

# LOAVES AND FISHES



DULUTH, MN

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FREE

## People Speak to Power: Local Solution to Poverty Forum

By Courtney Cochran and Drew Anderson

The Local Solution to Poverty Forum (LSPF) was created by Loaves and Fishes and CHUM in 2013 to amplify the voices of Duluthians experiencing homelessness and poverty in the local political process. It is estimated that 1 in 4 Duluthians are living below the federal poverty line and 50 percent are living without affordable housing. Although solutions to poverty are critical, they are rarely platforms of those running for office and people in poverty have almost no opportunities to be heard.

The forum process begins with input from grassroots organizations and individuals in many neighborhoods and populations. From multiple winnowing sessions, LSPF organizers identify priority issues — affordable housing, coordinated services for health crises, paid sick time, equitable representation of racial groups in city hiring, and transportation.

At the forum, candidates listen while individuals with personal experiences in these issue areas speak. In 2015, the forum was held at the Damiano Center before a packed house of over 200 people. All but two candidates for city council and one mayoral candidate attended the forum. Speakers concluded their talks by asking candidates to voice a commitment to address specific problems. Candidate responses were tallied and published in the newspaper.

The process does not end after the election. LSPF continues to dialogue with council and mayor about

*Local Solutions — Continued on Page 2*

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by Andrew Moe

One sunny day in May last year, Joel, Kelly and I hopped in a rental car and started a long drive to Denver. We had been invited by the National Coalition for the Homeless for the first national gathering to stop the criminalization of homelessness. It was a learning experience I will never forget. The evening we got there, Joel and I decided to take a walk to the Cathedral 4 blocks away. I was astonished by what I saw. On our walk we counted 40 people sleeping in the street. I have been homeless in Duluth, but the scale of the problem in Denver was more devastating than I could believe.

At the gathering, I met people from many different communities, from New York City to Austin, Texas to Portland, Oregon, each with their own stories of the problems people experiencing homelessness face. It became clear that most were struggling against the criminalization of homelessness. By that I mean local and state authorities are passing laws that target people who are homeless and their allies — anti-loitering laws; laws outlawing the merciful practice of sharing food on the street; and even laws that prohibit people from sitting or resting in public spaces. Instead of dealing with the root causes of homelessness, many communities are simply trying to make people who are homeless disappear. This made me think about my experience in the Twin Ports as someone who has struggled with homelessness and mental illness.

Two years ago my life changed in a way I never imagined. I was sleeping outside for the first time in my life without a clue as to how to survive outdoors. Where is it safe or not safe to sleep? Who can I trust and where do I find support services? Heck, where do I use the bathroom? I was completely broken and had such a strong sense of humiliation that still affects me deeply.

The first two weeks were the longest two weeks of

The City of Duluth has responded to increased homelessness by closing off one sheltered sleeping space after another and displacing people from downtown. We are hopeful that newly elected Mayor Larson and the city council will reverse this trend and work with community partners on real solutions. Photos: Michael Elderbrook

my life. I had never walked so much. I worried if I sat somewhere more than a couple minutes I would get harassed by the police the way I had seen happen to other people. I worried I would be found in the woods at night by someone who had less than good intentions. I worried about being in a new place not knowing anyone and worried about being exploited by the sharks

who sometimes swim among the meek and destitute.

In these two years I have seen all sorts of exploitation from sexual to physical to mental. I have seen pimps “working” the lunch lines, tempting people with a place to sleep in exchange for sex. I have seen drug dealers, bullies, and self-described vigilantes beating people who are afraid to report the crimes against them. I have seen people harassed and ticketed for sleeping in a park. I have known people to lose toes to frostbite and gangrene. And yet, given the current rental market it is nearly impossible to find housing, especially if you have a felony, work for minimum wage, or try to make ends meet with public assistance. I have met people who survived one paycheck away from homelessness for years, only to lose their apartment or home when a crisis jolted their world. I have met people who lived in the woods because of a tragic fire or domestic violence. Yes, there are many people who struggle with mental illness and chemical dependency, but those people are as much human as the rest of us. They deserve to be treated as such... not like animals to throw in cages.

A month or so into my homelessness, I had a panic attack that sent me to the hospital. I was given strong drugs to calm me down, only to be woken up and discharged two hours later. I could barely walk because of the meds. I was terrified I would fall asleep in broad daylight in public. I was staying in a shelter in Superior that is open only at night and closes during the day. I did not know about the CHUM Drop In center. I was almost helpless. I managed to stay awake but was stumbling around trying to remain conscious. If I had to sleep outside it would be illegal in Duluth. And what if I couldn't find a bathroom? Mine is just one small personal example.

*Right to Rest — Continued on Page 2*

In the state of Minnesota the homeless are not a protected population. This is not acceptable to me. We can do better. In my eyes what makes a community great is how they treat the most vulnerable.

Some well-intentioned people say that instead of talking about the rights of the homeless we should focus on how to get everybody into housing. Of course, I agree that we need to create housing opportunities for everybody. But the housing does not exist, and there are hundreds if not a thousand people like me on waiting lists that are up to two years long. Every one of us deserves the right to rest and move freely without feeling like a second class citizen.

Duluth has not seen a wave of anti-homeless laws like other communities, although Superior recently passed a panhandling ordinance to prevent people from begging for change. In Duluth we have a strong tradition of service providers, police, and homeless folks working together for solutions. Still there are systemic barriers to people meeting their basic needs if they don't have a permanent address. One barrier is a citywide ban on camping. Another is profiling. Another is the lack of access to hygiene and laundry facilities. There is also a pervasive message from even friendly police officers and service



providers that people can just go to CHUM, and if they don't, it's their choice. This ignores people with anxiety disorders, paranoia, autism and PTSD, as well as victims of violence, couples who don't want to be separated, people with pets, people with chemical dependency, and others who find traditional shelters inaccessible.

In 2013, at the urging of people experiencing homelessness and their allies, the Duluth City Council unanimously passed a resolution calling for greater civil rights protections for houseless people and more city involvement in efforts to end homelessness. To date, that resolution has never become anything more than a state-

ment of good intentions.

Last year I spoke at the Local Solutions to Poverty Forum with city council and mayoral candidates. I told my story and asked the candidates the following questions:

- Will you commit to amending the Duluth Human Rights Ordinance to include people who are experiencing homelessness and people perceived to be homeless as a protected class?
- Will you commit to an audit of city policies and ordinances, specifically regarding public safety, parks and community development, to make sure that people who are experiencing homelessness are protected in their right to privacy, rest, movement and association?

All of the candidates said yes. However, given our experience, we must fight to make this a reality. It is time that people experiencing homelessness — our internally displaced population — are protected from burdensome laws and practices that violate our human rights. I would like to ask all citizens who care about this ever rising problem to call their city councilors and Mayor Emily Larson and urge them to follow through with their commitments to us. Lastly I thank those of you who have taken action on behalf of people experiencing homelessness. It gives me encouragement.

*Local Solution — Continued from Page 1*

the policy initiatives. Progress is being made on several key areas.

Mayor Emily Larson began a review of city hiring practices with a view to promoting equity.

Worker's benefits and equitable work environments were continually raised as community priorities in the 2015 forum planning process. From this the question was formed to ask for a municipal ordinance guaranteeing paid sick and safe time benefits to all workers in the City of Duluth. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, 51 percent of southern St. Louis County workers currently do not have these benefits. Passing a local ordinance that ensures earned sick and safe time (ESST) benefits for all Duluthians, would ensure that everyone is able to take time off when they or their family members are sick, as well as allow those fleeing domestic violence, human trafficking or stalking to take off needed time to ensure safety. This question was presented to all city council candidates and the mayoral candidate at the forum by Deb Smith. Since the forum, the Vision Duluth Coalition has formed an ESST committee that is in the process of launching a municipal campaign. Representatives from this group have met with the majority of city councilors and the mayor to begin moving this forward and are just starting a small business outreach. This campaign expects a public launch with support from many city councilors and the City Administration in the upcoming months.

The city's lack of coordinated mental health services for those experiencing poverty and homelessness was another priority. Affordable housing is difficult for all low income people, it can be unobtainable for someone living with an untreated mental illness. Rushed discharge planning at hospitals and jails, restrictive supportive housing and general stigma perpetuate a cycle of homelessness for some. There is a critical shortage of men-

tal health beds for acute, intermediate and long term treatment across the entire state. Minnesota has only 3 beds per 100,000 people while the national average is 50. At the forum, Jemel Jones posed the question to now mayor, Emily Larson, asking for the formation of an emergency mental health taskforce within 90 days of her taking office. This taskforce was envisioned as a way to identify gaps in our local mental health systems and propose initiatives and policies that would close them.

LSPF has since gathered representatives from mental health service providers, the Duluth Police Department, and community members who have lived experience with mental illness or have had to negotiate the mental health system for friends and relatives. LSPF sent Emily Larson a follow-up letter in January, stating the following conditions for the taskforce: 1) the taskforce membership will be diverse in its relationship to mental illness (comprising consumers, providers, and advocates); 2) It will determine how Duluth city policy may help close gaps in our mental health system; 3) the taskforce will maintain a clear channel of communication with our community at large. The mayor decided to join a committee of providers and elected officials currently studying the gaps in Duluth's mental health services. Her office agreed to include the three conditions specified in the LSPF letter.

Affordable housing and transportation were topics of concern in the last two years. These issues are carried over from one forum to the next, with incremental progress. The intractability of some problems, unfortunately justify the need for an annual forum to keep the spotlight on the needs of our neighbors experiencing poverty and homelessness.

If you would like to learn more about the LSPF's work or see a video of this year's forum please visit the Loaves and Fishes website.

## Hannah House Looking Better than Ever!

*by Doris Malkemus*



Hannah House, which provided transitional housing for Dorothy Day guests for the last year has been freshened up to serve its new purpose of housing families. Over the last year, Hannah House was painted a lively green, its windows cleaned, kitchen remodeled, hallway painted, and entry floor tiled. Special thanks to volunteers who equipped a toy room and purchased and hung curtains for all first floor windows, making Hannah House safe and attractive.



# Non-violent Response to Islamophobia in Twin Ports

by Michael Elderbrook

In the last year, there has been a resurgence of Islamophobia manifested as acts of physical and rhetorical violence against our Muslim neighbors across the country. Unfortunately, the Twin Ports have not been immune to such scandals against our shared humanity. Just before the celebrations of the births of Jesus and the Prophet Muhammad, our area was embroiled in what was cast as a free speech/hate speech controversy. “Unbelievable! She and her Muslim partner have destroyed the fabric of democracy that was so very hard fought for,” replied Mayor Bruce Hagen of Superior to

a picture of Michelle Obama on Facebook. This comment prompted a steady stream of media coverage and editorials. Some called for Mayor Hagen’s resignation, condemning his statement and the potential violence such comments can provoke. Others at least supported his right to express himself, while some stood up for the sentiment behind his words as well. In addition, local activist Kym Young organized a protest at the government building in Superior. Several Loaves and Fishes members attended the rally, which called for Mayor Hagen’s resignation and began a boycott of all events

in Superior endorsed by the city government. But to emphasize empathy for the marginalized, the protesters also collected winter clothing for our homeless neighbors.

Although it feels like there has been a lack of real reconciliation, the Islamic Center of the Twin Ports responded beautifully to the situation. Their community extended an invitation to Mayor Hagen to join them at the table of their monthly potluck dinner, which he accepted. Two L+F volunteers and a Dorothy Day House guest also attended, and it was no more and no less than any other pot luck — good food prepared and served by loving hands; good conversations among old friends and new acquaintances; teenagers off in a corner staring at their phones. Even though TV cameras were present to capture footage and interviews, there were no mea culpas or self-righteous finger pointing — just sisters and brothers gathered to break bread. The uproar subsided in the ordinariness of people being civil and open-hearted.

I was ashamed that Mayor Hagen used the word “Muslim” as a slur against President Obama and how his words reflect on our community. Yet, while Islam is a religion, much of the subsequent talk framed the situation in terms of race and racism, with “Muslim” implying a non-white, dangerous “other.” However, the racial and ethnic demographics of the American Muslim community reveal a great diversity. Ultimately the illogic of racism, Islamophobia, and intolerance of all stripes boils down to one thing: Fear. It would be easy to seize this moment as a chance to reaffirm our righteousness over against Bruce Hagen, but I believe that would become a missed opportunity for an examination of our own fears and consciences.

As we live into this new creation, struggling to exist as the beloved community while so many forces work to keep us divided, let us ask ourselves: How have we been complicit in violence against our neighbor in thought, word, or deed? Have we stood in solidarity when the powerful of our society speak against our Muslim sisters and brothers, our black sisters and brothers, the oppressed and marginalized of every race, religion, gender, orientation, class, ability, and so on? How are we working to make this a world where all are welcome at the table? Where we celebrate not in spite of the presence of some, but because of the presence of all? In this spring season of rebirth, renewal, and resurrection, let us maintain our work of repentance and reconciliation, casting off our old fearful selves and seeing the God-breathed humanity in everyone around us.

## Tenant Landlord Connection: A Success Story from Housing for All Community Summit

by Donna Howard

The annual Housing for All Summit is a community-driven conversation to follow up with goals set in 2007 by St. Louis County’s Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. Summit participants in 2014 prioritized the need to re-establish a housing access center in Duluth. The center, which existed until 2009 when its funds were cut, educated and mediated disputes between renters and landlords. After the Summit, a strong grass-roots coalition organized around that goal and lined up city and county support. On August 25th 2015, The Tenant Landlord Connection (TLC) officially began to undertake this work. It operates under the auspices of One Roof Housing and is funded by the City of Duluth, St. Louis County, Duluth Housing and Redevelopment Authority, and the Ordean Foundation.

Conflict between landlords and tenants is a significant contributor to homelessness. TLC promotes stable rental housing by educating existing and potential landlords and tenants regarding their respective rights and responsibilities and by mediating disputes between them.

TLC offers Ready-to-Rent classes for tenants looking to establish or rebuild a positive rental history, and landlord workshops on fair housing laws, local government rules and requirements, business fundamentals and other common issues. TLC serves as a community-wide resource about the rights and responsibilities of both tenants and landlords. They offer mediation services to help resolve tenant/landlord and neighbor to neighbor disputes. Evictions are costly; TLC saves literally thousands of dollars for landlords and tenants.

At the council hearing to establish TLC, landlords as well as renters spoke highly of the value of tenant/landlord mediation.

We experience the need for this service first hand at Loaves and Fishes. Many guests face barriers to housing due to previous evictions or criminal backgrounds. TLC was extremely helpful to one guest and her teenager at Olive Branch who had been evicted during a family crisis. In many cases, prior evictions result in an almost automatic rejection of applications to rent. TLC coached her through rental application process and she is currently apartment hunting.

In addition, TLC is ideally suited to administer a program to establish incentives for landlords to rent to those with felony convictions and is helping advance the cause. With TLC at hand, landlords are more open to giving someone a second chance.

The 2016 Housing for All Community Summit will celebrate the first anniversary of the Tenant Landlord Connection and set further priorities.

### TENANT LANDLORD CONNECTION

Resources and assistance for tenants and landlords

- Ready to Rent Classes
- Landlord Workshops
- Mediation

To speak with TLC staff about your rental situation, call: 218-727-5372

[www.1roofhousing.org/contact/programs-services/tenant-landlord-connection](http://www.1roofhousing.org/contact/programs-services/tenant-landlord-connection)



## Housing For All Community Summit

May 26, 2016, 10:00 AM - 3:30 PM

First United Methodist Church (“The Coppertop”), 230 E Skyline Parkway, Duluth

Please join us in coming together as a community to put an end to homelessness in St. Louis County.

For more info visit: [www.facebook.com/SLCPlantoendhomelessness](http://www.facebook.com/SLCPlantoendhomelessness)

### The summit focuses on two overall goals:

To come up with concrete solutions to prevent and decrease homelessness and to create a community report back to share with decision makers and the community at large.

# Mental Health Court has changed people's lives

by Kelly Wallin

Today over 1 in every 15 people arrested have a serious and persistent mental health condition. It is estimated that 40 percent living with mental illness have spent time in a correctional institution at some point in their lives. Historically, mental health problems have been handled with an out of sight, out of mind approach. People were incarcerated for all sorts of minor offenses and were "out of sight." Enough minor offenses led to prison terms and the problem was "out of mind." As 6th District Judge Sally Tarnowski of the St. Louis County Mental Health Court says, "we were not treating people who have mental illness and offend very well."

Thus the need for a more compassionate and productive approach. Today we have that with the Mental Health Court (MHC). The first mental health court was established in Florida in 1997 and was modeled

after the successful drug courts that started in 1989. St. Louis County's pilot MHC started in October 2001 with 15 participants. It went through trial and error until the current model was adopted in 2009.

One of our former guests and friends who is a recent graduate of MHC talked with me about his experience with the court. He talked at length about his personal spiral into darkness, where his mind was attacking him, causing him to act out in ways that brought police involvement. When I asked why he didn't seek mental health care, he said that he felt everyone was out to get him,

including and especially doctors. He had a lot of mistrust of people.

"What do you think of the mental health court?"

I asked. "If it wasn't for Mental Health Court I'd be dead. For sure," was his stark reply.

Loaves and Fishes has partnered with MHC and provided housing to many of its participants. "Without the court introducing me to you people

in the Loaves and Fishes and letting me stay at the Dorothy Day house and you folks caring about me I don't know how I'd have made it," said our friend.

He pointed out it wasn't all smooth sailing. When he made mistakes along the way, the court didn't just turn their back on him. Dorothy Day didn't turn its back on him. They worked with him and never gave up. "Oh, they were hard on me." He chuckled to himself at this statement, remembering a funny moment in the program that he's not willing to elaborate on.

When I asked him what could have been better about the program, he said people should be helped earlier. As it is now, people have to be in serious trouble to qualify for the support that MHC brings: help that includes psychologists, social workers, housing advocates, work advocates, chemical dependency counselors, psychiatrists, and friendship. If people are helped earlier a lot of pain could be prevented. Jail for those having an episode of mental illness is HELL.

One of the criteria for participating in MHC is the illness must be severe and persistent. Unfortunately, this means that the downward spiral into mental illness is not addressed until damage and unneeded suffering are caused by multiple arrests.

Right now the mental health system is piecemeal, ineffective, handcuffed and broken. So broken that sick people break before it's willing to do something. MHC is doing some good work. But the mental health system needs an overhaul. We see this every day in our houses and community. People on the edge, people over the line, people struggling not to go off the edge. Addressing this broken system was one of the top three priorities of the 2015 Summit. The City of Duluth has responded to our advocacy by joining with county, hospital and police leaders to plug the worst gaps in crisis care, but there are still many, many individuals for whom emergency rooms, hospital stays, jails and prisons are no solution. Loaves and Fishes sees many such people drop by day after day, year after year. Many find a safe, loving, homelike environment in our houses. We also feel the grief for others for whom there are so few options to nights on the streets. No one chooses a mental illness, and while there are relatively few miracles, much can be done much better. Momentum is on our side, the mayor and most civic leaders want to move ahead. Let's pull together as a community and show gratitude for our blessings with those more vulnerable.

**"The mission of the St. Louis County Mental Health Court is to improve mental health, promote self-sufficiency, reduce recidivism, and offer cost effective alternatives to incarceration for participants"**

*St. Louis County Mental Health Court Policy Manual, 2012.*

## Desperate Need for Foster Care

by Brooke Tapp

Tim, one of the guests at Dorothy Day, shared his experience of growing up in foster care. He was placed with his first foster parents at the age of 9. Why children enter the foster care system varies; Tim was placed in foster care to get out of the physical abuse of his home situation. Homelessness, drug addiction, and mental illness are some of the most common reasons for placement in foster care in south St. Louis County, where, sadly, an average of 4 kids per week enter the system.

Foster care is intended as a temporary home for children while their birth parents work through difficulties. It provides food, clothing, shelter, and just as importantly, stability, patience, love and support. Stability is a critical need for childhood development. Compared to those in stable homes, children who live in unstable situations have four times the rate of developmental delays, three times the rate of emotional or behavioral problems, and twice the rate of learning disabilities. ([www.ocd.pitt.edu/Files/PDF/ECMH-unstableliving.pdf](http://www.ocd.pitt.edu/Files/PDF/ECMH-unstableliving.pdf)).

Stability is not what Tim experienced in the Illinois state foster system in the late 70s. His first foster home was only licensed as a temporary placement. It was a positive family for him, and when he was transferred he found less positive situations. Over the next two years, he tried to run away from group homes and temporary foster placements because of physical abuse from staff and foster parents, physical fights with other foster kids, and abusive punishment. He had a total of 16 different foster care placements, including group homes, prior to "aging out" of the system at age 18. He had to transfer schools with each placement making it difficult to meet and keep friends.

He believes his experience and those of other foster kids would have been more positive if they would be able to stay at one foster home. Tim says it is a

**"There is love from other people besides your family, it doesn't have to be your mom, dad, brother, sister."**

*Tim, guest at Dorothy Day*

scary experience for kids entering foster care for the first time. He eventually returned and stayed with his first foster family after they were licensed for permanent foster care. There he learned, "There is love from other people besides your family, it doesn't have to be your mom, dad, brother, sister." If Tim could change one thing about foster care in general, he would let kids stay in one home indefinitely.

South St. Louis County has five social workers, called licensors, who match children and foster families. Each licensor has 40-45 active cases to oversee. First, licensors attempt to place children with relatives. If this is not possible, they look for placement in a licensed foster home that will be a good fit for the child as well as the foster family; hopefully, a fit that will last until reunification is possible. Reunification of children with their birth parents is the hope for the families in the foster care system. In south St. Louis County, the length of a foster care placement has lengthened to allow birth parents more time to recover.

Unfortunately, children are on the waitlist for a foster care placement in St. Louis County. Bethany Youth Crisis Center is the emergency shelter for children that cannot be placed with relatives or in a foster home. St. Louis County is in desperate need of safe, stable foster homes. If you have an interest in providing stability for a child through foster care, go online for more information at [www.stlouiscountymn.gov/ADULTFAMILIES/ChildrenYouth/ChildFosterCare.aspx](http://www.stlouiscountymn.gov/ADULTFAMILIES/ChildrenYouth/ChildFosterCare.aspx)



# Midwest Catholic Worker Faith and Resistance Retreat and Black Lives Matter

by Donna Howard



A line of Catholic Workers blocks the street and light rail on Monday, April 11th at Target Field in downtown Minneapolis to call attention to racial injustice. From right: unknown, Michael Elderbrook, Kelly Wallin, Ed Bloomer, Donna Howard. Photo: Jerry Holt

Midwest Catholic Workers gather twice a year: in fall at Sugar Creek, Iowa, for a retreat and exchange of ideas, and in spring to share faith and our deep commitment to nonviolent action.

Michael Elderbrook, Kelly Wallin and Donna Howard spent 4 1/2 days in Minneapolis this April for this spring gathering. Catholic Workers came from as far as Indiana, New York, Arizona, and Texas for a retreat which culminated in direct action under the leadership of Black Lives Matter.

**“The calling of the Christian is to remind the state that all children are ours” -Rev. Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou**

At least 75 CWs and church people from the Twin Cities protested at the opening game of the Twins season by dropping banners both outside and inside Target Field and blocking two intersections, one of which included a light rail train. The three of us from Duluth were among 25 who were arrested and charged with two misdemeanors. Our first court appearance will be later this month. The three demands of the protest were: 1) a re-opening of the charges against the policemen who shot Jamar Clark in Minneapolis November 15, 2015; 2) white people speaking out against white supremacy; and 3) fair pay and scheduling for workers at Target Field.

We were moved by the warmth, talent and spirituality of the Black Lives Matter leaders who organized and led the action. They made it easy to trust and to give ourselves to our shared convictions. And they helped us understand the massive injustice experienced by Black people. We three who went offer our gratitude to Rye House in Minneapolis for hosting us, to our Black Lives Matter leaders, and to the rest of our community for covering our hospitality work so we could do the work of nonviolent protest.



Donna Howard in a camp for Internally Displaced Persons in Sri Lanka Photo: Nonviolent Peaceforce

## Loaves and Fishes & the Tradition of Peace Work

by Doris Malkmus

Loaves and Fishes Community member Donna Howard recently received word that an organization she helped build was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. Donna joined founders Mel Duncan and David Hartsough in 1996 in building Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), an organization which provides unarmed civilian peacekeeping in countries experiencing violent conflict.

In 1989 when Steve O'Neill and Angie Miller were organizing a Catholic Worker house, she was one of the early volunteers. She participated in the opening of Hannah House in 1991 and was key in starting Olive Branch in 1993.

Community living was part of what made a life of dedication to peace possible. Loaves and Fishes demonstrated that it was possible to put people first and that a revolution of the heart was needed more than impersonal policies and fine promises.

In reflecting on those early years, Donna remembered that Loaves and Fishes members were passionate leaders in Plowshares and the anti-nuclear movement.

On Earth Day 1996, Donna and fellow activist Tom Hastings, went to the Project ELF site in northern Wisconsin and, with swede saws, cut down transmitter poles, effectively preventing the facility from signaling a first-strike nuclear attack. Testimony of experts at their trial convinced the jury to acquit on the sabotage charge; so Donna and Tom were only convicted of felony damage to property. Donna spent six months in prison and had much time to think about how important it is to disarm the weapons of mass destruction and to build alternative responses to warfare.

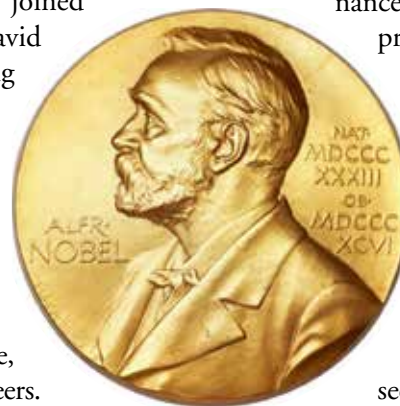
After leaving prison, she sought out others who were looking for ways to do civilian peacekeeping.

She found this with Mel and David and Nonviolent Peaceforce. During the early development of Nonviolent Peaceforce, Donna worked in governance and did the research for a pilot project in Sri Lanka in 2002.

The most difficult lesson Donna learned while doing research in Sri Lanka is the importance of non-partisanship in peacekeeping work. As an activist, beliefs and ideologies dominated perceptions; as a peacemaker, she had to remain non-partisan while passionately seeking to save lives from senseless war and destruction. Donna made several more trips to programs in Guatemala, the Philippines and Kenya.

The founding group realized that no organization would be credible if it was seen as simply another form of Western dominance. Nonviolent Peaceforce by-laws required the governing body to have members from South America, North America, Europe, Africa, Asia and South Asia. Donna served on the governance council, co-chairing it twice before retiring in 2011 and returning to Jefferson Street as a full time volunteer with the Loaves and Fishes Community.

The nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize came as a complete surprise one winter morning in 2016. The American Friends Service Committee, which won the prize in 1947, nominated the Nonviolent Peaceforce. Only organizations/individuals who have received a prize can nominate, and Nonviolent Peaceforce carried forward a long Quaker tradition of peacemaking — of making peace from the heart, building communities and institutions to heal and celebrate the messy business of being human. Donna shared, “It was a great privilege to help create an organization that protects the lives of civilians in war-affected countries.”





# Olive Branch House Notes

by Chelsea Froemke

It has been one year since our last newsletter and I do not know how we could possibly summarize an entire year at Olive Branch in so few words. The front door of this hospitality house is constantly opening and closing as friends and strangers alike come and go. These days there never seems to be a dull moment. The house is busy and the work of hospitality is often demanding. There are numerous long days that often push me to my limits and frequently in the past year I've needed to re-center and re-balance. As a community of volunteers we constantly remind ourselves that in the midst of all that we do, our priority and focus should always be providing hospitality.

On the surface hospitality seems simple enough. Our goal is to extend a warm welcome to all who enter; providing a safe, clean, and sober place for people to live, catch their breath, eat a meal, take a shower, use the phone. It is our hope that this space can be a stepping stone for people as they prepare for their next home. From the outside it may seem that providing hospitality is simple and straightforward, but I am reminded daily that that is not true.

Just maintaining the house is a lot of work in itself. There are always meals to prepare, dishes to wash, sweeping, mopping, phone calls, laundry, clogged toilets. This past year we discovered that our porch was rotting (we are forever grateful for Habitat for Humanity and all of their long days of porch rebuilding), there is a bathroom renovation project that needs to be addressed with urgency, a washing machine and an oven that are both dangerously close to the end of their lives, a half finished patio in the backyard, and a long list of other projects that we might get to someday.

Olive Branch is always filled to the tip-top and yet the phone never stops ringing, the need for long term and emergency housing persists. The main floor of Olive Branch continues to serve as drop-in space during the day but an open bed is quickly re-filled. It is dif-



The Olive Branch gang at Lucy's play: from left: Michael, Kate, Lucy, Drew, Barb, Chelsea, Naomi.

icult to turn people away when we do not have any available beds, but it is a consolation to know that we can at least offer this space to people during the day. Sure, a warm meal and a hot shower can go a long way in brightening someone's day, but does it create any difference when that person still finds herself homeless night after night?

It is always a joyous celebration when our guests secure permanent housing. We enjoy honoring these moments with special dinners at Olive Branch and of course by helping with the big move. We relish these send offs and appreciate seeing the positive impact that Olive Branch has had in a person's journey towards stability. Sadly, the opposite situation also exists. Sometimes people are asked to leave. These departures are always sad. Sometimes people's addictions and/or mental health struggles are just too much for us to manage. It is always upsetting for us when someone has to leave; we are left worrying about them and questioning what could have been done differently in order to prevent such an unfortunate outcome. It is hard to accept that barriers such as mental health and addictions can prevent us from expressing hospitality to everyone.

The Olive Branch dining room was full for Easter

this year. Like we do for every holiday, we gathered to share a meal and to spend time with one another. Looking around the table I smiled thinking of all the people surrounding this sacred space. All of us brought a different story along with us to that meal; people who have experienced trauma, who know loneliness, some mourning broken relationships, friends experiencing suffering. As we ate, and chatted, and laughed I realized that this is what hospitality looks like. Some days it is really difficult; hospitality can get complicated, messy. Though at this meal I was reminded once more that amidst the messiness of hospitality there is also beauty. When the Olive Branch door opens it can provide a safe and sober place for someone to spend the day or a place for someone to live temporarily. It can also become a place of welcome and belonging, a place where we all find love. Olive Branch has been a blessed home and a place of respite for many adults and children throughout the years and we are committed to continuing the messy, beautiful work of hospitality.

## DAY ON THE HILL



by Michael Elderbrook

On March 15th, a group of over 30 people (and one puppy) loaded onto a bus before sunrise, traveled to St. Paul, and shared their stories with elected officials at the Capitol. The Second Chance and Homeless Day on the Hill presented our group with the opportunity to speak truth to power about the realities of homelessness and poverty, as well as the obstacles a felony record creates for individuals even after they have "paid their debt to society." We asked for greater funding on behalf of thousands of our most vulnerable Minnesotans who are often left voiceless in the political process.

Splitting into two groups, I went with the half advocating for the homeless. In our meetings with Rep. Jen Schultz, Rep. Erik Simonson, and Sen. Roger Reinert, we asked for support for initiatives that will increase statewide spending for affordable housing. This included funding earmarked for affordable housing for people over age 55 and a \$100 increase in monthly payments to low-income families through MFIP (Minnesota Family Investment Program), which has not been increased since 1986.

Overall, I was left with a sense of pride that our group worked to counter the political apathy found too often among the socially and economically downtrodden. But I was also encouraged by the politicians we met who were willing to really pay attention to people who are usually tokenized or just swept aside in the spectacle of modern politics.

For more information on *Prosperity for All* and *Homes for All* agenda 2016 go to Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless at [www.mnhomelesscoalition.org](http://www.mnhomelesscoalition.org).

## Chelsea's 1239 Mile Summer

by Chelsea Froemke

Before my life as a Catholic Worker, I spent several summers as a canoe guide in the Boundary Water Canoe Area Wilderness at a camp called Wilderness Canoe Base. I am incredibly thankful to have had the opportunity and the ability to lead middle school, high school, and intergenerational groups on week long trips through the beautiful northern Minnesota wilderness. This summer I will be embarking on a 1,239 mile canoe trip from Seagull Lake (Wilderness Canoe Base) to Hudson Bay (York Factory). This trip has been a dream for many years and it is very exciting that it is actually becoming a reality. I am thankful for the support of my



fellow Loaves and Fishes community mates and will miss them very much throughout the summer. This trip we are calling Journey 4 Renewal will surely be an adventure of a lifetime, but it is also serving as a fundraiser to benefit Wilderness Canoe Base's Renewal Campaign. To learn more about this adventure and to follow us as we paddle, check out our website [journey4renewal.org](http://journey4renewal.org).

**The Loaves and Fishes community sends Chelsea and her friends off with lots of love and good wishes for their safety and renewal physically and spiritually. We hope the wind is at their backs and the polar bears are friendly. We ask our readership to pray for the four.**

# Dorothy Day House Notes

by Joel Kilgour

A few years ago I had the privilege to speak to a group of five- and six-year-old parishioners at our friendly neighborhood St Paul's Church. I gave it my best, asking them to help piece together the biblical loaves and fishes story, which they did, more or less, with a few assists from parents: Jesus went across the lake and met lots of people, they were hungry, a boy had a few loaves and fish and Jesus used that to feed all of the people. I asked them what they thought the story meant. A girl offered a fair but dispassionate answer that "Jesus made a miracle." We clearly needed to put the story in a more practical context. So I asked them to imagine that they finally got to the lunchroom at school, hungry as can be, and sat down with a couple friends. They opened their lunch boxes and saw that one of them had a peanut butter sandwich, one had an apple, and one had nothing at all. What would they do? The kids, who just a few seconds ago were staring at the floor, shot their arms into the air, eager to solve the problem. The consensus answer was obvious to them: split the sandwich and apple three ways so everyone gets some! Then one boy added a monkey wrench: what if one of the friends was hungrier than the others because she didn't have breakfast? More excited problem solving ensued, concluding that they wouldn't necessarily split the food equally, that the person who was hungriest should get the most. And what about everyone else in the lunchroom? Surely they could be recruited to pitch in and resolve this dilemma.

Kids' best intentions don't always translate into daily practice, of course. But their innate faith in humanity stands in stark contrast to the adult world and its border fences, bombs and greed. I couldn't think of a better living example of what Jesus meant when he told us to be like the little ones.

Not long after this experience, someone stole a lighter belonging to one of our guests. In our world this is a serious affront. The theft victim stormed around the house for awhile and then took off without a word. After dinner he returned home. In his hand was a bag full of lighters he had just purchased. He gave one to every smoker in the house. No need to steal, he said, if everyone has what they need.

By the increasingly fearful and self-interested standards of our society, Dorothy Day House is a living miracle. Fourteen to sixteen men, all carrying heavy personal baggage, living well together, for the most part. When I talk to housed people about not having a lock on my bedroom door, I often get gasps of surprise and worry. But I'm the one who feels sorry for people who are afraid of one another. The world is not as scary as it seems. People are good. There is hope. That's what living here teaches you.

A lot has happened at Dorothy Day House in the past year. Here are a few highlights:

- We have housed 82 men since we last published a newsletter. A majority of our guests were working when they arrived, homeless in large part because of unreasonable rents and low wages. Most have since

ended up in permanent housing.

- We have lost four former guests to suicide, seven to drug overdoses, and two to untreated medical conditions. Heroin and synthetics, mental illness, and a dysfunctional health care system continue to eat away at the very heart of our community.

- Michael Elderbrook joined us as a volunteer last year.

Mike hails from Marshfield, WI, and was considering monastic life before finding his way to the Catholic Worker. His quiet and patient demeanor is a great compliment to the chaos that defines this house. An artist and musician, he also balances our collective brain. Kelly and I are grateful to have him here. His parents Ruth and Gary own a catering company and often send us delicious desserts, and recently bought us a beautiful new refrigerator. And he signed up his boyfriend to do house duty, so he gets triple Catholic Worker points.

- In December we lost our longest serving house member, Lucifer the Cat. The old man made it 21 years, not short of astonishing considering how many fights he picked with raccoon. He wasn't what you would call personable, being a cat, but in his old age he would not only cuddle once and awhile, he even followed me around as I worked in the garden. And in his own way he made people feel welcome. Kelly and I half joked that we decided who could live here based on how Lucifer reacted to them. He had an uncanny way of rubbing up against any potential new guests on their first visit — something he rarely did with anyone else at any other time. If he was absent we took it to mean beware. And he was spot on, every time. Lucifer reminded us that humans are not alone on this planet, not alone even in person-ality, wit or compassion. He will be missed.

- The winter has seen us full to the brim, and it hasn't slowed down. We routinely find ourselves with both couches full, as well as a sleeping mat in the laundry room, and often people covering the dining room floor. We try our best to keep the house from becoming overcrowded but there is literally nowhere else for many people to go... what can we do? As I write, 18 men live here, with 14 beds available.

- Meg Kearns, who has volunteered at Dorothy Day House almost since the beginning, is retiring from her position at CHUM after many, many years of service to the Duluth community as the coordinator of distributive services and CHUM church. We are so grateful to be in the work with her, a rare woman in both her deep compassion and ability to get to the point. Luckily, she'll be continuing on here as the

Monday night volunteer and we're crossing our fingers that we'll see even more of her now.

- This spring our guys have been involved in a lot of advocacy around safe and affordable housing — the lack of which is nothing short of a crisis in our community. The Dorothy Day House crew has met and spoken with candidates for city council and mayor, state legislators, county board members and congressional representatives. This spring we took part in Homeless Day on the Hill, Second Chance Day on the Hill, and the Mental Health Day on the Hill at the Capitol in



*Christ of the Couch* by Michael Elderbrook

St Paul. Our guys rock it every time, and it is a good reminder of the power that we have, if we choose to exercise it. Our experience with the political class is that it is ignorant of the needs of poor people primarily because poor people do not operate in the same sphere. The best intentioned elected officials needs to be confronted with the realities of our lives.

- We have routinely been serving dinner to between 15 and 20 people per night, and are blessed with many wonderful folks who prepare and deliver meals: Volunteers Involved Through Action at the College of St Scholastica, the good people of Hillside United Methodist, St Paul's and Peace Church; Donna Effinger; Fred and Roseli Cain and their children; and Gerry and Annette Ouellette. Better still, most of our meals lately are prepared by current and former guests — a special shout out to Tim, Adrian and Ricky! The nights they cook make this place feel like a self-supporting community.

Again, none of our work here would be possible without the loving support of those of you reading this newsletter. You have come to our rescue by donating food, coffee, bike parts, toiletries, bus fare, and cash. You have generously responded to the needs of our guests, offering rides, handing down work gear and tools, buying tickets home for funerals and more. Please remember that the doors of Dorothy Day House are open to everyone, seven days a week. We invite you to stop by, meet us and hear some stories. As it happened in the miracle of the loaves and fishes, it is in relationship, giving and trust that we shall surprise ourselves and change the world.



# 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, 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; 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, Michael Elderbrook, Chelsea Froemke, Donna Howard, Joel Kilgour, Doris Malkmus, Brooke Tapp and Kelly Wallin. Many other people are part of our community as volunteers, donors, meal providers and advocates. We invite you to join us in whatever ways you can.

## Dorothy Day House and the Bike Cave

1712 Jefferson St.  
Duluth, MN 55812  
218-724-2054

## Olive Branch

1614 Jefferson St.  
Duluth, MN 55812  
218-728-0629

## Current needs to keep us going:

Donations are accepted every day 8am-9pm at 1712 Jefferson St, Duluth. If you have any questions, please call 218-724-2054.

Thank you!

**Ongoing material needs:** Coffee, sugar and creamer; Butter, margarine and vegetable oil; Canned tomato products (sauce or diced, large cans preferred); Healthy breakfast cereal and milk; Cheese and eggs; Toilet paper (regular and jumbo commercial rolls); Laundry detergent (HE or powder, large containers preferred); Shampoo and conditioner; New socks (cotton, adult sizes) and anti-fungal foot cream; Ibuprofen, bandages and antibiotic cream or spray; Postage stamps (letter- and postcard-rate); Gift cards for area gas stations (\$20 preferred, to aid people sleeping in their cars or needing transportation to work); Cash donations to cover house expenses. Checks to Loaves and Fishes, 1614 Jefferson St, Duluth MN 55812; or donate online at [www.gofundme.com/LandF2016](http://www.gofundme.com/LandF2016). Loaves and Fishes is a people-powered movement for change, we are not a tax-deductible charity.

**Special requests:** Area rugs, size 4'x6' or larger, clean and in good shape (for guest rooms), twin and full sized bed bug mattress covers

**Volunteer needs:** (please call for more information): Mason or someone experienced with laying patio pavers; Bicycle mechanics and folks who are good with kids to volunteer 1-2 times per month in the Bike Cave over the summer. Shifts are approximately 4 hours.

# Bike Cave 2016

by Kelly Wallin

The Bike Cave is an important and growing part of our work at Loaves and Fishes, and I would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to all you who have supported us with your time and donations. Without you the Bike Cave would not be possible. If you haven't ever visited the Bike Cave, please do! I wish all our supporters could experience the joy that we see every time we open our doors.

One particularly busy day last summer comes to mind as I write. All of the mechanics were occupied getting tools in people's hands and grease under their fingernails. People were waiting in line to be helped, kind of like the DMV, minus the numbered tags. When I finished helping the person I was working with I went outside to see who was next. A small group of kids arrived, jumped off their bikes and tried butting in line. Before I could get a word in, one youngster, looking to be about 8 years old, started to tell me all the things he needs help with on his bike. As I pointed to the people ahead of him, explaining he'd have to wait until those in line are first served, he gave me a crestfallen look, followed soon by a mischievous grin that usually spells trouble. He turned his back, dug in his pocket and looked over his shoulder. He motioned me to have a private conversation with a little nod of his chin. Intrigued, I stepped away from the line. "Are you sure you can't move me to the front of the line?" He asked as soon as we were out of earshot of the others. "If you do there's some candy in it for ya." He held out his hand with a couple pieces of hard candy with bits of pocket lint stuck to it. I started laughing and couldn't stop for a long time. I still laugh as I think about it. You can ask any of our volunteers and they will have similar stories!

Speaking of our volunteers, big thanks to ALL of the volunteer mechanics who donate their time and energy to keep people on two wheels. Chelsea, Drew, Wil, Alex, both Matts and Nate have shown a lot of

dedication and put in many hours already this year.

Our hope is that everyone who comes to the Bike Cave takes something with them: be it a sense of accomplishment, a feeling of community care, a diversity of friendships or a pride in self-reliance.

Last year we tried a number of improvements. We implemented mostly logistical processes that helped immensely with tracking volunteer hours. We made great strides in parental involvement through a meet and greet for signing parental permission slips. We started the 'bike library' with 12 loaner bikes, some of which were actually returned! We started a movie night with bike-themed movies that we'd watch on a projection screen in the back yard (sad to say this fell flat). We started a pilot program on the Fond du Lac reservation and partnered with COGGS (Cyclists of Gitchee Gumees Shores) and Healthy Duluth Area Coalition (which graciously provided us with bike helmets for dozens of kiddos). We provided bikes for local organizations, including Arrowhead East and Harbor City High School, and for the Bike Rodeo at Myers-Wilkins School. But mostly we helped over 150 bikes find a new life and home.

I'm convinced 2016 will be the best year ever, and it has started early! With bike ridership up, we've already gotten many bikes on the road. And thanks to the generosity of many of our friends, we will start the year with much needed new tools and equipment and have moved into the digital age with an iPad to help us keep track of bikes and volunteer hours and to record all the fun. We hope to continue the relationship with Fond du Lac and working with local projects to promote bike culture. Community bike rides are a priority with many people I've talked to.

If this sounds like fun, it is! If you are interested in volunteering, contact Kelly, Drew or Chelsea at 218-724-2054 or stop by on any Wednesday or Saturday, 1-5 pm to see the Bike Cave in gear.

## A Brush With Kindness



Last fall, we partnered with Western Lake Superior Habitat for Humanity (WLSHFH) to complete major improvements to our houses and properties. Volunteers from Temple Israel, Glen Avon Presbyterian, Barr Engineering, Team Red, White and Blue, UMD Rotaract and Affinity Plus Credit Union contributed 230 hours of labor to the projects. We improved and expanded garden space, built a 25-foot retaining wall and stairs behind Dorothy Day House and did a near-complete rebuild of the 110-year old back porch at Olive Branch. Big thanks to WLSHFH for all they do to promote community and affordable home ownership!