On June 16, team members from Consolidated Communications came out to help us spruce up our shelters and properties. It was a hot day, and they were great troopers and accomplished much!

A special thanks to Greater Mankato United Way for organizing their Week of Action.

JESSICA, JOAQUIM AND THEIR JOURNEY

Joaquim moved to the Minneapolis area with his family as a young adult. His parents urged him to attend college and get a degree. He took classes for a few months but began to fall behind in his studies and dropped out, causing his parents to kick him out of the house.

As a teen, Jessica moved from Houston, TX to southern Minnesota to live with her father and attend high school, but the relationship was volatile, and she learned to live in a state of housing instability. “I moved to the Twin Cities and stayed on friends’ couches, but it’s really hard to find a shelter to stay at, because there is a waiting list or they’re only for families,” she said.

Meanwhile, Joaquim was living on the streets and got into trouble with the law. He served time for his offenses, and when he was released from jail, he struggled to find a job due to his criminal history. Needing a place to sleep, he sought out local emergency shelters, but none of them gave him the resources he needed to get back on his feet.

That’s when he met Jessica and the two developed a mutual support system. Their relationship progressed; they found a small apartment to rent, and shortly afterward discovered that they were expecting a child. The couple had children from previous relationships. Jessica’s 3-year-old son was living with her mother, and Joaquim’s children were living with their mother. The couple realized they needed to stay stably housed, but none of them gave him the resources he needed to get back on his feet.

The family found PAH’s Union Street Place as a temporary home. PAH case workers helped Jessica find a job and get the family connected to resources in the area. During the spring, PAH helped the couple move to their own apartment, and provide furnishings for their new place. Joaquim cares for Journey while Jessica is at work, and the couple is working with legal services to help Joaquim get his paperwork in order so he can get a job and Jessica can go back to school.
Sometimes the services we provide look like education and empowerment… a newly single female who never worked outside the home needs to find employment and believe in herself; a family who fled a war-torn country and has landed in Mankato but doesn’t know how to navigate community systems; a young mother who has reunited with her children after attending substance treatment. We help them reset and determine a path forward and our team provides support and resources to overcome big hurdles.

There is no end to the challenges our clients face, and no end to the efforts of our staff to partner and empower clients so they can overcome barriers and move on to a better life!

A common question recently has been “how has COVID-19 impacted the people you serve?” Like all of us, the impact can be felt in different ways. Facebook is filled with people who still have a job and can pay for their housing or car or other expenses, but lament about a vacation that fell through or the difficulties of distance learning or not being able to find toilet paper. Admittedly, I fall into that category as well. I worked between home and the office while my child learned at a distance. Fear of the unknown, change in our routine and not being near my Partners team everyday was hard. Fortunately, in my work, I’m reminded throughout the day of what REALLY HARD looks like, and it convicts me! A home, a job, health, a car, a savings account – blessings that I take for granted sometimes – are things some people in our community don’t have.

Try distance learning when the parent’s English or education level or understanding of technology is nil. Try saving money for a new home for your family when you lose your job. Try nurturing and supporting your children when you don’t know how you’ll be able to provide stability to your family, or you have a mental illness that prevents this.

Numerous times in recent months I’ve seen that people who have experienced homelessness and other subsequent challenges continue to trust us to help them. They know we are there for them and they want to entrust their future to us. We are so proud to be able to help them.

Our welcome mat is out for everyone. We serve people experiencing homelessness, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, primary language.
Despite the challenges, USP has been able to fulfill many essential needs thanks to generous neighbors.

“With your kind words, acknowledgments and financial gifts, you also LIFT UP, LEAD and WALK ALONGSIDE Partners in solidarity to counteract this epidemic and we thank you!”

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Have a little extra time on your hands and want to help? Let us know if any of these opportunities pique your interest:

- Online auction help (limited time—starting Nov. 1)
- Cleaning/painting help (single day)
- Sorting/organizing donations (ongoing need)
- Moving help—Need trucks and people to load/unload (intermittent)
- Office help (intermittent)

DONATIONS OF HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Due to space constraints, priorities and other logistics, we have modified some of the items collected for our clients as they move out of shelter and into stable/permanent housing. We will continue to accept donations of gently used basic household items:

- water glasses
- plates
- silverware, cutlery, basic utensils
- kitchen towels and cloths
- small appliances in working order (toasters, coffeemakers, microwaves, irons)
- beds in decent condition (mattresses, box springs, bed frames)
- living room chairs (non-reclining), sofas and love seats
- blankets, sheets, mattress pads, pillows and bedspreads
- area rugs and throw rugs
- pots and pans, bakeware
- lamps
- dressers, nightstands
- kitchen tables and chairs
- end tables and coffee tables
- framed mirrors
- bath and hand towels, washcloths
- storage containers and organizers
- cleaning supplies (mops, brooms, dustpans)

We will no longer be accepting home décor, books, games and toys, sleeper sofas or large recliners. To make a donation of more than a few boxes, please make a drop-off appointment by calling 507.387.2115 x4. Other small (1-2 box/bag) donations may be made at our main office during regular business hours.

The lack of affordable and subsidized housing in Minnesota is the primary barrier for those experiencing homelessness. This comes from the Wilder Research 2018 Minnesota Homeless Study. In working with guests and clients at Partners for Affordable Housing’s Union Street Place (USP) emergency shelter in St Peter, that barrier is amplified by other economic factors. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact access to employment, rental vacancies and childcare. Without childcare, families with young children find it difficult to gain steady employment, which creates a domino effect when trying to secure stable housing.

“It’s hard to find housing right now. It’s hard to find people to take kids for daycare,” said Kelsey Johnson, shelter manager at USP. “We are kind of at a standstill.”

The Minnesota Housing Partnership reported a 20 percent increase in median rent for Nicollet County from 2000 to 2017, with a cost of $693 a month to $829. The increase, along with a state-wide 9.9 percent unemployment rate reported in May, make for challenging scenarios.

Shelter staff have extended stays for guests due to the current barriers related to COVID-19. Three new households also arrived at USP this summer, bringing the emergency shelter rooms to full occupancy. Even at capacity, Johnson-Rode anticipates a greater demand for emergency services once evictions are no longer suspended by Governor Walz.

Despite the challenges, USP has been able to fulfill many essential needs thanks to generous neighbors.

“The community has been very supportive in helping our guests with food and donations,” said Johnson-Rode. The shelter currently needs twin bed sheets, bath towels, and full-size bottles of shampoo and conditioner. With a continual occupancy by families, activities for children ages 10 to 15 are welcome. For the privacy of guests, donors are encouraged to call 507-932-3100 to arrange delivery.

Unfortunately, circumstances like these continue to bring people to our door, and we’re working hard to help. We have committed to reviewing our processes and training to ensure that we are an inclusive housing organization, and to seek out more feedback from those we have served, to ensure that we are doing our best. Our team is here for others to LIFT UP, LEAD, WALK ALONGSIDE and WALK BEHIND in solidarity. I feel blessed to have friends like you in our community who do the same thing for Partners for Affordable Housing! With your kind words, acknowledgments and financial gifts, you also LIFT UP, LEAD and WALK ALONGSIDE Partners in solidarity to counteract this epidemic and we thank you!

I welcome your feedback, questions and involvement anytime!

Best,

Jen Theneman
Executive Director

MAKE TODAY COUNT

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info@partnersforhousing.org | 507.387.2115 x 4
partnersforhousing.org | facebook.com/partnersforhousing
SAVE THE DATE:  
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2021  
9TH ANNUAL PEDAL PAST POVERTY

Returning for the ninth year, Partners for Affordable Housing (PAH) plans to host its annual Pedal Past Poverty event on Saturday, February 27, 2021. This exciting and unique stationary bike race has been a key element for PAH to raise funds to help fight homelessness in the Greater Mankato Area.

PAH’s event planning committee plans to stay abreast of best practices, CDC advice and local ordinances in order to keep the event safe and fun.

“Due to all we’ve learned about COVID-19, we will be making many modifications for next year’s event,” announced Jen Thenenman, PAH’s Executive Director. “We are looking at staggered heats, careful spacing of the bicycles, and the option to compete and participate remotely, while still bringing the excitement and energy that our riders expect.”

This event, which began in 2012, has become popular in the community and is not just for biking enthusiasts! Riders from ages 10 - 99 jump on a bike and pedal for a cause. Prizes are awarded to fastest riders, to individual riders and teams with the most spirit and who raise the most funds.

The event’s title sponsor for the second consecutive year will be MEI-Total Elevator Solutions. Other sponsorships will be available. Those interested in getting involved are encouraged to visit the website: partnersforhousing.org/pedal or to contact PAH’s main office at 507-387-2115 ext. 4.

“Although, this year’s challenges and opportunities look different for each family, business and organization, we agree that we all must stand together to support the needy and vulnerable within our own areas of reach and influence,” explained Coralyn Musser, Director of Outreach & Engagement at MEI.

Coralyn continued.

“Partners for Affordable Housing and their programming are vital to serving our community’s homeless population and helping families move towards stable, permanent housing,” Musser continued.

Team formation and registration for the event will begin November 1, 2020. To keep informed, visit the website: partnersforhousing.org/pedal or to contact PAH’s main office at 507-387-2115 ext. 4.

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Visit www.partnersforhousing.org/pedal to see the past 8 designs of the highly coveted Pedal Past Poverty T-shirts.

Do you have a concept in mind for ‘21? We’d love to hear from you and we will recognize our top picks at the event on February 27, 2021.

Send an email to kirsten@partnersforhousing.org by November 15, 2020

Supplies help fill the gaps
- Cleaning supplies
- Paper towels
- Paper plates and bowls
- Toilet paper
- Plastic forks and spoons
- Clorox wipes
- Disposable gloves

Help with food needs
- Bring a homemade meal once per month
- Provide grocery gift cards (increments of $50 and under)
- Make a meal with our guests, and help calculate expenses

Help with transportation needs
- Provide Lyft or Uber gift cards
- Purchase City of Mankato Bus tokens
- Purchase TRUE Transit rides
- Gas-only gift cards (increments $25 and under)

Donate your birthday
Your birthday has a life-changing impact when you donate it!
Create a Facebook fundraiser and ask your friends to give a donation to Partners for Affordable Housing instead of buying you a gift!
www.facebook.com/fundraisers

Let us know YOUR idea!
You’re smart – You’re creative. Do you have ideas to share with us?
Call 507.387.2115 x4 and let us know!

Check out our wish list
https://tinyurl.com/ PartnersAmazonList
Start a Pillow Drive!

Interested in joining the Pedal Past Poverty planning committee?  
Please email: kirsten@partnersforhousing.org.

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