



# Solutions to Homelessness

WINTER 2013 NEWSLETTER



Reducing Homelessness Together

## *From the Desk of Steven Schooler,* Executive Director

As we approached this winter, we were confronted with the same concern we had last winter: how to provide a warm place during the day for the many homeless adults and families in the downtown and surrounding area. The Capitol basement remained closed and the Madison Central Library was nowhere near completion. Last year, with the assistance of the City of Madison, we opened and operated a daytime resource center in the abandoned Don Miller showroom on East Washington Avenue. This winter, that space had been demolished. As we were pondering how to address this problem, Dane County stepped up and made a commitment to opening up a daytime warming center for this winter and requested Porchlight to participate in its operation. We agreed without hesitation.

Locating a place for this center, even if limited only to this winter, was no easy task. Dane County worked diligently to find a suitable space. A key factor was that it be located in the vicinity of the downtown and on bus lines for accessing other services and opportunities. Downtown is where most homeless shelters are located and a warming center located outside of walking distance presents a real barrier to use as most do not have transportation or the resources to utilize bus service. After considering several sites and a few less than enjoyable neighborhood meetings, Dane County selected the former Lussier Teen Center at 827 East Washington. In many respects, the space was very good, with several large open rooms, a kitchen area, and an area for computers. It lacked showers and laundry facilities but needed very few other modifications. It also had a large patio area for guests to gather outside and for smoking.

However, locating the site was only a part of the challenge. Operating a multi-faceted facility that serves over 100 homeless persons a day, many with varied needs and hardships, is a real test. Last winter with Don Miller, we provided a warm space to many, but there were many police calls to the site, complaints by neighbors about the conduct of some of the guests, and limitations on the services provided to the guests. We tried to staff the Don Miller by rotating existing employees into various shifts. This simply did not work as there was no continuity of management or staffing.

The operation this winter required a different plan. At the same time, I knew that Sarah Gilmore, a social worker I have known and respected for many years, was possibly looking for an opportunity to try a more community-based model for the provision of homeless services. I was interested in experimenting with such a model in Madison. Porchlight currently operates Hospitality House, which provides a wide-array of assistance and services to homeless, and does use community volunteers, but it is largely staff directed. This is successful for many homeless persons, as it serves over 6,000 persons in any given year, and consistently receives high approval ratings in the 85% to 90% range on guest surveys. Nevertheless, it may not be all things to all people, and in addition its space is often overcrowded, even with its location on Martin Street, beyond easy walking distance from the downtown.

Sarah best describes her concept:

*We're running on a community relationship model. So what we're focused on is building relationships with people, developing trust and then learning more about folks and figuring out how to get them through some of their main barriers... This model reinforces that everyone, no matter their circumstances, has worth.*

Sarah emphasizes that homelessness is like anything else that takes time to recover from... and like all recovery programs, you have to take it a day at a time. Sarah's philosophy reminds us that sometimes we become so focused on results and outcomes, we forget the varied and substantial barriers that most homeless have to overcome.

On November 26, the Daytime Warming Shelter on East Washington opened. It operates seven days a week from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, and is principally managed by two staff persons: Sarah, Lucas (known as "Z"), and Nate, an intern through the Madison-area Urban Ministry and the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. Sarah utilizes many of the guests, numerous agencies and great community volunteers to provide programming and services. Volunteers and guests walk around the surrounding area to ensure issues do not arise in the community. Countless community members have donated clothing, food and other items to assist homeless persons. (A list of specific needs is provided on the back of this newsletter).

By all accounts, the Daytime Warming Shelter so far has been a fabulous success. There have been few police calls, minimal community complaints and numerous guests have been well-served. Dane County truly deserves our appreciation for providing the financial support to make this a reality.

Beyond this winter, Dane County has already committed to locating and beginning the operation of a permanent day center. While still in the planning stages, it is hoped that this facility will be in the vicinity of downtown and have not only sufficient space to accommodate the numbers it will surely serve but also have showers, laundry facilities, bag and item storage, as well as many of the attributes of the current Daytime Warming Shelter. More importantly, it is anticipated that operating model will be the community relationship model that is the currently in place at the Daytime Warming Shelter.

Whether Porchlight will be involved in the operation of the new facility remains to be seen. However, in the short time of operating the Daytime Warming Shelter, we have learned that there is no single means of addressing the needs of all homeless persons. We also have learned that simple reliance on goals and outcomes is not the only measure of success in the provision of homeless services. Moreover, being open to change and to new and different ways of providing services is essential to fulfilling our mission of reducing homelessness.

**Thank you!**

## A Second Chance For Sobriety, Stability and Success

In November of 2012, both Safe Haven and Partnership for Transitional Opportunities (PTO) transitioned their programs to the new Porchlight Nakoosa Trail campus located on the far east side of Madison. Over the years, these two programs have specialized in serving the needs of individuals whose challenges are considered among the leading causes of homelessness: chronic mental illness and substance abuse. Safe Haven provides temporary housing and support services for homeless men and women with chronic mental illness. Safe Haven also offers basic human services, as well as a psychiatric clinic for individuals without health insurance. PTO provides 18 units of transitional housing with case management and counseling services for homeless adults with a history of substance abuse issues.

The following is the story of one individual whose life has been profoundly impacted by both the Safe Haven and PTO programs.

Isaac grew up in Orangeburg, South Carolina. At 18 he received a phone call from one of his older brothers. It was an invitation to live with him in Madison, WI. Isaac immediately envisioned living with his closest older brother and finding better job prospects for himself than he had experienced in the deep south. Isaac's first three years in Madison were filled with consistent and frustrating attempts to secure gainful employment. It was at this point that Isaac's life took a turn for the worst. He rapidly went down a life path of severe and progressive alcoholism that co-occurred with major clinical depression, which was undiagnosed at the time. For 15 years, Isaac lived his life on the streets struggling with chronic alcoholism and untreated depression. During this expanse of Isaac's life, any level of ambition and will he had to make a better life for himself effectively ceased.

In 1988, Isaac reached a point in his life where he resolved to combat his alcoholism. He expressed that he could no longer live life "drunk and on the streets". As he progressively grounded his sobriety, he managed to secure employment. Having a consistent income enabled Isaac to rent an apartment for the first time. He also purchased a car. But the most important fruit of living a sober and stable life for Isaac was his ability to reconcile and develop a relationship with his daughter, who was in her early adolescence at the time.

Then, seven years into his sober and stable life, Isaac decided to "test" himself and have a beer. He surely thought that in consuming one beer, he could walk away and carry on, living a sober and stable life. In retrospect, Isaac understands that this was a grave error in judgment, as that one drink to "test" himself led to his return to a life of full blown alcoholism. His stable life unraveled rapidly, as his alcoholism consumed him completely. He

lost his apartment due to alcohol filled, drunken, rowdy parties. His chronic drinking also led to the loss of his job and his business. Tragic history repeated itself for Isaac. For the next 15 years, he lived his life on the streets, alleys, parks, hospitals, jails, prisons, and the men's homeless shelter. Isaac believes for certain that he "broke the record for the number of admittances to Dane County's Detox Center."

In the spring of 2012, Isaac was admitted to the hospital for what amounted to a complete collapse of his system caused by decades of drinking and drug use. Soon after his discharge from the hospital he resolved to end his life of alcoholism and drug use. At around this time a friend told him of a place where he could get help to get back on his feet. This place was Safe Haven. In June of 2012, after 37 years of addiction, Isaac walked into Safe Haven and started the process to receive services. Throughout the five months Isaac accessed services at Safe Haven, he was consistently focused and diligent in working on his sobriety and moving forward in his life.

Isaac continues his efforts in grounding his sobriety and stabilizing his mental health through his transition from Safe Haven into the PTO program. At PTO, he actively engages in programming that consists of individual counseling, group meetings, AA meetings, and access to relevant resources in the community. PTO's case manager, Rich Zietko, adds, "Isaac has demonstrated a commitment to excellence: actively participating in Omega School to get his GED, working on the employment curriculum, and taking charge of his recovery. He has seen the light!"



Tim, Safe Haven Case Manager, Isaac and Rich, PTO Case Manager, enjoying a cup of coffee at the new Nakoosa Campus.

**Upcoming Events**



MADISON CARES



MADISON CARES

**The Madison Cares  
Capital Campaign  
Committee**

and

**Porchlight**

Invite you to attend  
The Grand Opening of the  
Nakoosa Trail Campus:  
Safe Haven and Affordable Housing Facility

**Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony**

Thursday, April 25th  
11 a.m.  
4002 Nakoosa Trail  
Madison

**Safe Haven Open House**

Sunday, April 28th  
12-4 p.m.  
Program at 1 p.m.  
4002 Nakoosa Trail  
Madison

Tours and Refreshments Provided



MADISON CARES



MADISON CARES

*Porchlight's Original Chefs Auction*

**Homegrown Talent Meeting Local Need**

Join us for a night full of artistry, inspiration and elegance. Enjoy signature fare from Madison's top chefs, sip craft cocktails and dance the night away with friends to support Porchlight's vital work to serve the homeless of Dane County.

**Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery**

330 North Orchard Street  
Madison, WI 53715

**Tuesday, March 5th, 6-9 p.m.**

*6-8pm* Appetizers, drinks and dancing

*8-9pm* Program & Live Auction

\$30/person

\$200/reserved table for 8

*Participating Restaurants*

- Angelo's
- Bonfyre American Grill
- Chef John Williams of Sundara Inn & Spa
- Cooper's Tavern
- Daisy Café and Cupcakery
- Fox & Bird Fresco
- Johnny Delmonico's Steakhouse
- Pig In A Fur Coat
- Steenbock's On Orchard
- Underground Food Collective

Please contact Beatrice at 257-2534 to reserve your ticket



*Our Mission: Porchlight strives to decrease the Dane County homeless population by providing shelter, housing, supportive services, and a sense of community in ways that empower residents and program participants to positively shape their lives.*



## Porchlight Needs List

*The following items are in high demand and in short supply at the Porchlight donation warehouse. If you would like to donate any of these items, please call (608) 257-2534 or drop them off at the donation warehouse at 1490 Martin Street at Door #3 on the side of the building between 9:00 am and 3:00 pm, Monday through Friday.*

- |                                  |                                 |                      |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Baby diapers</b>              | <b>Cleaning supplies</b>        | <b>Shaving cream</b> |
| <b>Kleenex</b>                   | <b>Small kitchen appliances</b> | <b>Toilet paper</b>  |
| <b>Feminine Hygiene Products</b> | <b>Pots &amp; Pans</b>          | <b>Cereal</b>        |

*The following items are needed by the Daytime Warming Shelter. Donations can be made from 9am-3 pm, Monday through Friday.*

- |   |  |                                    |
|---|--|------------------------------------|
| <b>31-day and 10-ride Bus Tickets</b>         | <b>Adult socks</b>                       | <b>Creamer</b>                     |
| <b>Men's and Women's Underwear</b>            | <b>Coffee</b>                            | <b>Cough Drops</b>                 |
| <b>Disposable utensils</b>                    | <b>Instant Oatmeal</b>                   | <b>Hot Chocolate</b>               |
| <b>Shelf-Stable Foods(for big casseroles)</b> | <b>Adult Winter Boots(various sizes)</b> | <b>Backpacks &amp; Duffel Bags</b> |
| <b>Adult Sweat Pants</b>                      | <b>Dominoes &amp; Chess Board</b>        |                                    |



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[www.porchlightinc.org](http://www.porchlightinc.org)

Return Service Requested

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Madison, WI  
Permit No. 2333

Winter 2013

306 North Brooks Street  
Madison, WI 53715

