

A Beautiful Smile Was All She Needed

"I didn't want to be that street lady pushing her cart around," said Erika Holm in reflecting on her seven months at the Welcome Inn three years ago. Anyone who took the time to get to know Erika would agree, she would never let that happen. She is too determined.

Erika knew, early in life, that she wanted to help others. Inspired by her uncle Father Gregory Heille, Erika envisioned a life of service but she could not have imagined where her work would commence.

She grew up in south-central Minnesota, the middle child of three girls. After graduating from high school, Erika relocated to Rochester where she attended community college. Even though her interest, at the time, was music therapy, Erika quickly realized she was not ready for the academia.

Her return to New Ulm fast tracked her to marriage and family. In the years that followed, the marriage dissolved leaving Erika to search, once again, for her future of service.

It wasn't long before Erika's dreams re-emerged.

Driven by faith and inspired by her uncle, Erika Holm made a decision most of us could never, ever imagine. After months of preparation and prayer, Erika made the decision to travel to Egypt in service as a missionary. According to protocol, Erika gave away her worldly possessions and boarded a plane bound for New York and (later) Cairo. She had little more than the clothes on her back and faith in her heart. An apartment had been secured for her, church members were ready to meet her and she had prepared herself for teaching English to young Muslim children.

Her tenure in Egypt was short-lived. Not only had Erika suffered her entire lifetime with major dental problems—an inherited disorder that affected many of her family members—but she now had to contend with living in a third-world country where refrigeration was unheard of and perishable foods hung in the hot marketplace for days before preparation and consumption. Erika became sicker than she could have ever imagined.

After seven weeks of suffering Erika had no choice but to return home. Penniless and property-less, Erika humbly asked for help at the door of the Welcome Inn.

Her stay at the homeless shelter changed her life. While there, Erika connected with Mankato's Open Door Health Center where compassionate dentists promised and delivered a new and beautiful smile. Why was that important? Because

"I didn't want to be that street lady pushing her cart around"

Erika wanted to work, wanted desperately to work, but her inability to comfortably and confidently smile became a serious barrier to employment.

Within a matter of months, Erika's new smile brought employment. Additionally, Erika was accepted by Section 8. With that assistance, she could afford a cute little apartment—a place to call home.

To this day, Erika has not forgotten her resolve to be of service to others. She has been the inspiration behind an important project being spearheaded by her church, Evangelical Free of North Mankato. Young mothers and single women moving out of the shelters and into an apartment of their own are gifted with a laundry basket filled with basic housecleaning and laundry supplies—things that cannot be purchased through SNAP (food stamps). Each laundry basket includes toilet paper, cleaning supplies, a broom and dustpan, paper towels and laundry detergent. Minimally speaking, each basket is valued at \$50. Church members hope to give out 30 baskets this year and look forward to continuance of Erika's mission in the years that follow. That makes Erika's smile even more beautiful!



The *President's* Prose



It has been said that sometimes the craziest of ideas can take flight and even soar! That has certainly been the case for our agency this spring. By now you might have heard about our tremendously successful "signature" fundraising event, Pedal Past Poverty held Saturday, March 2nd at the YMCA in Mankato.

I have to tell you that when our new director, Carrol Meyers-Dobler, told us about this event, we all had reservations. How could a stationary bike race be fun?

Who would ever want to build a team and participate by riding on a bike that went nowhere? And, how could the riders even begin to raise the requested \$100 per participant? It just did not seem possible. None the less, we deferred to her experience and hoped for the best.

Crazy as it sounded, Pedal Past Poverty was a resounding success raising over \$70,000 in NET proceeds. And, it was crazy! Please take a moment or two to enjoy the pictures and read all about our race on the insert in this newsletter—and—most importantly—be sure to mark your calendar for next year's race, Saturday, March 1st at the YMCA in Mankato!

Mark Piepho

Partners for Affordable Housing New Board Members



Lynn Kuechle is the Coordinator for the Glen Taylor Nursing Institute for Family and Society at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Lynn is married to Terry and they have two children, Taylor, 15 and Ryan 12. She earned her Master's Degree in Communications from MSU and has been researching and speaking about modern day motherhood and some of the professional and personal ramifications

of outdated stereotypes and idealistic expectations. Lynn coordinated Mama Palooza festivals in the area for several years, and is member of a group that recently opened The Museum of Motherhood in New York City.



Rev. Dawn Carder is a native of West Virginia. She has a BA Degree from Bethany College in Bethany, West Virginia, MS and Sixth Year Degree from Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, Connecticut and Master of Divinity from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Dawn has worked as an elementary teacher, counselor, adjunct professor, reporter, and

feature writer. She has been a pastor in Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota and has served as pastor at the First Presbyterian Church, Mankato, for 9½ years before her retirement on July 31, 2011. Currently, she is leading worship at Bass Lake Community Church in rural Winnebago, Minnesota. Dawn has three grown children, four grandchildren, and two golden retrievers.



Ben Shakespear was born and raised in Sydney, Australia. He is a Political Science and Non-Profit Leadership major at Minnesota State University, Mankato. After graduation he hopes to attend law school and work in human rights, advocacy, and diplomacy. Ben is excited about the opportunity to serve on the PAH Board to refine his advocacy skills.



Sally Erdahl earned her BS degree in Accounting from Minnesota State University Mankato and was employed as an accountant at Lloyd Lumber from 1992 until her retirement in March of this year. While at Lloyd, Sally was responsible for accounts receivable, accounts payable and the general ledger. Sally was previously employed at the Presbyterian Church as Treasurer and Business Administrator. In

years past, she also served as the volunteer bookkeeper and Board member for Habitat for Humanity. Sally and her husband, John, plan to spend their retirement years travelling.



Kris Wuller grew up in Mankato and graduated from Bethany Lutheran College and Minnesota State University, Mankato. She has a degree in Secondary Education. She has been married to her husband Kurt for 29 years and has a dog named Tucker. Kris works for Navitor as the Director of E-Commerce. She also enjoys volunteering at the YWCA, entertaining friends and family, working on projects with her

husband around the house and working at Pier 1 a few hours a week.

What does it mean to be “homeless?”

Being homeless has several meanings. If you look it up in a dictionary, it means to be without a home, but then goes on to say “therefore, typically living in the streets.” This is what many people think of when they hear the word “homeless.” What you may not know is the varying degrees of being homeless. Read through the following scenarios. Which people are “homeless?”

Amy was living in a home that she owned. She lost her job and was unable to make mortgage payments. Her house was foreclosed and she is now “couch-hopping” - sleeping at various friends’ and families’ houses for a few nights each. Is Amy homeless?

Bob is in a chemical dependency treatment facility. He was renting an apartment before he went into treatment, but has been evicted this month due to unpaid rent. He is in a 90 day treatment program. Is Bob homeless?

Mike works at a factory. He has been sleeping in a shed behind the factory for 6 weeks. He has been using the factory bathroom to wash-up before starting his shift at 8:00am. Is Mike homeless?

Susan was living in her apartment with her husband. Her husband has physically abused her and she left the apartment. She is now at a shelter specifically for victims of domestic violence. Is Susan homeless?

According to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), only Mike and Susan are considered homeless. Here is the legal definition of “homeless:”

Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

- (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation;
- (ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); or
- (iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or

less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution

Any individual or family who:

- (i) Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence;
- (ii) Has no other residence; and
- (iii) Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing

Though Amy does not have fixed or regular sleeping arrangements, her arrangements have been adequate as stated by the law. Bob had housing before entering the treatment program and will be leaving the program at 90 days. Even though he has no housing after leaving the program, the law does not define him as homeless.

As you can see, this creates challenges in assisting people in need. Certain programs go by the HUD definition of “homeless,” so would not be able to help people in Amy and Bob’s situations.



Minnesota State University, Mankato, Social Work Club students tried sleeping in a cardboard box for just one night during Homeless Awareness Week last November. Club members also gathered donations of non-perishable food items and cleaning supplies for shelters during that very, very cold night.

Mankato Clinic Helps Fund Shelters' Safety Program

The Mankato Clinic Foundation has awarded a \$5,000 grant to Partners for Affordable Housing, parent agency of Mankato’s two homeless shelters, the Theresa House and the Welcome Inn. The grant dollars will support the agency’s quest to build an Employee/Guest Safety Program. Grant dollars will be used to support the training and certification of all shelter staff in CPR and First Aid.

“Because the Mankato Clinic Foundation has chosen to support our quest for an Employee/Guest Safety program, those in our community who are experiencing a temporary housing crisis can be assured that shelter staff are well trained and able to confidently and competently provide essential first aid services when required,” said agency director, Carrol Meyers-Dobler. “We are so appreciative of their partnership with us.”



Kiwanis Lights

Partners for Affordable Housing was given the opportunity to work the Kiwanis Holiday Lights extravaganza at Sibley Park this last Christmas season and what a thrill it was! The project was orchestrated through the leadership of the Mankato Kiwanis and featured, quite literally, millions of holiday lights strung to tree, around buildings and through a wide variety of holiday-themed displays.

Though volunteers worked every corner of the park, Partners' staff and board members manned the entranceway collecting non-perishable food items on nine nights in December. Geared up in their long underwear, winter overalls, boots and jackets, the volunteers collectively received 6,625 pounds of food from holiday revelers touring the giant display.

The much appreciated groceries were promptly delivered to Theresa House and the Welcome Inn until the cupboards and closets could hold no more. Remaining donations were then

stored in the agency's food pantry located at the administrative offices. We are sincerely appreciative of the kind invitation extended to us by the Kiwanis and more than grateful to the generous donors who understood homelessness knows no season and hunger has no place at the table.



Children sheltered at the Theresa House and Welcome Inn love their regular walking excursions to the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota just two blocks away. There they can dress up, pretend they are working in a grocery store or dog grooming studio or perform countless experiments with water or sand. It is just too much fun!

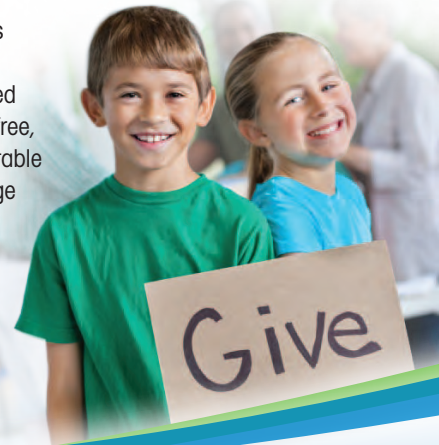
Just what is a "Used Furniture Barn"?

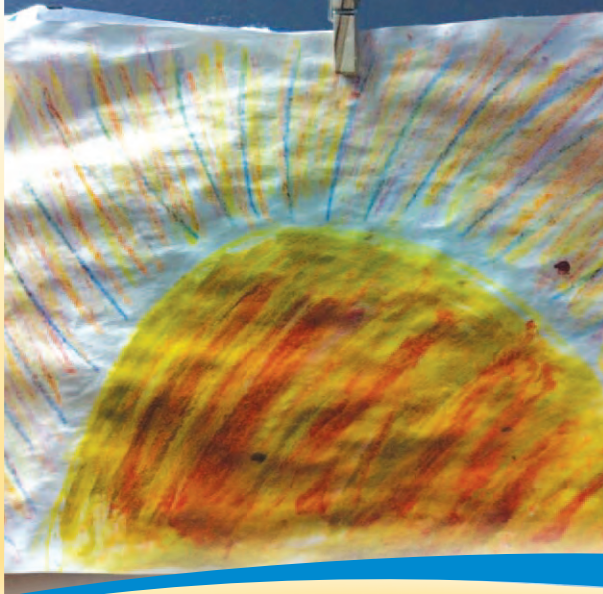
During a housing crisis, many families lose everything they have. After seeking temporary respite at the Theresa House and Welcome Inn, these families are often faced with the challenge of moving into a home of their own with nothing upon nothing—no beds, no dining table, no couch, no dishes, no silverware—nothing upon nothing!

That situation is changing through Partner's committed cadre of volunteers.

Through the availability of significant storage space at Partners' new office on Good Counsel Hill and the generosity of greater Mankato residents, Partners' volunteers have been able to launch the beginnings of a "Used Furniture Barn." The collected donations are sorted and stored within the basement level of the administrative offices "on the hill" and are used to help formerly homeless families outfit their new apartments with the basics of

household essentials: bed and bath linens, small table lamps, pots and pans, dishes, silverware, toasters and so much more when they are ready to move from the shelters to a home of their own. These donations are important for the recovering families. It means they can save their hard-earned cash for deposits and first month's rent on their new homes. In time, it is hoped that the agency can find rent-free, rodent free storage space suitable for the acceptance and storage of gently used furniture items, as well. **If you or someone you know can help make this dream come true, please contact Carrol at 507-387-2115.**





United Prairie Bank's "Denim for Dollars" Makes HUGE Impact

Chief Executive Officer Scott Bradley of United Prairie laughs when he thinks about the 17 bank, investment and insurance offices scattered across southern Minnesota and their efforts at philanthropy in years past.



While bank employees understand the power of philanthropic support in the form of cash, what they really like to do is roll up their sleeves and get their hands into a project. United Prairie Bank employees are pictured packing food for the Backpack Food Program. In the future, tellers and lenders might be painting bedrooms, and making up beds at one of the shelters.

"We had a program known as Casual Friday when employees of any of our branch banks could dress down in exchange for their financial support of a chosen charity. There was really only one hard and fast rule: you could not wear jeans to work," said Bradley.

"We looked like a bag of M & M's," laughed Scott, as each office selected the color of their logo wear.

Bank employees all across the organization were eager to dress down for Casual Friday but they looked like anything but a team. In fact, a bank customer might have had trouble determining who was a teller and who was another bank customer.

Bradley knew he wanted to build a team. Something would have to change.

It also occurred to the third-generation CEO that United Prairie really wanted to make a bigger impact on their home communities while building a sense of comraderie and pride within their ranks. They wanted to demonstrate the power of philanthropy. And, ironically, jeans did come into play.

After much thought, United Prairie leadership developed a carefully thought out plan for building team spirit while cementing financial support for community-based charities missioned to serve the disadvantaged. Each Friday, employees would have the option to pay \$5 in exchange for the opportunity to wear jeans to work that day as part of the company's Denim for Dollars program. Of course, the jeans had to be paired with the company logo shirt and a "Denim for Dollars" button.

Pretty simple.

United Prairie employees all across Minnesota liked the plan. Fridays became fun days and the dollars easily flowed into each of the 17 offices. Corporate matched the collected dollars making an even bigger impact for those charities who scrambled to help the poor or very poor of each bank's home community. Over the past three years, since inception of the "Denim for Dollars" program, United Prairie Bank has gifted over \$80,000 to needy Minnesota charities. In Mankato, the beneficiaries of the progressive bank's philanthropic work have been Partners for Affordable Housing and the Backpack Food Program. Through their generosity and the generosity of their employees, over \$7,333 has been received by Partners.

Can Happiness be Found in Color?



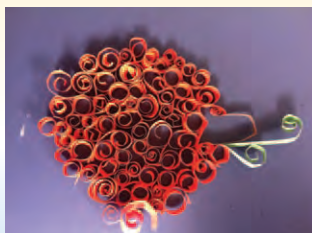
Through the generosity of the Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation, the children at Ahlstrom Road, site of 16 apartments owned and operated by Partners for Affordable Housing, have participated in Project GEM. The 28 week course, held every Friday afternoon, has been taught by MSU student Madison Thomas.



The children, ages five through twelve, have studied the color wheel and learned about primary and secondary colors, while experimenting with the various mediums of paint, crayon, paper, pen and ink, wire and more. They have expanded their knowledge of art vocabulary and been introduced to various styles of art such as abstract art or realism art. They learned that art can be playful and whimsical and that they can create happiness, even humor,

through bright colors and shapes that seem to move. Likewise, they learned that darker colors and stable lines could show grief.

Research has shown that exposure to the arts is important because it helps children to think "outside the box" and thereby develop successful problem-solving skills so useful in day to day living. Pending available funding, Partners is hoping to expand Project GEM for the 2013-2014 school year by offering the class to all children sheltered with the Welcome Inn and Theresa House as well as those living on Ahlstrom Road.





April 2013 Newsletter



Partners for Affordable Housing provides shelter for homeless families and individuals, and helps them to secure economically viable long-term housing.

Partners Introduces *New Staff*



Shinead Cunningham, Shelter Support
Shinead is a junior at Minnesota State University, Mankato working towards a degree in Hospitality Management.



Reina Saltou, Shelter Support
Reina is attending South Central College and will graduate in May. She plans to continue her education at MSU, working toward a degree in Zoology.



Joe Wagner, Maintenance,
is our "jack of all trades" performing simple and not-so-simple maintenance and repair projects that seem to constantly emerge at any of our ten facilities or 30 apartments

If you are not interested in receiving future editions of our newsletter, please let us know by calling 507-387-2115. We will promptly remove your name from our mailing list.

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Needs List: Our shelters need kitchen knives, silverware, food storage containers, dishes, pots and pans, alarm clocks, toilet paper, tissues, laundry soap, dish soap, magic erasers, deodorant, shampoo, conditioner, body wash, baby wash, feminine care products (pads and tampons), diapers, wipes, cleaning supplies, mops, vacuums, bed pillows, twin sheets, bath towels, fans, space heaters, address labels (30 to a page), Post It notes, envelopes, printer paper, thank you note cards, presents for children of all ages, bus tokens, gas cards, gift cards, batteries, pain reliever for infants, children, and adults. We would also appreciate NEW bed pillows!

Spring Cleaning? With our newly formed "Used Furniture Barn" Partners can now accept gently used basic household items such as kitchen utensils, pots and pans, dishes and silverware, microwaves, small lamps and coffee tables, bed and bath linens and anything else families might need to set up their own apartments once they leave our shelters. Please contact Tiki, our Volunteer Coordinator, to arrange drop off of your "next to new" donations at our administrative offices. She can be reached at 507-387-2115.