I sat down last month with Melissa for a conversation about her housing journey. It’s an awkward topic, and the question is not an easy one to ask, but I ventured ahead anyway. “How did it happen that you became homeless?”

“Well,” she snickered, “it all boils down to some poor choices I made in a relationship.”

She went on to explain that she became infatuated with “Rob,” whose “Prince Charming” personality swept her off her feet. Her life began to revolve around the relationship while other priorities took a back seat.

Over the course of a few months, both lost their jobs, so they were unable to pay rent. They stayed with friends or relatives for days or weeks at a time and would find another place to stay once notified they had to leave. (In the world of housing and homelessness, we call this “couch-hopping” and it is a form of homelessness, as it is not a stable or sustainable situation).

“Eventually, we got into Partners for Housing’s (PHH) shelter and Rob started working. During this time, Melissa realized she was pregnant. We were looking at affordable houses or apartments to rent once we left shelter. Rob kept telling me that he would get me a castle like I deserved.”

She went on to explain that she and Rob became victims of a scam…a would-be home fell through because they paid a person posing as the landlord/owner who had no legitimate right to rent the home.

“For a while, after the baby was born, we were living out of my car,” Melissa continued. “It was miserable and extremely difficult, all three of us in the car each night. We’d have to drive around to find different places to park.”

Melissa continued, “If we wanted home-cooked meals, we would buy groceries and offer to make a meal for friends. Our friends thought we were treating them, but really, just wanted to eat a hot meal and needed to use their kitchen.”

Melissa realized that she needed to begin advocating for herself, in more ways than one. She drove around Mankato, looking for the deal place she could call home. She called PHH staff, who assisted her with the application process for an apartment. Meanwhile, Rob was becoming increasingly manipulative and controlling.

The couple was in the habit of eating a hearty breakfast at a local church ministry. On one of the visits, Melissa gained the courage to ask a pastor for help in leaving the relationship.

There were a few difficult weeks for Melissa, as she advocated for herself and her baby, and was able to make a break from Rob. She received daycare help from the county and, using a temp agency, she began a job search. The hiring staff asked if she would be interested in becoming a dog grooming assistant. She’d never thought about it before but decided to give it a whirl.

Three years later, Melissa is still joyfully employed in her grooming job. She loves her apartment, her independence, her job and her life. When she picks up her son from daycare, she catches herself saying, “We’re going home to OUR home,” and it brings her incredible joy and gratitude. She still regularly accesses PHH’s Case Management services as she continues to maintain stable housing.

I asked Melissa if she had a message she wanted to share with our readers. She stated, “I just want people to know that it’s difficult being on welfare. It’s really hard to be in a constant state of need for food and shelter.”

“The (PHH) shelter staff helped me get this place, and I am so happy here! There’s just something very special about saying, ‘my home’ or ‘our home’. I am so grateful to be able to live in ‘my castle, my palace’ with my son.”

Melissa serves as a Regional Export representing PHH as part of the Housing Home Together collaborative, hosted by the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless and funded by the Heading Home Minnesota Funders Collaborative. She advocates for the rights of people experiencing homelessness.

Kirsten Becker, Communications Manager
SUPPORTIVE SOLUTIONS

We too feel that no one should have to go it alone on their housing journey, which is the beauty of our program, and is made possible ... by you!

“We don’t have to do all of it alone. We were never meant to.” This quote is from the book “Rigging Strong,” authored by Brené Brown. If you are not familiar with her, I encourage you to watch a TED Talk or read one of her books. Brown reminds us that, in order to grow, to become strong and brave, we must be our authentic, vulnerable selves. Frightening stuff to think about for some, but embracing our weakness gives us power and strength to overcome difficulties, and to move forward.

This concept aligns well with our mission. People come to us vulnerable, afraid, without hope and lacking a solid plan to get to a better place. Their options are few, their hurdles are many, and they feel alone. We too feel that no one should have to go it alone on their housing journey, which is the beauty of our program; people don’t have to. They are surrounded with caring staff who will support them every step of the way. This safety net is made possible through the commitment of our AMAZING PARTNERS: compassionate and dedicated staff; past clients who continue to advocate; project volunteers; volunteers on our Board of Directors; and YOU!

It’s a beautiful journey when we all PARTNER together to bring the Partners for Housing mission to life: “… to guide individuals and families on a path toward housing stability.” Thank you for joining us on this journey, and we hope you will continue to commit to PARTNER with us and make an impact in the lives of many.

-Jen Theneeman, Executive Director


day 27.21

Pedal Past Poverty returns for its 9th year on Saturday, February 27, 2021. This exciting and unique stationary bike race, which has been a key element for PHN to raise funds to address homelessness, will convene at its new venue: MRC’s 8000 sq. ft. facility at 1750 Energy Drive in Mankato.

Presented by MBT Total Elevator Solutions, the Pedal Past Poverty planning committee plans to stay abreast of best practices, CDC advice and local ordinances in order to keep the event safe, fun and productive. Mayo Clinic Health Systems has committed as a major sponsor and will help with the CEHD-19 safety plan.

Jen Theneeman, Executive Director, assures participants that we will be making many modifications for the upcoming event. “We are looking at staggered heats, careful spacing of the bicycles, and the option to compete and participate remotely, while still keeping the event exciting and high-energy.”

This event, which began in 2012, has become popular in the community and is not just for biking enthusiasts. Riders from ages 6-99 jump on a bike and pedal for our cause. Prizes are awarded to fastest riders, most funds raised, and to riders and teams with the most spirit!

Sponsorships are being sought at various levels. Those interested in supporting this event while promoting their business to over 400 participants are encouraged to visit the website: partnersforhousing.org/pedal or to contact our main office at 507.387.2115 x 4. Team registration for the event will begin November 1, 2020.

In the Greater Mankato Area, the housing crisis is a community issue.

48% of renters pay more than 50% of their income on rent
16% of renters pay more than 50% of their income on rent

Partners for Housing

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PEDESTAL PAST POVERTY

All in Perspective

VISION
All people have a safe place to call home.

MISSION
To guide individuals and families on a path toward housing stability.

The Board of Directors is seeking additional volunteer members. If interested in applying, please visit partnersforhousing.org/aboutus for more information.

christian bailey
nidec - kato engineering

mark cipos
wikileath

david cowan
minnesota state university

krysta elmore
blue place apartments

sara deriner
compeer financial

beth faernacht
timeless interiors

michelle johnson
Taylor Corp - labWorks

corinne muser
MEI - Total Elevator Solutions

mark pegho
blue earth county commissioner

luana rejda
disciplinary advisors

jakie severud
mayo clinic health system

jacob sherlock
betten benes

brenda telley
minnesota valley action council / school sisters of notre dame
HOLIDAY BUNDLES

12.14.20

The Holidays can be a tough time for people facing homelessness. Currently, 1 in 4 people are severely cost-burdened in the Mankato Area, making them vulnerable to homelessness. In 2017, 1015 individuals sought emergency shelter, and of those, nearly half were children.

In order to make the Holiday Season a bit brighter for our Shelter Guests and Transitional Housing Clients, we encourage you to participate in the Holiday Wishes program. Call us to let us know you’re committing to the program, then please purchase at least one item from each category below to create a family bundle.

Please select at least one item from each category and drop off unwrapped bundles at our main office by Dec. 14, 2020
151 Good Counsel Dr, Door 11
Mankato, MN 56001
or more info, call 507-387-2115, ext. 4

LAUNDRY ITEMS
Includes laundry detergent, laundry baskets, hangers, dryer sheets, bathroom towels, pillows

ENTERTAINMENT
DVDs, board games, cards, outside sports, puzzles, movie tickets

TOYS
Crafts, coloring books, crayons, building blocks, PlayDoh, learning toys

KITCHEN
Pots, pans, silverware, kitchen towels, utensils, clothes, glasses, cups

CLEANING SUPPLIES
Broom & dust pan, cleaning wipes, cleaning spray, cleaning towels, scrub brush, air freshener

GIFT CARDS
Walmart, Kwik Trip, Casey’s, Holiday, Aldi, grocery or other gift cards.

NOTABLE DONORS—SUMMER/FALL 2020

Anonymous Couple - St Peter $15,000.00
Trinity Lutheran Church - The Kitchen - St Peter $3,000.00
United Prairie Bank - Mankato $1,095.00
First Presbyterian Church - Mankato $1,000.00
MEI Total Elevator Solutions - Mankato $601.62
BankVista - Mankato $500.00
Samuel & Julie Gault - St Peter $500.00
Knights of Columbus - North Mankato $500.00
Rebecca & Alan Tolzman - North Mankato $500.00

GIVING TUESDAY

12.1.20

GivingTuesday was created in 2012 as a simple idea: a day that encourages people to do good. Over the past seven years, it has grown into a global movement that inspires hundreds of millions of people to give, collaborate, and celebrate generosity.

Whether it’s making someone smile, helping a neighbor or stranger out, showing up for an issue or people we care about, or giving some of what we have to those who need our help, every act of generosity counts and everyone has something to give.

Identify your gift amount, visit: partnersforhousing.org/givingtuesday and give back—not just for GivingTuesday on December 1, 2020, but every day.

The Heart of Iris

Iris (waving) with Ava, Maci and Bryson. These young entrepreneurs donated their lemonade stand profits to Union Street Place in St Peter. We applaud their generosity and are grateful for their kindness. We also thank their parents for their guidance and for encouraging a giving spirit in these young people.

Thank You

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Thank You

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When I was seven years old, my neighbor Jill and I would play a funny game. She would begin, joyfully, “I got a new bike.” Then I would reply, “That’s good!” She would continue, “No, that’s bad because I didn’t know how to ride it.” Then I would say, “Oh, that’s too bad.” She would pipe in, “Well it’s actually good. I got the hang of it and it’s really fun.” I would say, “Oh, that’s good you enjoy your new bike.” And she would say, “No, because I fell and knocked out a tooth.” It: “That’s too bad that you knocked out your tooth.” She: “No, it’s good! I got a quarter from the Tooth Fairy!” And so on, we would continue until we were laughing hysterically.

It’s probably a silly example, but as we’ve been pondering the news to share about Partners for Affordable Housing’s Union Street Place, I realized that, because of the nature of serving people facing homelessness, there are a lot of “That’s good/that’s bad” situations. Some of it relies solely on the perspective, and some clouds truly do have silver linings.

Let me explain a bit. Partners for Housing has been working for more than 35 years in the region to provide shelter and housing stability to individuals and families in need. That’s good! But there are still so many people we can’t help due to lack of space and funding. That’s too bad!

COVID-19 has challenged us in ways we’ve never expected. That’s too bad! We’ve learned to be more flexible, leave our personal struggles at the door, and have added additional safety precautions for the health of clients, staff and the community, such as providing masks, increased cleaning, updating client and staff protocols such as daily COVID-19 screenings, providing more onsite help like food, diapers, toiletries, transportation, technology and laundry supplies to reduce the need to venture out in the community. That’s good.

Our clients are facing additional barriers with jobs, childcare, and distance learning. That’s too bad. Our staff continue to facilitate connection to resources, and we have found that our clients are extremely resilient and often less fazed by the effects of the pandemic than most are. That’s good.

Governor Walz placed a moratorium on evictions, so fewer people can be without shelter. That’s good. As landlords of low-cost rental properties which partially subsidize our emergency shelters, we are finding that tenants are struggling financially and are behind in their rent. Without the income from these properties, we may need to scale back on programming or staffing. That’s too bad.

We are an essential provider whose staff have continued to work during the pandemic so the clients have received nearly seamless services. That’s good! Business as usual during a pandemic may put our staff at heightened risk. That’s too bad.

Expenses have increased for our organization. That’s bad. Local and state grants have been made available to offset some of these hurdles. That’s good.

Although the weight of the challenges has seemed overwhelming, we are blessed to have supporters in the community, and we are hopefully optimistic about the future to continue to provide a safe and supportive respite to help people weather the storm. That’s good!

-Kirsten Becker, Communications Manager

On a daily basis, callers ask for our help in finding affordable homes to buy and rent. The name “Partners for Affordable Housing” gives the caller the impression that we can help with buying an affordable home.

Last Fall, our administrative staff began discussing options for possible name change, toying with new names that could adequately describe what we do; this is no easy task. After ongoing discussions, the board of directors approved our new name “Partners for Housing”. It was the easiest choice since we already owned and were using URL www.partnersforhousing.org. The added benefit for selecting the new moniker is the shortening by four syllables of our organization’s name. This will save our employees an average of one minute a day per person when answering phones or introducing themselves to others. :)