

When Everyone Brings Something, there is more than enough

2010 Spring Faith Forum A Personal Perspective on Causes and Cures

On the heels of the Annual Homelessness Count 2010 report, which identified a significant increase (up 96% since 2009) in the number of homeless youth (age 18-21) in Anoka County, attendees at this spring's Faith Forum heard from Cheree Langmade who experienced homelessness for the first time as a 12 year old living in Anoka County. Cheree shared her personal story, including how her parents drug use and divorce left her on her own much of her young life, and how taking a bus from Coon Rapids to the Mall of America one night officially began the homeless stage of her life. With tears, Cheree told about the abuse she suffered and the people she met as she attempted to survive on the streets. Fortunately, the story doesn't end there. Cheree completed high school and went onto attend St. Catherine's University in Minneapolis where she earned her nursing degree. Today,

Cheree is the proud single parent of 4 children, owns a home in Andover and works as an RN and outreach worker for the Bridge for Youth, an organization that is dedicated to helping homeless youth build life skills. (<http://www.bridgeforyouth.org/>) In the telling of her own experiences as a homeless youth, Cheree challenged participants to consider how we think about homeless youth. She engaged the audience by posing the question "What are some of the things you've heard people say about homeless youth?" She then used the responses solicited to dispel common myths about youth who are homeless:

"Kids are old enough to be on their own once they turn 18" – the part of the human brain responsible for logic and decision making isn't fully developed until age 25 and many young adults don't possess the life skills necessary to live success-

fully on their own.

"They are unmotivated to change their circumstances" – once homeless, a youth's focus becomes survival (how to get food, where to sleep, how to stay safe) and until these basic needs are met, he/she can't begin to think about how to overcome the issues that initially caused the homelessness.

"We're shocked it's even an issue here" – homeless youth tend to be less visible in suburban areas like Anoka County because instead of begging on street corners, they are couch hopping (moving the one friend's couch to the next), living out of their cars or seeking shelter at the local library or mall. (http://abcnewspapers.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=11399&Itemid=28)

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Ideas Gained or Actions to Take.....

"Need to educate my church to see the needs in the community and brainstorm"

"Help get the word out"

"Together we can make change"

"I want to make more people aware of these issues"

"Create a team to work with other agencies"

"I gained more understanding of the issue of homelessness and I will encourage my church to be out in the community more"

"Have been contemplating having a Family Table at my church. Also, will have Cheree come and speak there"

"Never take life for granted"

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BridgeLink Break-Out

Jim Barber, Senior Associate Pastor of Constance Free Church and President of BridgeLink took the lunch time audience through the interesting journey of how BridgeLink became the non-profit agency it is today.

"In 2005, **BridgeLink** was founded by Constance out of a desire to practice love and good deeds beyond the walls of the church. It is a separate legal entity from the church with a distinct purpose of collaborating with other organizations in mobilizing people and other assets to meet the community needs of Anoka County."

"BridgeLink connects people and organizations who care, with several non profits that are providing the service of

care in Anoka County. We actively create collaborative relationships between Service Organizations that meet needs, and Support Organizations that help them meet needs." (from www.bridgeinkanoka.org).



Organizations such as Alexandra House, Stepping Stone shelter and Habitat for Humanity, contact BridgeLink about what they need done and BridgeLink matches people who want to volunteer their time or special talents to a specific project. The church accomplishes its mission to serve beyond their own walls; individuals share themselves with the needs of local humanitarian

organizations; organizations are better able to serve people in need with the help of volunteers.
WIN! – WIN! – WIN!

"Literally hundreds of adults and youth from Constance have volunteered in the community through several charitable non-profits. In addition, **BridgeLink** is forming collaborative relationships with other faith communities and businesses to help those in need." (excerpt from www.constanceonline.com)

If your faith community or community group is looking for ways to serve outside its walls, BridgeLink can connect you with opportunities for service.
(763.434.7587)

Lyla Pagels
CAN Board Member

2010 Spring Faith Forum A Personal Perspective on Causes and Cures continued.....



Based on both her personal and her professional experience working with homeless youth on the streets of Minneapolis, Cheree suggested some

tangible ways to help end homelessness in Anoka County:

- Penalize the "pimps" who promote and the "johns" who solicit under-age prostitutes instead of arresting the prostitutes. (known as the "Swedish Model" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prostitution_in_Sweden)
- Create systems that support working parent families by providing children and youth with supplemental adult contact and supervision.

- Help families meet their basic needs so they aren't pressured to choose between paying the rent and kicking their 18 year old child out of the house.
- Provide technical education and transportation through a bike recycling program (http://www.qbp.com/pdf/QBP_2.20.08.pdf)
- Street Outreach Workers who provide mobile case management services for precariously housed or homeless youth. (http://www.huduser.org/Periodicals/FIELDWORKS/1202/FieldWorks_NovDec02.pdf)

Lastly, Cheree relayed an experience she had as an outreach worker in Minneapolis trying to help a homeless youth from Anoka County. This teenage woman was on the run and could-

not return to the foster home she had left. The only housing option available in Anoka County was an over-night stay at the Lino Lakes secure facility where the young woman was searched upon arrival. Cheree recounted the woman's fearful and anxious reaction, suggesting that as a caring community, we can do better to meet the needs of our homeless youth.

For more information on the faith forum, see http://abcnewspapers.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=12013&Itemid=26

Gayle Alexander
Co-Chair, CAN Board

Veterans and Homelessness—What's the Connection?

Kathleen Vitalis is Executive Director of the **Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans** (MACV), a nonprofit organization whose mission is "to provide assistance throughout Minnesota to positively motivated veterans and their families who are homeless or experiencing other life crises." In her presentation on veterans and homelessness she shared some statistics about the men and women who have served our country, but are now struggling:

- About 23% of homeless people in MN at any given time are veterans.
- 1 in 5 veterans suffer from PTSD or depression and many also struggle with chemical dependency, all of which can increase risk for becoming homeless.
- 20-25% of veterans recently returned from a tour of duty are unemployed, which can lead to homelessness.
- About 25% of employed veterans earn less than \$22,000 a year which is insufficient to maintain housing and still meet other basic needs.

MACV does not duplicate services available through Federal, State and County veterans' benefits. However, there are gaps in needed services that are filled by

MACV, which include the following: transitional and permanent housing with supportive services, eviction/foreclosure prevention with rental and mortgage assistance, utility, transportation and food assistance, employment assistance, sobriety aftercare and legal assistance/referral services. MACV partners with other community organizations to coordinate and provide their services.

How can people in the community support the work of MACV?

Opportunities are available to:

- Sponsor a meal for the MACV Metro Region Month End meeting. Contact Kathleen Vitalis at 651.222.0613 or by e-mail at kvitalis@mac-v.org for more information.
- Volunteer to help with a special event. To find out more about that, call MACV headquarters at 651.291.8756.
- Donations of cash and various items are always needed. For specific details, go to www.macv-v.org.
- You can help sponsor a MACV Structured Independent Living Program house. Contact Kathleen Vitalis at 651.291.8756 or at kvitalis@mac-v.org for further information.

Finally it is important to share information about MACV with people in your community who may have contact with veterans in need. Faith communities, local nonprofits, and community service organizations would be good places to provide information. The MACV office in the metro area can be reached at 612.726.1327 and the main website is www.macv.org.

Ellen Raeker
CAN Board



A New Collaborative

A new task force was formed to explore the possibility of developing a Wellness Clinic for the Family Table in Anoka County.



Nurse Program and the Anoka County Housing Coordinator met to explore how this might happen.

Representatives from St. Mary's Clinics, Mercy & Unity Hospitals' Faith Community

The first step in the process is doing a needs assessment of participants of several of the Family Table Meals.

For more information, please contact:

Judy Johnson @ 763.422-6950

Or

Lyla Pagels @ 763.236.4342

Domestic Abuse and Homelessness

Joe Wotruba, Ph.D., L.P. Program Director & Maureen Zinda, Co-Therapist of the Men's group at Lee Carlson Center™ for Mental Health & Well-Being's domestic abuse program joined Jenny Green, Shelter Program Director from Alexandra House to facilitate this break-out session.

They began the break-out session by providing an overview of the domestic abuse program at Lee Carlson Center and how it's a program designed for the whole family.

Programs are provided to men who have been arrested for domestic abuse, and women and children who have been victim/survivors of domestic abuse and/or sexual assault.

Highlights of the discussion:

Factors contributing to the trend in homelessness:

- Shortages in affordable rental housing (32% increase in foreclosures between April '08 & April '09).
- Poor are frequently unable to pay for housing, food, child-care, health care & education.
- Difficult choices must be made when limited resources cover only some of the necessities.

Understanding the impact of Poverty & Intimate Partner Abuse:

- Needs are those things that are essential to sustain life. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.
- Wants are all other things and experiences we find desirable but not essential to sustaining life.
- It's estimated that 50% of the homeless population are victims of Domestic Abuse and trying to escape their partners.

Impact of Domestic Abuse on Homelessness:

- Approximately 63% of homeless women have experienced domestic violence in their adult lives.
- Roughly 28% of families were homeless because of domestic violence in 2008.
- Compared to single men and women, more families remained in emergency shelter, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing.
- Battered women in domestic violence homes must choose between abusive relationships and poverty. Many stay for this reason since she and her children may not be safe on the streets either.
- Victims often have poor credit records and employment histories because of the violence they have experienced.
- Landlords often discriminate against victims if they have a protection order or any other indicator of domestic violence.

Violence is an effective strategy for creating and maintaining power and control over another person. Domestic violence is a learned behavior and a conscious choice.

Anoka County Statistics:

In 2007, there were 7300 domestic assault related calls to police and, in 2007, all three homicides in the county were the result of domestic violence.

Domestic violence appears to have played a role in 4 of the 6 homicides we experienced in Anoka County in 2008.

In 2008 there were 6205 Domestic Assault related calls that resulted in 972 arrests for Domestic Assault.

What people can do to support those in need?

- Volunteer your services at local shelters, food shelves, churches & clothing stores.
- Show compassion when serving this population, most homeless people wouldn't choose this lifestyle.
- Donate money, clothing, food, services to your charity of choice.
- Be willing to listen when women talk about violence in their home and refer them to agencies that serve female victims.
- Remember that the lack of food, clothing, shelter, air and water are large stressors and contribute to desperate measures to secure them.
- Be aware that depression and anxiety are two of the mental health issues most often seen in male offenders of domestic violence.
- Provide support to people in your neighborhood by volunteering to make meals, babysit children, and provide transportation for job seeking.
- Have a bulletin board in the church that offers Help Wanted positions for those who are out of work.
- Learn more about Domestic Violence and what you can do in your church or agency.

To schedule a presentation on *Domestic Abuse & the Impact on the Family* or on *Creating Compassionate Relationships*, contact Joe Wotruba at 763-783-4991

For a presentation on *Women & Domestic Abuse*, contact Amy Highness at Alexandra House at 763-795-5452.

Patty Halvorson—CAN Board Member

Stable Mental Health, Stable Housing

Marielle Robinson, Anoka County Outreach worker, and Jeff Vadenais, a graduate of the Stepping Stone Shelter program, discussed how mental illness and chemical dependency contribute to homelessness.

Marielle discussed how mental illness (MI), chemical dependency (CD), or a traumatic brain injury (TBI) can affect a person's perception of what is normal or acceptable as well as their perception of the social service system and those who might be offering assistance. For instance, what is normal or acceptable to someone experiencing life through the filter of MI, CD or TBI might not appear to be normal or acceptable to

someone without such a diagnosis. Using a bell curve example, she explained that "normal is a setting on a washing machine" or relative depending on the situation or person. Marielle suggested that rather than judge people who do not behave according to societies "norms", as providers and lay people we need to understand the need a particular behavior is meeting.



Jeff shared his personal story of the events that led him into homelessness, including childhood traumas he suffered, a brain injury he sustained, and his drug addiction, mental health and criminal history.

His life demonstrates how multiple services came together to support him and helped him to acquire and maintain permanent housing. He is a living example of true redemption and the challenges of choosing to be present in one's own life.

Heather Ries
CAN Board Member

AngelFood Ministries

Do you know someone who could use help stretching their food dollars? If so, AngelFood Ministries (AFM) may be able to help. At the May Circle of Influence Meeting, a local representative from AFM shared information about a unique way to get good food cheap.



AFM is a non-denominational food program that provides high quality, fresh food at less than 1/2 grocery store costs. There is no application or pre-qualifiers required—anyone can participate.

AFM offers a diverse menu with options for families, singles, special diets & after-school snacks ranging in price from \$16—\$35 with monthly specials. In May, the choices include:

- 6.5 lb. Assorted Meat Grill box for \$23
- 4 for 4 Family Meals for \$35
- Premium Fresh Fruit & Veggie Box for \$22
- 8 x 8oz Steak Box for \$22

To participate, orders can be placed online or by calling one of the host sites. Payment can be made online or in person when the food is picked up at the host site.

Local hosts sites are:

- Anoka—United Methodist 763.421.2378
- Columbia Hts—Oak Hill Baptist—763.789.4337
- Coon Rapids—Presbyterian Church of the Master—763.954.1901

<https://www.angelfoodministries.com>

Faith Community Panel

Five (5) passionate and compassionate panel members relayed their experiences and stories of how their particular agency/faith community is responding to meet some of the needs of homeless individuals.

Rhonda Steele, chair of the board of Family Promise played an audio of phone calls from those looking for shelter sound like. Our hearts ached listening to each desperate call for help. Along with a growing coalition of faith communities, Family Promise is on the road to becoming part of the national model in which “each faith community will set aside a week at a time to create a living space within their facility for homeless families. Volunteers from the faith community will provide food and hospitality to the guests during the evening, overnight, and early morning hours. During the day, the parents and young children will have a day center at which they can pursue the resources they need to get back on their feet.” www.familypromiseofanokacounty.org

As Pastor of Congregational Life at CrossPoint Church in Coon Rapids, **Nancy Ernewein** told several compelling stories of how this small congregation stepped way out of their comfort zone in order to serve the homeless by providing opportunities that meet basic needs (food, clothing, friendship). With only 60 – 70 in their congregation, they have served as many as 20 kids in their youth group, taken in the homeless into their homes, provide a once a month ‘coffee drive-thru’ that includes a prayer list, a food shelf, a Family Table that feeds 75 – 100 people, a ‘winter coat’ drive, and more. www.crosspointmn.org

Pastor Diane Stores from Bridgewood Community Church in Blaine shared examples of how Bridgewood members took homeless individuals into their own homes – with some success and some challenges/learning/growing opportunities. The church parishioners have taken in a total of five homeless in their home. One experience Diane shared was about a Liberian refugee, a victim of torture, who stayed with a couple for over a year. During that time he found work and saved enough to get his own place. Within that year, “it was not just food and shelter; it really feed his soul and changed his outlook on life.” Not all experiences have been as successful, but lessons have been learned and more structure has been built into their processes. www.bridgewoodcc.org

With her gift of working with businesses, **Therese Hamel**, Vice President of BridgeLink’s board of directors, expanded the collaborations involved with BridgeLink. (see BridgeLink article on page 2) www.bridgelinkanoka.org

Representing Mercy & Unity Hospitals’ Faith Community Nurse Program, **Jeannie Freytag**, RN, Family Table Parish Nurse, explained the concept of Family Table and the sacrifice that the churches who are participating make on a monthly basis. It takes days to plan the meal and many volunteers to shop for the groceries, cook, serve, and clean-up.

Jeannie attends many of the meals and once in a while she will come across someone who is homeless. One example was a family who finally opened up after coming to several meals. They seemed to be fine physically, as all their basic needs were being met. They were sleeping in their car, they had clothes on their backs, and they were being fed. But what they needed, was to sit with people and have consistency, community and constancy; and to feel the love of those around them.

Jeannie then summed up the panel presentation and the forum by relaying how sometimes people in need assist others in need. Doing great things with the backup of an agency or organization is wonderful; however, befriending one person in a very practical way can make a huge difference in that person’s life. For more information on Family Table: www.accap.org/file/Resource_Guide.pdf





Mission Statement

To mobilize community organizations to recognize the value and benefits of working together, because when everyone brings something, there is more than enough.

Vision Statement

By working together to serve our community, every community organization will recognize and utilize its own unique gifts and resources.

Advisory Board

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St. Katharine Drexel Church

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Lee Carlson Center for Mental Health

Heather Ries
Stepping Stone Emergency Housing

Contact Information

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Compassionnet_mn@yahoo.com

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*When everyone brings something,
there is more than enough*

Cleaning For a Reason

Do you know a woman currently undergoing Chemo? There is a cleaning service that provides FREE housecleaning - 1 time per month for 4 months while she is in treatment.



All she has to do is sign up and have her doctor fax a note confirming the treatment. **Cleaning for a Reason** will have a participating maid service in her zip code area arrange for the service.

Please pass this information on to bless a woman going through treatment. This organization serves the entire USA and currently has 547 partners to help these women. It's our job to pass the word and let them know that there are people out there that care.

<http://www.cleaningforareason.org/index.html>

Compassion Action Network's Circle of Influence Meetings

Please mark your calendars for the 1st Thursday of each month to attend our Circle of Influence (COI) meetings.

The purpose of the COI meetings is to network together to better understand resources already in place and look for ways to make them stronger.

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Emmanuel Christian Center
7777 University Ave NE
Spring Lake Park, MN 55432



When everyone brings something, there is more than enough.