

Finding the Person She is Meant To Be: Angela's Story

The Wilder Research Center located in St. Paul, MN conducts a statewide comprehensive study of homelessness in Minnesota every three years. The most recent study, conducted October 25, 2012, found young adults to be the fastest growing segment of those who are homeless in Minnesota.

The information verified three factors that contribute to a young adult's vulnerability to homelessness: (1) exposure to trauma and abuse in their childhood homes, (2) a diagnosis of a mental illness, and (3) the darkness of addiction.

Angela Herz could have been the poster child for youth experiencing homelessness in Minnesota. You would not know that upon meeting her. Breathtakingly beautiful, bright-eyed and personable, one could never guess her real life experiences on the street.

Angela's parents divorced when she was barely two. She remembers being heartbroken, describing herself as a "Daddy's girl." Relegated to live with her mother, the young girl witnessed family violence perpetrated at the hands of her mother's abusive boyfriend. Even though she was eventually reunited with her father, life, for Angela, did not improve.

By sixth grade, Angela was smoking and skipping school on a regular basis. By seventh grade, she was drinking and smoking pot. In the eighth grade, Angela suffered a brutal sexual attack that put her in the hospital where physicians told her she would never be able to have children. Angela killed the memories of that incident and many, many more with mushrooms and acid supplied by a 32 year old male "friend." One can only imagine the horrors endured by her.

Angela entered the first of what would be many treatment centers by the time she turned 15. Treatment was followed by residency in a halfway house where she was arrested for sabotaging her treatment protocols. Court-ordered to a juvenile detention center, Angela was bailed out by her father just one week later.

By now, cocaine and meth were Angela's drugs of choice. The years came and went. Treatment programs, hospital stays, police raids, jail sentences and even prison peppered her young adult life. Time after time, Angela struggled to stay straight. Time after time, she failed. With each failed attempt came a new resolve. She earned her GED.

She attended college and earned her associate degree in nursing. She gave birth to three miracle babies, little girls who were considered, from birth, blessings in any sense of the word. Life, for Angela, was tornadic but she never gave up. Not ever. Again, she was simply trying to survive.

Following her graduation from the Challenge Incarceration Program in Northern Minnesota, Angela, clean and sober once again, was accepted into the Welcome Inn. By then, her addiction of choice had become exercise, specifically long distance running! She was running daily, participating in local marathons and racing towards her new life. Based on her lifetime diagnosis of mental illness, Angela was awarded SSDI, giving her a steady income. And, steady income meant she could chart her own future. She turned her sights to college at Minnesota State University Mankato where, today, she is just 12 credits from earning her second degree.

"I am an addict. I will always be an addict. Nothing is going to change that but thanks to the Lord and a wonderful man, I have my children back, I have a beautiful house and I have my sobriety."



The *President's* Prose



By the time this newsletter reaches your mailbox, we will have completed our second annual Pedal Past Poverty stationary bike race, now known as our "signature" event. While net profits on the Race are not yet available, we can safely assume that once again, the race raised \$70,000 in net proceeds or nearly 10% of our annual budgeted expenses.

You may have other questions. What other sources of revenue support the mission of Partners for Affordable Housing? And, how is the money spent?

Approximately 30% of our revenue is realized through the generous contributions of individuals, churches, local businesses and community-based organizations, including the Greater Mankato Area United Way. Last fiscal year, one-third of all contributions were realized through Pedal Past Poverty! These dollars are used as matching funds for grants, salaries for shelter staff, shelter expenses and direct resident support for our shelter guests.

Another 30% of our revenue comes from program fees. Program fees are rents paid by residents in our rental properties. It should be understood that Partners for Affordable Housing owns and manages five apartment complexes and three single family homes in addition to Mankato's two homeless shelters, the Theresa House and the Welcome Inn. Rents paid by residents are "below market rate" meaning we offer these units to "at risk" families. In addition, guests at Welcome Inn and Theresa House are encouraged to contribute \$25 a week for bed space after they have been in the shelter for 30 days. Program fees support building expenses and salaries.

The remaining 40% of our revenue is realized through federal, state and local grants. These grant dollars provide subsidies for rents, assist shelter guests with cab fare or bus tokens which may be needed, and support the salaries of our staff and program administrators. Local family foundation support provides funding for various programs, subject to change every year. This year some of the grant-supported programs are New Beginnings skills classes and Project Gem, an afterschool arts education program. Grant dollars also support the purchase of school supplies needed by our sheltered children, our Access membership in the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota and major renovation projects which might be required on the shelters and/or our rental units. For example, Open Your Heart to the Homeless and Hungry Foundation dollars made it possible for the agency to remodel the main floor bathroom at the Welcome Inn so that it is fully ADA compliant.

Finally, our organization is blessed to receive many gifts-in-kind. These non-cash gifts, such as laundry soap, diapers, cleaning supplies, personal hygiene products and foodstuffs, help us better care for our families as they transition from the shelters to their own apartments.

Bottom line—we could not carry out our mission without the generous support of the many individuals, families, businesses and organizations who believe in what we do. We thank you for your continued confidence that we are using our resources in the most effective means possible to help those less fortunate in our community. As a non-profit, our records are open to the public. If you would like a copy of our 2013-2014 budget or our 2012-2013 audit, please contact the administrative offices at 507-387-2115.

Mark Piepho, President
Partners for Affordable Housing Board of Directors

Partners' Support *Holiday Lights*

Partners for Affordable Housing was honored to be able to provide voluntary help to this year's Kiwanis Holiday Lights Extravaganza held at Sibley Park, Mankato. The organization's staff and volunteers worked throughout the months of November and December in several roles.

On three very *frigid* nights Partners' staff/volunteers collected non-perishable food items donated by Extravaganza attendees as they drove through the main gate. The foods collected support the daily meal requirements at the two shelters for an entire year. These donated foods are also provided to families struggling to stay afloat once they have left the shelters for their own apartments.

Additionally, staff members teamed up to work yet another *exceptionally* cold evening at the park welcoming cars at the entrance gate, collecting cash donations, distributing programs, and directing walking traffic.

In exchange for Partner's participation, the agency earned the right to decorate a tree within the park. Under the theme, "Every Heart Needs a Home", the Partners' tree was decorated with 54 wooden houses custom-cut by Wilcon Construction and decorated by staff and residents alike. Each wooden house represented a family or individual who stayed at the shelters during fiscal year 2012-2013.



Julie Caraway-Jensen, Program Director for Partners for Affordable Housing, was caught hamming it up with Santa during her shift!

Art With Hannah!

In response to the observed/expressed needs of Emergency Shelter (homeless) guests and those households enrolled in the Transitional Housing Program, Partners for Affordable Housing launched a 14 week skills curriculum last fall known as "New Beginnings." The classes are held each and every Thursday evening at Centenary Church, just one block from the two shelters. Classes are mandatory for all shelter guests with provisions for childcare thoughtfully addressed.

While parents are attending skills classes, and the pre-school children are playing with volunteers in Centenary's fully furnished nursery, just what are the school-age kids doing? Project GEM—or, as it has been nicknamed, "Art with Hannah!" Hannah Newman is a student at Minnesota State University majoring in Art Studio with a concentration in Ceramics and Printmaking and has been Partner's Project GEM coordinator since September.

Project GEM helps children develop their creative expression using a wide range of materials and mediums that bring focus to the cultural arts and appreciation for various art forms. The children work with clay, acrylic, water and oil paints, chalks, pen and ink, fabrics, wire and twine, plastics and more. Because the activities vary from week to week, the youth are able to fine-tune the essential life skills of listening, clarifying and following directions, asking questions and providing feedback.

Traditionally, Project GEM is designed to work with the same small group of kids for the entire academic year, but the nature of working with children living temporarily in the shelters has required considerable flexibility. As families move in and out of the shelter, Hannah says "good-bye," to some students and "welcome" to others nearly every week. Many of the children are skeptical when told they will go to art class every Thursday, but after 1 or 2 weeks they eagerly look forward to "Art with Hannah."



Learning How to Be a *Responsible Tenant*



In addition to completing a comprehensive housing search and participating in an intensive case management program, Partners for Affordable Housing shelter guests and program participants attend RentWise, a tenant education program.

RentWise is a six-hour program designed to help participants:

- Learn about communication & conflict resolution in an apartment complex or neighborhood
- Gain successful & responsible money management skills
- Know how to find the perfect place to live
- Ascertain the ins and outs of rental applications and rental agreements or leases
- Move in & out of their chosen apartments without hassles
- Manage the responsibility of cleaning and caring for their rental housing

RentWise is offered the second week of every month at Centenary United Methodist Church. Instructors are trained through the University of Minnesota Extension Services and participants receive a certificate after successfully completing the course. Certificates are often used to show a landlord that a prospective renter will be a responsible renter. Partners for Affordable Housing has been providing RentWise Education for over 15 years with the help of dedicated volunteers, Jean Anderson, Barb Heller, Nancy Holden, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, and other community volunteers.



Barb Heller



Jean Anderson

PARTNERS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING



Pedal Past Poverty Nets \$70,000

Pedaling to the blasting beat of Radio Mankato, forty-six teams of ten participated in Pedal Past Poverty, Partners for Affordable Housing's signature fund-raising bike race held Saturday, March 1st, 2014 at the YMCA in Mankato. Collectively, the bikers brought in approximately \$70,000 in net proceeds with online and matching dollars still expected in the aftermath of the event. Proceeds benefit Mankato's two homeless shelters, the Welcome Inn and the Theresa House.

Co-Chaired by Honorary Spokespersons Chris and Shari Crocker, this year's event featured more costumes, larger prizes and the involvement of several youth teams. Cari Bou, mascot for Caribou Coffee, joined the Piepho's Peeps Team Captain Mark Piepho (dressed in full chicken costume) to kick off the very first 20 minute heat. Piepho serves as the President of Partners' Board of Directors.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame continued their support of the event by building 5 teams whose total donations exceeded \$18,000! Six Mayo Clinic Health System teams raised another \$11,000. Prizes recognizing individuals and teams who raised the greatest amount of money will be awarded later this spring.

At the conclusion of the race, grand prizes were awarded as follows:

Most Miles Ridden by an Adult Participant

First Place: Dr. David Lu, Mankato Clinic Team, 7.22 miles in 20 minutes

Second Place: Katie Johnson, Mankato Clinic Team, 6.4 miles in 20 minutes

Third Place: Tom Myers, Piepho's Peeps Team, 6.1 miles in 20 minutes

Most Miles Ridden by a Youth Participant: Matthew Wedzina, Team Full Throttle, 5.96 miles in 20 minutes

Most Miles Ridden by a Team

First Place: The Friday Sliders, Team Captain Duane Olson, 52.6 miles total*

Second Place: United Prairie Bank's Wheely Awesome, Team Captain Heather Hinsch, 52.6 miles total*

Third Place: The Missing Links, Team Captain Chris Crocker, 50.74 miles total

*The top two teams tied in total miles. First place was determined by a random drawing.

Most Spirited Team: The Friday Sliders, Team Captain Duane Olson

Most Creative Team: Mayo Clinic Health System Team, Piddling Past Potty Stops, Team Captain Karen Tauer

All participants were eligible to win random prizes throughout the day. In fact, over \$20,000 in prizes had been gathered from generous community-based businesses by Board members, volunteers and staff for distribution at the race.

At the conclusion of the race, three random grand prizes were awarded to three lucky winners.

First Place Grand Prize (iPad): Joe DeLory

Second Place Grand Prize (Airstream Bike): Lisa Wojcik

Third Place Grand Prize (Davison Guitar): Lance Robert

Did you miss the race this year? You will not want to miss it next year! Mark your calendars now for the first Saturday in March, March 7th, 2015 (a tentative date) and plan to join us as we "Pedal Past Poverty"! For more pictures of teams dressed in tutus and crowns, as miners in hard hats and reflective gear, or looking like sugar-coated marshmallow peeps, go to www.partnersforhousing.org. The carnival atmosphere of the race will be easily apparent!

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Wishes Granted, Dreams Fulfilled

"It looks like Santa's Workshop in here!" exclaimed our office neighbor, Linda Hachfeld of Appletree Press, amazed at the stacks of presents quickly filling our office hallway last December. Big and small, practical and fun – the boxes and bags of holiday gifts seemed endless.

Orchestrated through the efforts of Partners' Volunteer Coordinator, Onnie Brodkorb, the holiday season brought more than a sleigh full of gifts for guests and former guests of the Theresa House and the Welcome Inn. Generous individuals, churches and organizations were matched to needy families, provided their wish lists and sent on a shopping spree. Santa's elves were asked to bring their unwrapped gifts to Partner's administrative offices by mid-December where they would be further sorted, wrapped and tagged for delivery during the days preceding Christmas.

On December 17th, more than 20 volunteers wrapped presents late into the night. Pajama pants, pots & pans, princess dolls, and pillows were all wrapped and readied for delivery. As gifts continued to arrive well past the "wrapping party" night, staff members, volunteers and nuns from School Sisters of Notre Dame did their best to keep up with the never ending flow of generosity.

When it was finally time to deliver the presents, Santa's sleigh (the PAH van) was overloaded. Multiple trips were required in order to deliver the gifts to the Welcome Inn & Theresa House as well as apartments in and around Mankato where former guests currently reside with their families.

With each delivery, there were looks of surprise and tears of joy. It quickly became apparent, it was not the staff who should be thanked but the donors. It was our *donors* who deserved the bear hugs from adults, elated shouts of "hooray" from kids and the shy whispered "thank you's" from toddlers hiding behind their mom's legs.

So, to everyone who contributed to a very Merry Partner's Christmas, we say, "Thank you!"

Sally Coomes and Barbara Dombrovski



Partners for Affordable Housing Donors *Thank You!*

The following is a list of all donors who gave a cash gift between Sept 1, 2013 through February 28, 2014. If your name or business has been omitted from this list, or we have a typographical error, please let us know. We are extremely grateful to those who have chosen to support our work with a portion of their life treasures. *Please note: The following list does NOT include donors in support of Pedal Past Poverty. Those gifts will be recognized within our fall, 2014 newsletter edition.*

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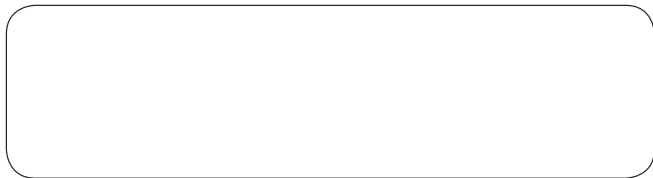
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Spring 2014 Newsletter



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



New Faces in *New Places*



Josh Ardolf is our new part-time maintenance person. He grew up in Madelia, MN. He learned a lot in the carpentry field by working for his dad for over 6 years in multiple states. Josh enjoys staying active and helping others out. He also works two other jobs while going to school full time online, so he is a busy guy.



J. Faith Solano was born in Mankato, MN and brought up on an organic farm. Her parents taught her a strong work ethic and the value of family ties. Faith married young and became a mother of six children, now ranging in age from 10 to 22 years old. She spends her time as a homemaker and violin teacher, along with marketing work for a local contractor, Homecrafters, Inc. Ms. Solano graduated in 2008 from South Central College with a Marketing Management Degree. In March, with a personal desire to help ease the homeless situation in the Mankato area, Faith was elected to a three year term on the Partners for Affordable Housing's Board of Directors.

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Laurie Evans is one of our brand new part-time Life Skills Support Staff. Born and raised in southern Missouri, Laurie worked many years at a large theme park in the Ozarks and earned a BA degree in studio art while there. In her 20 years in Minnesota her employment has focused on youth and people with disabilities, serving 2 years in the AmeriCorps National Service Program and earning a second degree in rehabilitation counseling. Favorite pastimes, now that she's semi-retired, include walking/hiking and bicycling (when it's warm outside), yoga, good movies, spending time with family, and art.



Krista Albrecht is our other brand new part-time Life Skills Support Staff. She was born and raised in Mankato, graduated from Immanuel Lutheran High School and is currently working full time at Orthopedic & Fracture Clinic. She is getting married in November. In her free time she likes to spend time with family and friends, go camping, do crafts and go shopping.