

LOAVES AND FISHES



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Chronic Homelessness

By Joel Kilgour

When I first moved into Dorothy Day House in 1995, we almost never turned anyone away. Between the CHUM shelter and our houses, we made room. We were full, sometimes overfull, but it was manageable.

Flash forward to today. The CHUM shelter has been remodeled and expanded, and yet routinely operates far beyond its capacity. New shelters have opened for youth and people fleeing domestic violence, but they are at capacity, with dozens of people on waitlists. We could keep saying yes but there is not enough physical space in our houses to accommodate everyone, and what kind of life would that be for our guests? So we have also had to learn to say no. On particularly difficult days, I can turn away twenty or thirty people in immediate need of shelter.

Duluth, like most places in the US, has seen a steady increase in homelessness in the past decade and a half. Because congregate shelters are full and not appropriate for everyone, increasing numbers of people are living outside, in cars, under bridges, in the doors of businesses and squatting in unheated buildings. You have probably seen encampments from the freeway and people's makeshift beds in the skywalk.

There are many ancillary issues that can lead to and prolong homelessness, but the most basic and universal definition of homelessness is the lack of housing. Like many cities, Duluth's housing market is becoming increasingly out of reach. A city sponsored study determined that 3,500 more units of housing

are needed by 2024 to meet current and anticipated demand. Rent has been increasing annually at a rate completely out of line with wages: between 2020 and 2021 alone average rent in Duluth went from \$1,125 to \$1,320. Most low income Duluthians simply cannot afford rent without a subsidy. The lack of available subsidized units and vouchers means that even those who do everything right, fill out every application, make every appointment, and save every penny they can for a deposit, will likely sit on a waiting list for a year or two. If they get a voucher, 14% of them will lose it because they can't find a landlord willing to rent to them, and so they start at the bottom of the list again.

All of this means that homelessness is not only affecting more people, it is becoming chronic. A majority of sheltered and unsheltered people now fall into this category - meaning they have

with no clear plan and inadequate support. The Reagan "revolution" ushered in a new era of political greed and myopia that saw a steady erosion of the public safety net and pathways to middle class success. Wave after wave of drug scourges destroyed people already on their knees from a broken economy and lack of mental health services. Duluth bears its own responsibility for not effectively addressing a housing crisis that has been brewing for years. We can point to some specific policy choices by the city, county and state that brought us to this moment:

- Hospital and freeway expansion that destroyed thousands of units of low income housing over the past few decades
- The lack of student housing leading to thousands of students now occupying houses that used to be rented or owned by low- and moderate-income people
- Poor stewardship by landlords coupled with political and economic pressure that led to the closing of the Seaway, Kozy, and Carter Hotel - altogether nearly 200 units of housing that once served the same population that is living on the streets today.

Every one of those decisions has been made under mythical pretense of economic development, with pie in the sky notions of a housing market adjusting and responding to by lifting all boats. It didn't happen, and the people with the most to lose are now suffering the consequences of a market that is almost unmanageably broken.

Fortunately, our past doesn't define us. There is newfound will among many sectors in Duluth to meaningfully address both the housing and homeless crises. All Duluth homeless service providers have teamed up to launch an initiative called Stepping On Up that aims to end the unsheltered homeless crisis - not just mitigate it. In November, we took an all day bus tour to Minneapolis and St Paul to view some promising new housing initiatives there. Not only were homeless service providers and housing developers on that bus, but we were joined by county and city elected officials, members of the Chamber of Commerce and Greater Downtown Council, the hospitals and faith community. This is a moment of unity, and we need to seize it and make good on our stated commitments.

This newsletter will explore unsheltered homelessness from a variety of perspectives - personal, political and medical. The story of Loaves and Fishes is an example of what can be done by regular people who are committed to changing their community and world. What we are facing now is more serious than anything we have faced in our 33 years, and we need you, our readers and supporters, to join us and be part of the solution.



A makeshift camp in downtown Duluth. Photo Credit Deb Holman

been homeless for a year or more, or five times in the past three years. The physical and psychological consequences of long term homelessness is devastating to individuals, families and communities - as you can read about in this issue. Without housing, we can't even begin to address the addiction, broken relationships and mental illness that haunt many homeless people. By allowing this condition to become chronic we have passively accepted a brutal reality in which hundreds of people are so wounded by their experience of homelessness that it will take them years to recover, if not generations.

What caused this? That's not an easy answer. The modern homeless epidemic began in the late 70s and early 80s. Asylums were rightfully closed, but people were released to the streets

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A Note From the Artist

By Tiffany (@spirit_of_she)

The pandemic has proved we are all susceptible to being homeless. It can happen to any of us. I've found myself without a home more than once over the years, each time for a different reason. I found solace within the community that allowed me to focus on myself and my children and be the mother they needed me to be to find housing and work.

This drawing represents the many struggles we face finding ourselves knocked down time and time again. This time she is getting back up with the support of her community allowing her to heal from the inside out. She represents the many struggles of life where we find ourselves lost, alone. With the support of her community she is able to rebuild herself and get back on her feet. Grounded and with the support of her community she is stronger than ever. Her hair is made out of roots to represent her growing her roots into the community grounding herself, the leaves represent inner healing and self growth. She is also open for interpretation.

This drawing is now the logo for "The First Ladies of the Hillside." We are a group of women who came together during the pandemic to support each other and our children. From serving coffee to establish ourselves within the community, to supporting each other making art in hopes of selling it to financially support our families, to creating a compassion fund to help other struggling mothers. We've also been working with UMD's entrepreneur students to create a social enterprise to address healthy food access in The Hillside. These are just a few of the things we do to support our community to ensure that we are here to help anyone who needs it. You can learn more at www.firstladiesofthehillside.com or follow my art journey on Instagram @ spirit_of_she_



A Conversation With Deb Holman

By Drew Anderson

You can't publish a newsletter about the homelessness crisis here at home without mentioning the work of Deb Holman, the Street Outreach Coordinator for both the Human Development Center (HDC) and CHUM. She has put 14 years into the job (officially) and countless hours off the clock. Deb is literally on the front-line, meeting people where they are at on the street, camped out in the woods, or on the phone in crisis. She's there to help. Sometimes that looks like a ride somewhere or a tobacco favor, other times it's helping them make a phone call or make it to a doctor's appointment. Her downtime is spent fostering the pets of other people, often the people she interacts with on the street. I recently met up with Deb at a cafe to talk about all this. I started by asking her how she became Duluth's most eminent street outreach worker:

"I started working at a front desk at a shelter around 1998 in St. Paul. And then I had done some work with Sue Purchase. She's now at the Harm Reduction Sisters in Duluth. But she had started a previous needle exchange. So I volunteered at a needle exchange in the shelters... which led me to a job in a shelter. And then it just kind of went from there. They added outreach in St. Paul and I was really one of their first outreach workers in St. Paul."

In 2005, Deb began doing street outreach in Duluth for HDC and CHUM shortly after. I asked if this dual role for separate organizations is coordinated in any way. "It's kind of like one rolls into the other: I punch out of CHUM at 4 and then it's HDC time, even if I'm sitting at my CHUM desk, you know? So it just gives me a little more time everyday...because people say I work all the time. Well, that's why, because I do work 60 hours a week. But I don't always look at it as work. At the



same time, this is spiritual, you know? Depending on how I'm taking care of myself."

Deb shared that the job often taxes more than it rewards, and requires something more than our average human capacity: "Like the spirit of Dorothy Day. I like that kind of life, but you get knots in your stomach because of this [work]... I've had so many nights where I was dropping people off at their camp at 20 below. And I remember sometimes saying, 'Well, I gotta go home now,' and then feeling so bad, you

know, like inside myself going: 'Oh, my God, that's the wrong thing to say.'"

Those bitter winter drop-offs were alleviated somewhat three years ago when Duluth's first Warming Center opened, underfunded and understaffed. It finally received full funding last year and an official location at the Lincoln Park Community Center in West Duluth, seeing at times an intake of 80-plus people per night. "The warming center is a great thing," said Deb, "And you do see people come in that don't come in anywhere else."

I asked Deb how the work has changed over the years. Has the need changed? "Every year I say it's worse. When I [started] you had the whole population of chronic alcoholics, that whole segment of the homeless population...through the years it's changed, just because now it's not as much the chronic alcoholics as people love drug use."

What hasn't changed is the number of people living outside. "There's still all these people out here," Deb said, "I don't have numbers for the counts through the years, but it's always been over 100. We had 500 unduplicated people sign in

the warming shelter this year."

Thankfully Deb doesn't have to take on that large of a case load anymore. According to Deb, since 2005 there wasn't a designated homeless outreach worker in Duluth except for herself. HDC recently added a citywide position while the Downtown Council created one for the downtown district. Now there's talk of adding two more workers. "Sometimes I go, 'Oh, God, we don't need [more]' and then there's other days, I'm like, we need 10... because one day, you might spend, you know, 4 hours with somebody. One day, it might be 5 minutes."

Deb went on to describe how our community has been playing catchup on the issue of homelessness, which has been largely overlooked by the county. The systems we have in place aren't built for the need: "Just this morning, I took somebody to the Crisis Team. So I hand him off to [them] ... well he's kicked out of detox until the 14th. So [then] I'm talking to detox: 'Can he get back in if he has a plan to go to Birch Tree?' Of course, both [places] are full. So he goes from the handoff from me, to the Crisis Team, to Detox. The problem is at the end of the handoff there's nowhere to put the person. So there's a lot of people out here that have nowhere to go. And so I think it's a little too late. I think they just waited too long to address it. You know?" I don't recall the county even being involved in homelessness for like the first five, six years I was here. Well, you know, I think that when they developed that whole 10 year plan to end homelessness, I think that was the start of their interest, at least, as I remember it"

Our conversation meandered toward the topic of solutions, which didn't come readily from Deb. Years of the same issues persisting despite efforts, like St. Louis County's 10 year plan to end homelessness, seem to have inspired a sense of re-evaluation: "I just hate that you have to have a disability to get into housing, and sometimes I hate the hoops, you know? Of course, case management might help some people, but does every single person need that? I don't know. I think we need more community **Continued on Page 4 & 5**

What is the Warming Center?

The Warming Center is an emergency overnight drop-in center open from November 1 through March 31 every year. It is operated by CHUM in partnership with the City of Duluth, Duluth HRA, St Louis County and Loaves and Fishes. Other community partners including the Lake Superior Community Health Center, Essentia and the DTA provided rides and services.

The Warming Center first opened in 2018 as a response to the alarming increase in the number of people living outside or places not meant for human habitation. This year it moved to its new location in the Lincoln Park Community Center, offering more space as well as showers.

More than 500 individuals checked into the Warming Center at some point during the 2021-2022 season.



Cutting the ribbon at the Warming Center's new location in the Lincoln Park Community Center. Photo courtesy of Sharon Mollerus

From Unsheltered to Advocate

An Interview with Bradley Renfro



Do you mind sharing what the circumstances that led to you becoming homeless?

My circumstances were actually pretty simple. I was living with someone and had built a life around that. When that relationship ended I needed to leave and didn't have a place to go. So, I was completely unprepared with no first month's rent or deposit. I had been looking for apartments and there were quite a bit of waitlists, so I ended up on the streets.

During your experience with homelessness, you lived in shelter and also were unsheltered, living out of your car. What were those experiences like?

Shelter was somewhat confining, a lot of rules, what would almost feel like jail in a lot of ways. There were extremely short curfews and they took away my phone. There were very structured activities that were constantly being watched. It was nice to have a roof over your head, but at the same time, that kind of setting creates anxiety which we already have being homeless. The car was a little bit better, but at the same time, living in a vehicle is not quite as secure as living in a shelter. Also, you have to put up with what is going on around you. Most of the time you are going to be parked in an area which is not a very good place to be. You are much more thrown into the situation that way.

I've been asked why some people live outside or in a car instead of shelter. How would you answer that?

A big reason that I think people live in their cars, after I've talked to people, is that a lot of them simply just don't trust shelters. They are dangerous and theft is a big problem, they are worried about losing their things, and also assault. So I think a lot of people just self isolate and attempt to take care of themselves to try and stay out of that kind of idea of what shelter life is like.

You've been on a waitlist for housing for some time. How many applications have you filled out? What sorts of barriers have you encountered?

I have filled out quite a few applications. If I had to actually say, I just filled out five a couple of weeks ago. I have filled out around fifteen I think. The biggest problem with that is with the low rent and affordable housing becoming less and less, so people are needing that service more and more.

The waitlist is getting longer and longer. Here in Duluth, it was well over a year. For example, down in Kansas City section 8 was only about 3 months, so there is a very big difference on that. For the hurdles with the applications, the biggest one is lack of communication from the people you turn the applications into. I almost never hear from someone and have to do the follow up myself, and a lot of times you just never hear back from these people. Sometimes you fill it out and maybe go back and try to do it again and it's very difficult. A lot of times you can't get a hold of these people by phone or whatever.

Are there other systemic barriers to getting out of poverty and homelessness that you have experienced?

I think a big one is how society actually views homelessness and people that are suffering from homelessness. They almost want to, it sounds cliche, but it's literally true they don't really see them or deal with them. They have no idea what it's like. I know I fell into the same thing when I first became homeless. I was absolutely shocked and actually kind of amazed at how the homelessness culture is so different from the culture above us. Also the fact that, Not In My Backyard, makes it very difficult for homeless people to get out of the cycle because the society they are trying to enter doesn't really want them.

This winter you joined the staff at the Warming Center. What were some of the challenges you faced? Did your experience of homelessness help you empathize with others?

Yeah, it absolutely helped me empathize because people would be coming in and have the look on their face, sometimes when they were just now homeless not knowing what to do. They just really need a helping hand to get started. A lot of problems we had are the lack of mental health care across the country, so people were often in psychosis. Also, addiction to both drugs and alcohol. Generally, when the warming center was open at night people would drink or use drugs during the day and then almost basically crash and need a place to stay. So it was quite a difficult thing. Another thing was trying to get people what they need, and getting people in contact to help them. It was a big problem because many of these people don't have phones or the ability to actually get down to CHUM. There are a lot of ways that they can't actually get help. The warming center was an excellent experience and I hope to work there again next year.

Were there things you learned about other people's experiences with homelessness that were a surprise to you?

Yeah, the biggest one is how the homeless take care of one another. When I was talking to other homeless people, they would come over and check on me, and I got into the swing of checking

on them and everybody would talk and spread information. I have seen people going around telling everyone "Hey, there's meals being served tomorrow here," it's very tight knit. Everybody knows everyone, and everyone seems to help and try to support everyone. So it's good but it can also be really bad when we lose someone which is definitely a very strong possibility. People have passed away from things like addiction, exposure, improper medical care. It can affect the entire community which is very surprising that to me it was just so close knit.

What do you have to say about the network of social services that help people experiencing homelessness? How are they excelling and how could they improve?

I think it's actually going at an okay pace. A lot of it is communication. I think communication is a big issue. Not only getting to the homeless saying "hey you need to fill out this application," or "you need to come with me to get into some type of program for addiction." Also, communication with other services outside of homelessness. Communication with the transit people, DTA, hospitals, and police are all areas that could use some work.

If you could wave a magic wand right now, what would you like to see happen in the City of Duluth to improve the lives of people experiencing homelessness and poverty?

More affordable housing, better mental health care as well as drug addiction treatment. The very first thing is always affordable housing, but I think secondly if someone is struggling with addiction and can't hold down a job they are really in need of help with mental health, so just getting them an apartment may not do them any good. So I would think better mental health, better counseling, and more affordable housing. Also, one thing that people should know about homelessness is when you donate, even when it is small, the homeless community really does appreciate it. I would also like to stretch that during winter a lot of people would say 'Oh well I just have some gloves to donate it's not a big deal or whatever' but actually it is. Winter gloves are in short supply, just an example, but you can literally save somebody's fingers. I mean we have had frostbite and other cases like that because people didn't have proper gloves. So every little bit helps, and I know you hear that, but it is actually something that is true. Anything you can do, it is greatly appreciated.

Bradley has first hand knowledge of homelessness, having experienced it personally in Duluth and Kansas City. He has been a guest at Dorothy Day House, was a volunteer and member of staff at the Warming Center, and is currently on staff at CHUM.

A Conversation With Deb Holman Continued type stuff. I don't really know, I always have more questions."

Often solutions focus on housing, creating more of it and making it more affordable. But Deb was quick to point out some nuanced problems with the idea, especially when housing insecurity is coupled with addiction recovery: "You can't just put somebody in market rate housing, I think we all see it: you put somebody into an apartment, I mean, even folks that have gone through Dorothy Day [House], they often remain isolated and alone, you know?... It's so hard for them to be successful in housing, but we don't have the right kind of housing.... And no more shelters. Let's build some housing and get the right kind of housing, not new shelters."

Deb elaborated on a phase plan for people experiencing homelessness, where instead of somebody going directly into self-

managed housing, or being evicted for drug use, they were assisted in overcoming their specific barriers, incrementally: "Instead of just kicking them out, we got to figure out a way to work with them... and it makes sense having a phase plan....I think they need to kind of start somewhere, like Avivo [in Minneapolis]. For instance, you can go grab Mike from under the bridge, and he's using drugs, and he's been outside for 5 years. But you can put him in this room and say, 'hey, we'll talk to you in two days, get some rest' You know? So he doesn't have to come in and do paperwork. Like, 'here's your key, this is your room,



Photo Courtesy of Deb Holman

lay down.' And have a phase plan: get through this first, and then deal with your addiction, or your mental health or whatever it is."

Deb also clarified that any solution, to be successful, requires effort from the person in need. "It's not just to give a free handout, you know, not that that's a bad thing because it's not. Just having at least this much responsibility has to be on you, you know? We can help as much as we want, but you have to take some responsibility." In the meantime, many people will continue to seek do-it-yourself shelter outside. Tents have become an essential resource for people unhoused and a nuisance for the city of Duluth. Deb shared that last year, 20 dumpsters of trash were cleaned up from a tent community under I-35 last year. Deb spoke directly with people who had resided there: "We had a focus group this year when the Warming Center closed down about the sites we're possibly going to get to camp in. We talked about just being responsible campers, kind

of what the city expects, but the city can never say it's actually okay, because it's illegal to camp in town, but they'll overlook it if it's clean, has no complaints and is small. There's nowhere for folks to go. I think they at least deserve a tent to sleep in, rather than just lay on the ground, or in a doorway, or, but then there's a slew of problems that go along with that. I've seen that get crazier over the years; people stealing from each other, start-

ing people's tents on fires, just more violent, you know? Well, I would say maybe some of the mental health outreach has gotten better, but there's still a lack."

The added layer of mental illness remains one of the most persistent barriers to the right kind of housing Deb was talking about. She referenced a woman who hasn't been able to find adequate housing for years due to untreated mental health issues: "She's nowhere near getting help, you know, because she doesn't cause any problems. But yet, she's so ill, that you just have to kind of wait for that one moment. And it might never happen, you know? And that's kind of what we do— wait for that to happen. I'm not a fan or proponent of commitment, but I don't like how we let these folks who are so ill just wander around and fend for themselves, so that it takes so much to get them the help they need. And then they do end up getting committed through a process. And, again, I've been here a long time, and there's just this handful, a dozen or so, who go on commitment, they do well for 18 months, they get off and pretty soon it's the same thing. And it's just a constant."

Deb and I talked about how some people who are homeless don't fit a category of any kind. For instance, some people choose not to enter housing. "One good example is when AIM [the local chapter of the American Indian Movement] was doing the yurts, they were interviewing people. And they really wanted this one guy to go into one. During his interview, he said, 'I'm just gonna be honest with you, I can't make the commitment not to use.' And it didn't matter to AIM if someone used off site. But he was honest enough to say

Unsheltered Housing Context

- Over 1300 Duluth households are on a priority wait list for housing because they are currently homeless
- Duluth has only 155 shelter beds
- 284 people were documented as living outside or places unintended for human habitation in January 2021
- 554 people checked into the Warming Center winter of 2021-2022
- Chronic homelessness increased by 83% since 2007 in St. Louis County
- All Duluth shelters are routinely at or beyond capacity.

Healthcare & Homelessness

By Kristin Larson

Most of us have heard the popular saying "Health is wealth". This gives large meaning to our lives, as health is valuable to all people. Good Health means not only the absence of disease but encompasses the physical, mental, social and the spiritual well-being of an individual.

In the last decade, a large portion of our healthcare system began adjusting its focus on prevention. Often, we cringe at the idea of making an appointment for recommended preventative screenings, or mindlessly brush off scheduling our next dental cleaning. How often do we recognize the privilege these services offer us? The last two years have made the disparity in healthcare clearer than ever before.

As a healthcare worker, I see many health problems that are difficult to treat even when a person has access to medical care and a house to live in. Homelessness creates new health problems and exacerbates existing ones, often leading to shorter life expectancies; up to 25-30 years less. Sleeping on the streets can leave a person exposed to high levels of stress, physical violence and other environmental factors that can take a toll on health. People who are experiencing homelessness may have the same reservations about

seeking healthcare, in addition to the significant barriers to a person's access to this type of preventative care. People are unable to seek routine preventative services as simple as an eye exam or annual physical, and necessary vaccinations due to lack of insurance, transportation and high costs. Chronic health conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, HIV, depression and substance abuse disorders are twice as likely to affect homeless individuals. Making and keeping doctor's appointments while homeless is incredibly difficult (especially if you have no phone, or no ID). These chronic conditions tend to worsen when people have limited or no access to medications. Something that is overlooked is the inability to provide sufficient storage of medication or ability to read instructions, so a medication is appropriately administered.

Recovery and healing are also difficult without adequate housing resources and options are often very limited for people requiring care after a hospitalization. If someone does require hospitalization, being homeless creates a problematic situation where a person is being discharged from the hospital and does not have a safe place to complete their recovery*. A house is not only im-

portant for privacy and protection from extreme weather conditions; it's also a place to recuperate from surgery, illness and other ailments without worrying about finding a place to sleep or a meal to eat. It also provides protection of exposure from communicable diseases such as influenza, hepatitis, and COVID-19 or infection. Barriers like these often result in higher utilization of emergency services, result in increased injury and often receive zero follow-up.

The healthcare challenges experienced by the homeless population are many and often insurmountable. It could be unrealistic to expect someone without a roof over their head to be able to navigate a newly diagnosed health condition or recover from surgery.

*We are grateful for the work of Bob Tavani Medical Respite House, which provides this safety for the few lucky people who get to stay there after hospitalization.

Kristen Larson is a General Surgery and Inpatient Wound Care nurse manager based in Duluth. Over the 2020-2021 winter season she helped organize fellow hospital employees to collect winter gear for weekly distribution at the Warming Center.

'No, I might use in that yurt.' So they couldn't take him."

Deb could relate to this individual. Her sensibility and compassion are driven from personal experience. "I'm not advocating use, I mean, I'm a drug addict, ex-drug user. Thank God, I got out of it. I'm old, Drew, 62. So add it up. Yeah, 31 was the last time I used hard drugs.

But I always know I'm vulnerable to it, just like anybody. It never leaves my mind. That's the way drugs work. But drugs are so different from when I was using them. I'd be scared to death to touch any kind of drug now, with fentanyl, and so I think people never know what they're getting."

We didn't have time to talk about Deb's personal recovery experience, but she did mention how changing one's environment can really help. "One of the huge problems too is that people who are using, go to treatment, they do really well, but then they get discharged back to homelessness in Duluth. And then what happens? They start using again. I think you have to—and this is from my own experience—leave the area for a while. You gotta change your surroundings."

Deb continues to push forward in her work despite the constant struggles. She is currently gearing up for another busy summer while waiting on funding the city might eventually deliver to the cause. In a recent meeting with the city, Deb had to provide a reality check: "I said, 'we're too late this year, because it's already here. The tents are going to be popping up soon, if they

haven't already, so we're gonna have another summer like we always do." I asked her how she takes care of herself amidst this reality. She shared that walks on the beach with her dogs are critical to her rejuvenation. She also sees positive changes on the horizon. One being the development of a pet fostering center

that will specifically assist homeless individuals needing support for their pets. And as mentioned already, she's no longer alone in her street outreach role, a development that's bittersweet: "I kind of go sometimes, 'Oh God, what am I going to do if there's all these outreach workers!?' But there's plenty to do, you know? And part of that, for me, is learning to let go, too. I can slow down now and have some time. It will definitely be a learning process. I do take one day to myself. Yeah, that was yes-

terday, but this afternoon I think I won't be answering the phone either. Unless it's a serious crisis."

At 62, Deb has pondered what retirement life might look like: "Sometimes I go, what's next? I wouldn't mind easing out on a plan that really did address some of these needs. Like maybe overseeing one of these sites or housing models. I'm not site director material by any means. I don't want that kind of position. But I mean, when will I sit still? And it's hard too, because I've been so free and running around all these years. It's hard to think of sitting still and being in one spot and not feeling like, 'Hey, I gotta go.'"



Photo Courtesy of Deb Holman



Duluth homeless service providers have united behind a plan to address chronic homelessness over the coming five years. Loaves and Fishes is proud to be a founding partner in this effort.

The plan requires significant investment of money and people power, but in the end will address blight and safety concerns, save significant costs to emergency services and, most importantly, provide people with a dignified path from chronic homelessness to stability.

We need you too, as an individual and a leader to support this effort. Please visit steppingonupduluth.org

Phase 1—Immediate Response (2021-22)

\$300,000

Authorized Living Zones & Outreach Workers

Safe outdoor spaces with Support

Phase 2—Stabilizing Response (by 2023)

\$8,000,000

Indoor Villages, 100 units

Safe indoor shelter with support to overcome disabilities

Phase 3—Transforming Response (by 2026)

\$25,000,000

200 Tiny House Units

Safe tiny homes to maintain stability and support capacity development

In Memoriam



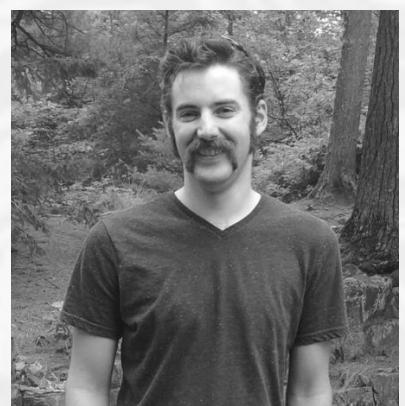
Harry Lee Victor, Jr.
1970-2021

Known to us as Victor, we can't think of him without seeing his contagious smile. Victor stayed at Dorothy Day House, then moved out and volunteered, and helped everyone around him in any way he could. Victor was an active part of many L&F projects including: The Homeless Bill of Rights, Local Solutions to End Poverty, the So Much More projection event under 35, and was a part of the Warming Center's staff for a season. Above all Victor was a loving dad and grandpa. He brought joy to us at Loaves and Fishes in so many ways.



Amy Louise Wilcox
1966-2022

Amy is remembered as a friend with an extraordinary number of big ideas. They floated through permaculture, herbalism, nutritional medicine, history, and queer advocacy. She volunteered with Loaves and Fishes, living at Hannah House for awhile, and continued to invent ways to help us be better catholic workers even after she moved and started an urban permaculture farm. For the last three years Amy was working with the Glenwood Historical Society to preserve the story of the local and global ski jumping events in Glenwood, MN during the 1930's. She left us a bus (the Sun Spot) in hopes that it can be used for outreach.



Alex Lowe
1983-2022

Alex was a young guest of Dorothy Day house and quickly took to volunteering at the Bike Cave where he could express his mechanical prowess in his own quiet and kind way. He landed a job as a bike mechanic at Twin Ports Cyclery and from there worked his way to home ownership and another, higher paying job. Alex's love for bicycling took many forms: team triathlons, gravel rides, bike polo and velodrome. Among other things, Alex baked a mean cheesecake which he loved to share with friends. He could often be spotted at L&F events behind the camera; he helped document many ceilis and block parties.

Bread & Roses House Notes

The 4 R's

By Anne Schepers

Respite- Bread and Roses continues to provide space for community members and guests who need a bit more quiet, privacy, space for recovery, support during transition and then, just plain old fun! Game nights, puzzles, Kohti (the cat) cuddle time and crepe making come to mind. We are really happy to have Michael Elderbrook, former community member, living with us this month. And Shannon Loehrer is here for a bit to continue her pattern of keeping her L&F participation alive by staying with us when someone else is away (*With a shortage of live-in volunteers, we're grateful for out of town folks who come to provide house duty coverage for 1-14 days. Let us know if you're curious to hear more!*).

Retirement- The letter R brings up recent personal happenings. After 34 years of delivering babies and accompanying women on their health care journeys, I have joined the ranks of retired folks. Living at Loaves and Fishes was a key part of my "retirement planning" and my community mates threw me a retirement breakfast which was a sweet time for reflection and sharing stories.

Another sort of retirement for me is ending my board membership time with Loaves and Fishes Housing, Inc . The partnership and understanding between the community and the board has steadily evolved. After years of serving on more traditional boards, I've found L&F Housing Inc board to be a place where we all bring mind, body and spirit to our tasks.

Reliable- Of course I continue to share life with Donna here at Bread and Roses. Donna emanates reliability in so many ways; house duty and advocacy at Olive Branch and Dorothy Day House and participation in efforts like Stepping On Up and Community Connect. In recent days Donna has journeyed alongside friends experiencing incarceration and mental health crises and has offered the most loving end of life care.

Redpolls- Flocks of redpolls have been hanging out in our pear tree out front, taking turns at the window-mounted feeder. They've relinquished the other feeder to the squirrels. These red-capped beauties will be on their way soon to the far reaches of Canada where they spend summer.



**Open
Wednesday
& Sunday,
1-5**

The Bike Cave relies solely on volunteer power and we are in need of more volunteers. Consider joining us this season, all skill levels welcome!

(218) 302-5523
bikecaveduluth@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/BikeCaveDuluth

Olive Branch House Notes

By Sharon Mollerus

The Olive Branch house is bustling with life these days, with three children under the age of three and a new rescue puppy, Mowgli. All the rooms are taken and the live-in guests are pursuing education, employment, well-being, and most challenging, the search for affordable housing which is so elusive, even with steady work.

There is a regular flow of day guests who come to pick up mail, get a bus pass, have a meal, or take a shower. Thanks to an ongoing donation from Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, we now have laundry vouchers for Dee Laundry, and this is a great help for our homeless friends and for shortening the laundry queue in the house. Although COVID-19 is still real and we continue to wear masks and distance and test as needed, as with the rest of our community, there is a certain relief with less risk. We have a heated back porch which was a great help especially during the winter, where we can offer guests meals without masks and keep the house safer.

Many of the guests used the Warming Center this winter as a stop gap for life without a home. There is the immediate need in the frigid cold to find warm boots in the right size, coats, gloves, fresh socks and insulated pants. They carry their belongings from place to place trudging through the snow. Some have just been released from the hospital and have no good place to lay their head and heal their bodies. Some are escaping from situations of violence. Some are disabled. Many have mental health and addiction hurdles. The Warming Center was filled to capacity and could only offer a mat on the floor during the night. The housing crisis throughout the country is becoming ever more acute and a comprehensive plan needs to be implemented to keep people safe and warm and allow them to move forward for their health, dignity and well-being.

Live-in volunteer Kate is continuing to work on her art and give countless hours of her presence with her big heart, especially for the kids. She also collects and shares art materials with the guests, and we have a particularly artistic group at the moment.

Sarah spreads her time from her job at a bakery to house duty, always reading a fascinating book and always ready for a good conversation. She is planning to move on in September, to spend some good time with family before moving onto a new stage of life.

Shelly is now a puppy owner as well as an occupational therapist and house volunteer. She is also the planner behind the big renovation that is coming this summer to Olive Branch. She is currently off to Turkey to visit former L&F members Gunes, Mo, and kids.

Donna is also part of our team, but unfortunately she keeps going home to Bread & Roses.

The ground floor will be getting a new full bathroom, which will allow us to offer showers to our visitors while our live-in guests will have the second floor with a bathroom to themselves. An unused area of the house will be turned into a bigger guest room on the second floor and the pantry will be reworked on the main floor. While that will mean a kitchen closure and impact hospitality for a period of time, on the other hand there will be expanded capacity for the numerous people who come through our door.

Other community members and volunteers continue to fill in with shifts, meals, donations, all in a steady stream of friendly help and welcoming to all our guests. Chronic homelessness requires a force like this, for bringing about both short-term and long-term solutions. *-Sharon is a grandma and a regular volunteer at Olive Branch and the Warming Center.*



Sharon preparing dinner at Olive Branch

Hannah House Notes

By Chelsea Froemke

It's snowing outside today, again! There may be a wintery view out our window but I know that spring is just around the corner. Despite the long, dark, cold days we have had a lovely winter as a family of four. Alahna has loved every minute of preschool and she is an incredibly loving (and sometimes a bit smothering) big sister. Gavia has wowed us with her rapidly developing motor skills and the way she takes in the world around her with those big blue eyes. Drew continues to stay busy with various house maintenance projects around the community, electrical work, and the Bike Cave. I was incredibly grateful to have space for a maternity leave this fall, and throughout the winter I've been able to return to my various roles within the Loaves & Fishes community with Gavia along too.

We've stepped back into foster care by providing some weekend respite and got a taste for life with three kids in our household. Drew has been busy renovating one of our bedrooms which will become the



Hannah House enjoying a museum in Springfield, IL during a winter trip to visit family

official kid room. Once that project is complete we will be eager to open our door again to a longer-term foster placement. The renovation will also include a new bunk bed, which is being built by Paul Anderson and Bruce Gildseth. We recently discovered that Paul and Bruce were integral fundraisers thirty years ago when Hannah House was purchased!

It has also been a joy to ease up a bit on some of our personal COVID-19 precautions during this season of low case numbers. Our community is back to meeting in person at Hannah House every Monday morning (finally giving us a reason to clear the "office" off the dining room table). We've also been able to reconnect with some friends over shared meals and Alahna has finally been able to have some playdates with friends and neighbors.

This summer will certainly be a busy one for us with the Bike Cave, gardening, and family camping trips. We are looking forward to a visit from the kiddos who stayed with us from October 2018 to June 2020. It will be really special to have them back under our roof for a week! I'm also hoping that the community garden plot next to Hannah House can become even more of a community space. This summer I plan to be in the garden every Monday evening from 5-7 planting, weeding, harvesting, and generally being in awe of all growing things. I hope that this will make it easier for friends and neighbors to be more involved. Come join us!

Dorothy Day House Notes

Just Another Day

By Tone Lanzillo

It's around eight in the morning and I'm getting ready for another day. It's Tuesday. The Dorothy Day House will be open to visitors from 12 noon to 7pm.

People from throughout Duluth come here for a cup of coffee, something to eat, take a shower, do a load of laundry or just sit and give their mind and body a little time to rest and recuperate. Their challenges and struggles are many. Whether it's being homeless, out of money, depressed, dealing with probation or parole, staying away from drugs and alcohol, or a variety of medical problems, our guests are trying to figure out how to put one foot in front of the other and hopefully move forward with their lives.

These days, our house is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. As we come out

of the COVID-19 pandemic, we're trying to find the best framework to serve our visitors and guests who live with us. We want to keep the spirit of hospitality alive as we figure out what we can do and what our capacity is to serve the greater good.

While Joel and I are the two live-in volunteers, we are very lucky to have Anne helping us cover many house shifts. Since last winter, Joel has put a lot of time into organizing and managing the Warming Center, and is now working on the Stepping On Up initiative to address the ongoing needs of our homeless population in Duluth. And I just keep looking for ways to contribute to the city's conversation about climate change.

Besides the three of us, we need to thank all the people who come and help out with house duty: Donna, Meg, Doris, Mark, Peter and Mary Ellen. We have also been fortunate to have three UMD students spending some time with us for their spring semester: Mary, Samantha and Anna. Also, we have Shannon back in Duluth for about ten days to do house duty and help support the house.

At the moment, we have five men living with us and will probably invite several more to move in over the next week.

Yes, it's just another day. But every day is so important and meaningful. Each day gives us another opportunity to reach out and hopefully help another human being.

Henri Nouwen once wrote that those of us who want to help others are "wounded healers." I am definitely one of them. Having dealt with divorce, unemployment, homelessness and other difficult moments, I'm trying to remember and embrace those wounds in my work in this community. That's all any of us can do.



No more drafty windows on the 3rd floor of Dorothy Day House!



Jefferson Street Block Party is back!

August 20th, 2:00-5:00
1600 Block of Jefferson Street

Sign-up to bring a dish here:
<https://tinyurl.com/yprfam98>



Dorothy Day House
1712 Jefferson Street
Duluth, MN 55812
(218) 724-2054

Bike Cave
1712 Jefferson Street
Basement/Backyard
(218) 302-5523

Olive Branch
1614 Jefferson Street
Duluth, MN 55812
(218) 728-0629

Loaves & Fishes Housing INC or Hannah House
1705 Jefferson Street
Duluth, MN 55812

Current Needs:

- Eggs (home raised is ok!)
- Socks (adult sizes)-Toilet paper
- Men's underwear (medium and large)
- Laundry detergent

- Bus passes
- Gas cards
- Dish soap

Donations can be delivered to 1614 or 1712 Jefferson Street, ask for the volunteer on duty

Monetary Donations:

Checks can either be made out to *Loaves and Fishes* (NOT tax deductible, for unrestricted needs of the community and our guests), OR to *Loaves and Fishes Housing* (tax deductible, for house maintenance and repair only) and sent to 1705 Jefferson St, Duluth, MN 55812.



Online donations can be made at www.loavesandfishesduluth.com

Volunteer Needs:

- Plumbers, electricians and carpenters to assist with small projects around our four houses
- Volunteers with trucks or trailers to help occasionally with dump runs, donation deliveries and helping guests move into new apartments
- Meal angels to bring a prepared meal for 12-15 people monthly
- Bike mechanics for the Bike Cave (weekly or monthly commitment preferred)
- House duty volunteers to fill several hour shifts at Olive Branch or Dorothy Day House. Volunteers help to maintain a welcoming atmosphere, connect with visitors, help with light cleaning, answer the phone, etc.

For more information email us at duluthcatholicworker@gmail.com

Who We Are:

Loaves and Fishes is a community of people inspired by Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement to build "a new society within the shell of the old." We believe in a world that is abundant with resources and love, and that there is enough for everyone if we share. As a community we offer family-style hospitality to people experiencing homelessness; operate a no-cost neighborhood bicycle shop to promote shared economics; organize with our neighbors to protect everyone's right to housing; and study and practice nonviolence in our interpersonal relationships and in our politics. Loaves and Fishes is entirely volunteer-run and receives no government funding.

Current live-in members of Loaves and Fishes Community are: Drew Anderson, Shelly Bruecken, Chelsea Froemke, Donna Howard, Sarah Kilbarger-Stumpff, Joel Kilgour, Tone Lanzillo, Anne Schepers, and Kate Young. Many other people are part of our community as volunteers, donors, meal providers and advocates.



Loaves & Fishes Housing, Inc - Board Report

By Polly Edmunds

I imagine many of you are wondering what putting a new roof on the Dorothy Day House has to do with homelessness or how adding a shower on the main floor at Olive Branch helps to solve the severe shortage of affordable housing in Duluth. The short answer is that it doesn't - directly - but, while these crises exist, the Loaves and Fishes Community is committed to providing shelter and hospitality for people without homes. And, in order to do that, we must maintain the four old houses we own so that we have the space to welcome people in out of the cold.

In 2017, recognizing the aging condition of the homes we own, the L&F Community formed a nonprofit entity, Loaves and Fishes Housing, Inc. to raise tax-deductible money and to be able to apply for grants which can be used for home maintenance projects.

This was a big step for the Loaves and Fishes Community since one of the guiding principles of most Catholic Worker communities is avoiding any involvement with government - at all costs! But it seemed like something we had to do and it has worked out well.

The Housing, Inc. Board has done lots of work on the houses in its short existence. There's a new kitchen and a new roof at Dorothy Day. The old sewer line to Olive Branch was replaced. And we have secured the money - thanks to our many generous supporters - to undertake two major projects in 2022.

Soon there will be an expanded bathroom on the first floor at Olive Branch which will mean that we can more easily welcome people off the street to take a shower at the house. This is awkward when our only shower is on the second floor where guests live. We are receiving major funding for this from the Lloyd K Johnson Foundation.

Hannah House is getting a new roof with solar panels this summer. This is a long awaited dream come true! Thanks to the Whole Foods Coop, MN Power and MoonShot Foundation for funding this improvement.

We hope, soon, to also have the money to replace the lead pipes that are contaminating the drinking water at Hannah House and Bread and Roses.

Maintaining these houses would not be possible without all the generous individuals who support our efforts. Watch for updates through the summer about the projects that you are funding that all help to alleviate the effects of homelessness in Duluth. *-Polly Thomson Edmunds is a long-haul supporter of the Loaves & Fishes Community and has been a member of the Housing, Inc. Board for the last two years.*



Surprise chimney remnants found in a wall while renovating a Hannah House bedroom.



Mowgli supervises while Drew repairs the Olive Branch kitchen sink.



Newly repainted guest room at Olive Branch after many peels of wallpaper.



Whole-house lead water filter before and after replacement at Hannah House.