



Shelter Stories

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. LUKE'S SHELTER

SUMMER 2006

Offering transitional shelter and life-reclaiming support to people experiencing homelessness

IN THIS ISSUE:

Letter from the Pastor 2

How to Contribute 2

Open House Ooohs 3

A Smokin' Supporter 3

A Message of Thanks 4



An Escape from Sorrow

RIPPLE EFFECT: When David Corsini lost his mother, he also lost his way. He ended up sleeping in a trailer with about 10 other men before St. Luke's helped him reclaim his life.

Corsini found "a nurturing environment," he says. "All the counselors care." It was during a talk with Residential Supervisor Saeed Woodall that Corsini realized that he wanted to reclaim his life. Discussing his attempts at suicide, Woodall suggested there was a reason why Corsini had survived.

It was a revelation, and

Seven hundred miles from Washington, DC, David Corsini had only a passing interaction with the homeless. In his hometown of Chicago he would sometimes see men on the street, but he was busy with his job as an executive assistant, and busy attending night school to further his career.

The death of his mother brought him to Washington to be with his sister, and it was here that Corsini's life began to unravel. The combination of alcohol and grief helped push him into homelessness and suicidal thoughts. With no money and little support, Corsini slept on a thin mattress in a trailer along with perhaps 10 other men. He says he was "100 percent totally destitute ... a wreck" when he was referred to the Community Council for the Homeless at Friendship Place in Northwest DC, one of St. Luke's Shelter's partners.

Corsini had spent several months at another DC-area agency seeking treatment for his addiction, but wasn't satisfied with the level of attention he received. "Nothing is more important than the human touch," he says.

CCH/FP's Stacy Chapman, in particular, provided assistance, and helped place him at St. Luke's Shelter in 2005. At the Shelter

Corsini rededicated himself to getting his life back in order. "I didn't want to be meaningless to myself," he says. He credits St. Luke's for "taking away my craving for escapism, and it has not been back."

Now 47 years old, Corsini credits the individual attention and support he received during his five months at St. Luke's as instrumental to his progress. At first uneasy around Shelter volunteers, he quickly became comfortable at dinners. "The volunteers are so nice and understanding," he says.

Saying he wanted to join the cause, Corsini recently spoke at a fundraising breakfast for CCH/FP, recounting his path from success to homelessness and back. "My story, I used to hide it," he says. "But it needs to be told. Some people choose [to be homeless], but some people have no choice. I wasn't aware of it."

Today, Corsini lives in an apartment with the help of CCH/FP and works in a Connecticut Avenue consignment shop. But the former executive assistant is looking to expand his work opportunities. "As time goes by, thank God, I can be challenged more and more," he says. "I'm ready to meet this challenge."

—Story and photograph by Derek Willis

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Letter from the Pastor

One of my favorite writers is Frederick Buechner. In his book *Wishful Thing: A Seeker's ABC*, he defines "homelessness" this way: "To be really at home is to be really at peace, and there can be no real peace for any of us until there is some measure of real peace for all of us. When we close our eyes to the deep needs of other people whether they live on the streets or under our own roof—and when we close our eyes to our own deep need to reach out to them—we can never be fully at home anywhere."

St. Luke's Shelter helps us all be fully at home. Helping men turn their lives around gives us all a sense of "home," knowing that we can bring peace to the lives of those who have no peace.

We strive to make St. Luke's Shelter a safe, clean, and sober environment. I applaud all who have

helped furnish the Shelter with new furniture, bedding, and computers. Especially I want to thank:

- Meg Markham, who gave the dining room furniture in memory of her husband, Allan.

- Dorothy Pearson, who provided lounge furniture, bed frames, cubbies, and computers in memory of her mother and father, Wallace and Annie Pearson.

- Workers of St. Alban's, who provided partitions in the sleeping area to afford privacy.

- the Sealy Mattress Corporation, which donated seven mattresses for the residents and counselor.

- John Snedden of Rocklands, who donated all food receipts from Glover Park Day to St. Luke's Shelter to help furnish the computer lab.

As we work together with the Shelter's residents, we will all find peace and be "really at home."

—Dave Myers

ST. LUKE'S SHELTER

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Georgetown Ministries
Miriam's Kitchen

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How to Contribute

Along with giving food, time, and skills, and participating in the Help the Homeless Walkathon on November 18, you can help St. Luke's Shelter by donating cash for salaries, postage, and transportation for residents.

Easy ways you can donate to the Shelter program:

- **Donate online** using a credit card on our website, www.stlukesshelter.org. Set up onetime or recurring gifts through our secure donation system.

- **Set up automatic payments.** Several smaller dips into one's bank account can be much easier than a single gift as big as you would like to make once a year. Our contract is with the secure and reliable service long used for pledges to St. Luke's United Methodist Church. See the box on the enclosed donor envelope.

- **Pledge a payroll deduction.** Your employer

may have payroll deduction options—and, even better, a matching gift program. Our United Way and Combined Federal number is #7940.

- **Give by shopping.** Did you know that you can support St. Luke's by shopping online at iGive.com? There are more than 550 stores to choose from including Target, Barnes and Noble, and Ann Taylor Loft. The price is the same for you—but a percentage of you sale comes to us!

- **Send a check.** For those who feel the old ways are the best ways, a check or money order is always welcome. An envelope is included here for your convenience.

However you may choose to give, your support makes the Shelter's small miracles possible. —Mike Wint

Open House Ooohs

Friends and neighbors who dropped by St. Luke's Shelter on Saturday, May 20 were treated to a tour of the Shelter's amazing new space. Excited and curious visitors streamed through the doors ooohing and aahing at the gleaming new kitchen, bright separate dining, living, and sleeping areas, and colorfully tiled bathrooms in the lower level of St. Luke's United Methodist Church. The new space also includes a classroom area and two offices.

On display were newly donated furnishings—including a dining table and chairs donated in memory of longtime supporter and volunteer Allan Markham. Sample furnishings still available for sponsorship were also on display. Friends wishing to make smaller donations were encouraged to check out the Shelter's wish list on amazon.com.

These new items take the place of much-appreciated goods—from sheets to refrigerators—donated over the years by generous supporters. Now the Shelter can

glory in the durability of new things—the assurance that an absent-minded dinner volunteer can heat (or cook) a meal in a metal pan without blowing out the microwave, for example.

In addition to abundant material blessings, the newly renovated Shelter received an interfaith blessing from St. Luke's United Methodist Pastor Dave Myers, Msgr. Lockman from the Church of the Annunciation, Rev. Florence Gubanc of Community of Christ Church, and the Rev. Dr. A. David Argo of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church. Rocklands and Fiesta In a Box served a grand buffet. —Judie Guy



WELCOME HOME: Residential Supervisor Saeed Woodall greets longtime Shelter supporter Sharon Armstrong.

A Smokin' Supporter

John Snedden has been involved with St. Luke's Shelter almost from the very beginning. The owner of Rocklands Barbeque & Grilling Co. on Wisconsin Avenue, Snedden has been providing monthly dinners since 1993. But he does so much more than that. Snedden has served on the Shelter advisory council, and for the last eight years, has donated all of the contributions received from selling his delicious sandwiches at Glover Park Day. Most recently, he helped cater the Shelter's housewarming (see "Open House Ooohs," above).

Beyond the neighborhood, John lends his time and talent to other worthy organizations. From the Board of the Arlington Chamber of Commerce to the local chapter of the National Foundation to Teach Entrepreneurship, Snedden serves as a mentor, teacher, and all-around role model.

Snedden says he loves the Glover Park community, especially the diversity of the stores in the neighborhood and the vibrancy of the community, which seems to get stronger as the years go by. —June Kress

A Message of Thanks

A new space, a reenergized staff, a dedicated group of volunteers and supporters, and an amazing group of residents helped make the first half of 2006 an incredible success for St. Luke's Shelter. In March and April we asked all of you to be a part of the Feinstein Challenge to help us raise money, and you responded! We raised \$7,600. In May we invited you into our new home and launched our Housewarming Campaign. Again, you responded, and because of your overwhelming support we will have a fully furnished Shelter by the end of the summer, including a new computer lab.

Most important are the successes of the program—out of the 14 men who entered the Shelter so far this year, five moved into permanent housing, seven secured employment, and one reconnected with his family.

Thank you for contributing to an amazing beginning of 2006. We look forward to connecting with you more throughout the end of the year. Please mark your calendar now for two big events happening this fall: our annual Labor Day Barbecue on Monday, September 4th, which provides us with a special opportunity to show our appreciation to our volunteers and supporters; and the Fannie Mae Help the Homeless Walkathon on Saturday, November 18th. For more information on

participating in or helping to coordinate these events, please contact Shalom Mulkey at 202-337-4275 or email shalom@stlukesshelter.org.

Thank you again for your tremendous support of St. Luke's Shelter. Our successes are your successes and your commitment to our program changes lives.

—Shalom Mulkey, Shelter Director

SAVE THE DATES: You're Invited!

Monday, September 4

Labor Day Barbecue in the garden of
St. Luke's Church, 4 pm - 7 pm

Saturday, November 18

Help the Homeless Walkathon
on the National Mall

4



St. Luke's Shelter, a collaboration between a community of faith and a community of neighbors, provides life-reclaiming support to homeless individuals.

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