



Housing and Hope

Winter 2011-2012

Did you know ...

- that an estimated 12 million renter and homeowner households now pay more than 50 percent of their annual incomes for housing?
- that a family with one full-time worker earning the minimum wage cannot afford the local fair-market rent for a two-bedroom apartment anywhere in the United States?¹
- that in the U.S., over the course of a year, between 2.5 and 3.5 million people will live either on the streets or in an emergency shelter?
- that more than 670,000 people experience homelessness on any given night in the United States?
- that 43 percent of children living with homeless parents are under the age of 6?²
- that half of all homeless children attended three different schools in one year?

SOURCES:

¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

² "Homelessness in the United States of America," prepared by the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

Celebrating our success stories

Michelle Flowers has made wonderful progress since entering SSHA's City Park housing in August 2010. She had completed classes for a two-year degree at Seattle Central Community College. After taking a year off to have her baby and spend time with her newborn girl, Jayla, she returned to classes last fall and graduated in June with an Associate of Applied Science in Social & Human Services. Michelle promptly applied for a new Bachelors of Science program offered by SCCC. To her delight she was accepted into the Applied Behavioral Science program. She is back in school this fall, attending classes four nights a week and working days at a work-study position on campus. Michelle is very motivated and hopes to eventually earn a Master's Degree in Psychology. She was recently invited to join Phi Theta Kappa, the largest and oldest honor society for two-year colleges - quite an accomplishment after coming from a challenging background.



Michelle Flowers

Michelle is a great mom who is organized and is proactive with her paperwork. She is one of the lucky 2,500 people whose name was drawn in the King County Housing Authority's lottery for housing vouchers this past summer. Michelle has shown her gratitude to SSHA by sending cards to the Board of Directors, office staff, and housing case manager, thanking them for the opportunity that she has been given to live at City Park.

Some families need only a short time in our housing to stabilize and get on their feet. Martha and her three children left an abusive situation and found housing with SSHA. During her time with us, she was able to get the youngsters into local schools, began attending ESL classes, and attended counseling and financial management classes. After 11 months, she found permanent housing through a Seattle agency and now lives in a brand new affordable townhome. Less than a year in SSHA's program was enough to provide her with the support she needed to get through a difficult period in her life.

Our Mission

To address the needs of homeless families with children by providing housing with support services to enable families to move toward economic stability and self-sufficiency.

From the Director's Desk:

Looking back on this past year we are most grateful for:

- An excellent administrative staff who work well together and go beyond their job descriptions in handling the complex challenges of housing the homeless;
- The dedication of our many volunteers;
- A faithful Board of Directors who keep us on track being true to our mission statement;
- St. Stephen Church for providing us with office space and utilities;
- The positive support from the greater community both financially and in-kind donations; specifically contributing to our school supply drive, adopt-a-family for Christmas, and the blanket drive currently in progress. You are wonderfully generous.

May you have a blessed Christmas and a peace-filled 2012!

Joan



*SSHA Executive Director
Joan Mladineo*

Project Cool equips kids for school

Project Cool, a back-to-school program made possible by the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness (SKCCH), helps homeless students get the school supplies they need to be prepared for the classroom. Each fall SSHA purchases new backpacks from Project Cool for every child in our housing units. These backpacks contain new school supplies, books, toiletries, and a dictionary. This year, SSHA supplemented the contents with Payless Shoes gift cards as well as Office Depot gift cards for additional school supplies needed by the older children. In 2011 almost two thousand children from three-year-olds to high school seniors got sturdy, new backpacks through Project Cool.



Volunteer Dorothy Meek loads supplies into Project Cool backpacks.

Project Cool is made possible by several social service agencies, generous business and community partners and individual donors, and the hard work of many dedicated volunteers. For over 22 years, Project Cool has helped more 20,000 homeless students be ready for the new school year.

What does a case manager do?

Housing case managers work with families to resolve the financial, legal and/or medical issues that keep them from reaching each family's goals. This may mean helping residents develop life skills they missed earlier in their lives: paying their rent on time, keeping important papers in a file system, learning where to find needed resources. Meetings with our residents may also deal with more complex issues such as child custody/parenting plans and credit bureau dispute resolution. As needed, we refer families to outside community providers.

Case managers also work with emergency shelters, schools, medical facilities, and counseling service providers to interview potential families for entrance into our program as space allows. As a family's stay with SSHA comes to a close (usually in 18-24 months), the next step is to assist them in finding permanent housing. In the current recession, housing options are scarce and the search for housing may involve nearby counties.

To stay current and keep informed on issues in housing and homelessness, case managers attend seminars, workshops and community meetings, and network with other agencies to fulfill partnership requirements.

A case manager's work is never done, but is richly rewarded by seeing families reach milestones toward their goals.

**Find St. Stephen Housing Association online at
www.ststephenhousing.org**

One Night Count of homeless population

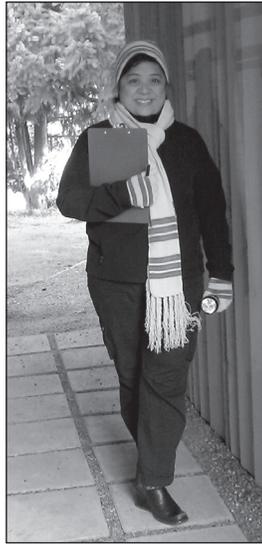
Each year volunteers along with SKCCH (Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness) venture out in the early morning hours to count the number of people sleeping outdoors in King County. On Jan. 28, SSHA Housing Coordinator Stefanie Mottola joined the 900 volunteers who counted 2,442 children, adults, and seniors living outside in urban, suburban and rural King County. Some were huddled in doorways, some sleeping in cars, and others camped in green spaces or sheltered in makeshift campsites. The 2011 One Night Count also collected information from select hospitals about emergency room usage, and from Metro night owl buses.

Stefanie had a vague idea of what to expect when she arrived at the Kent CCS office at 1:30 a.m. What she didn't expect was the incredible energy and excitement that filled the room. Surrounded by a diverse group of homeless advocates – agency employees, former social workers, PTSA members, moms and dads – she bundled up and headed out with the other teams to their assigned areas.

Overall, the volunteers counted 317 fewer people living in publicly-accessible parts of King County in 2011 than in 2010 - an 11% decrease. This number, however, is separate from the roughly 6000 people who were in area emergency shelters and transitional housing programs, and the 149 people in area winter shelters on the same night.

Double your donation through gift-matching programs

This is the time of year when many employers hold their annual Giving Campaigns and many companies have gift-matching programs. Please consider making a one-time gift or authorizing a regular payroll deduction. SSHA is a 501(c)3 program, so your donation is tax deductible. For you who are already giving, we truly appreciate your continued support!



SSHA's Stefanie Mottola heads out to participate in the One Night Count

A look toward the future

Recently the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation challenged King County to develop a plan to dramatically revise the way homelessness is addressed. The result is The Family Homelessness Initiative, a partnership of both private and public entities already involved in providing housing and supportive services to families. This new approach will have one primary goal: "to get and keep families stably housed." Currently, the network of homeless providers in our area is disjointed, presenting a maze for families to navigate while experiencing the trauma of homelessness. The new initiative focuses on streamlining the way services are provided to families.

One of the first changes to be made is Coordinated Entry and Assessment, which will give families a convenient and standard way to find the services and housing they need as quickly as possible. Beginning in March 2012, there will be one phone number to call for families experiencing housing issues: difficulty paying rent, an eviction notice, and trouble finding shelter or more long-term housing. Once a family has made the call, they will be quickly assessed for their level of need and be set up with an appointment for a more in-depth interview.

As a transitional housing provider, SSHA will accept referrals to our program from the Coordinated Entry agency. They will pre-screen applicants and then refer them to our agency for an interview. SSHA will still maintain our agency screening criteria and make the final decision on acceptance of families into the program.

After Coordinated Entry has been established, the Initiative then turns its focus to preventing homelessness for families most at risk and helping families regain stability by moving into non-time limited housing as quickly as possible. Next it will focus support services on housing stability and increase collaborations with mainstream systems that families may have had difficulty accessing.

For more information, visit the Family Homelessness Initiative webpage at: www.kingcounty.gov/socialservices/Housing/ServicesAndPrograms/Programs/Homeless/HomelessFamilies.aspx.

We make a living by what we do, but we make a life by what we give.

~ Winston Churchill



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Helping Families with Children in Crisis

Volunteer Opportunities

Interested in becoming involved an hour or two a week? We can offer a wide variety of ways for you to share your talents and interests.

- Do you have a green thumb? Is your garden club looking for a way to share its passion for gardening? We have 12 planter boxes at City Park in Auburn and need volunteers to keep them looking their best each season.
- Provide a Welcome Basket or a Welcome Meal to one of our new families. This is a great opportunity for individuals or a group! Welcome Baskets may include general household goods and cleaning supplies. A Welcome Meal can be a simple dinner for the family's first night in their new home or supplying a few essentials for their refrigerator and/or pantry.
- Work with our families on basic life skills – career development, money management, credit repair, health and nutrition. Are you a retired teacher or love to work with children? Become a tutor to one of the children in our program! Both are rewarding ways to share your time and talent while helping our families build a solid foundation for their future.
- We always need professional services such as as cleaning, counseling, medical, dental, vision, or legal aid. Please contact us if you can help.
- Do you have a truck and a couple of extra hours to spare? SSHA is always looking for people to help pick up donated furniture or deliver it to our units. We'll pay the gas!

For more information or to share your own ideas, please contact our office at 253-638-9798. We'd love to hear from you!

St. Stephen Housing Association

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