are phenomenal times to wrangle commitments out of politicians.

May the blessings of Easter joy and surprise lure you forward in this new season of spring. New growth is what happens. Let us grow toward all that God is luring us toward!