



Porchlight Men's Shelter update from Karla Thennes, Executive Director of Porchlight

Last night, I worked at our Men's Emergency Shelter at Grace Episcopal Church coordinating health assessments on the 140 homeless men who entered the shelter last night and I wanted to share my experience. Even though I've been with Porchlight for 29 years, I was a little nervous because it had been 25 years since I've used actual social work skills.

I arrived at shelter at 5pm greeted the night manager and intake worker and Preston, the shelter manager, who were ready to serve the men as they are every night, pandemic or not. I arrived in the intake office to find colored coded, laminated instruction sheets for each volunteer position and lead worker and a binder with all forms and instructions. All of this after only 24 hours of doing Health Assessments because our Director of Services, Kim Sutter, is amazing, loves her laminator and hasn't slept very much since this has started. Nate and Ellie, volunteer who are UW Nursing students did all of the health assessments outside in the cold and were kind, thorough and persistent when they needed to be. They will be awesome nurses someday.

Molly, who is a Porchlight Board member and volunteer, did all of the hotel, hospital and cab ride triage. She was kind, patient and firm when she needed to be. We asked every man outside, how they were feeling. We asked very specific questions about their symptoms and chronic health issues. We triaged two men with active symptoms into hotels and arranged for them to go to the doctor via cab in the next 48 hours. We wore masks and gloves and handed out surgical masks to anyone in line who was coughing. Men who were feeling well went downstairs to eat and sleep. Every single man, without exception, was patient, appreciative, cold, hungry, anxious and frightened.

I left for home at 9:30pm also feeling a little frightened. Every day, things seem more real and more desperate, but I mostly feel grateful. I am grateful for my staff who only ask what more can they do. I am grateful to volunteers who continue to bring hot food to the shelter and do health assessments on sick strangers. I am so thankful to people who donate funds and drop off masks and gloves because I put a call out on Facebook at 2am. Thank you, together we will get through this!

Sincerely,

Karla

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