



Samaritan House Newsletter

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Scattered Pieces, Scattered Lives

by Logan Smith, Board Member

When Brad Goforth, Executive Director of Samaritan House, goes on vacation, the rest of us pitch in to keep things running. At Samaritan House we provide recuperative care for our guests, but we also help them get connected to services that most people take for granted. Most of us have ID's, Social Security Cards, a place to live, a job and the basics, but can you imagine not even having these things in your life? Being homeless is a really hard way of life. It's difficult to keep track of personal belongings, to figure out how to get mail, how to stay in communication with family and friends. We try to help our guests put their lives back together again, sometimes literally. I had the privilege to see such an effort first hand when I filled in for Brad recently.

One of our guests needed to gather up his belongings which were scattered all over the city. I offered to help out by driving him to the places that he needed to go. The first stop was under a bridge near I-277 by the football stadium. He had been camping under the bridge and left his medication that he needed. I drove him to a spot near the railroad tracks so that he could walk to his camp. He said that

he would be back in 5 minutes, and that I should just wait here for him. I watched him cross the road and go behind a fence. I felt vulnerable, not knowing exactly where he was and whether he was coming back and realizing that I was in an area of abandoned warehouses all by myself. It didn't feel safe and I wondered what a police officer might think if he drove by and saw me parked here. Here I was, doing something good--why

did I feel so bad? Since I was nervous, I decided to drive around the block and come back. When I got back to the spot, our guest was walking around, looking for me. I was glad to see him, and he was very glad to see me.

The odyssey continued to the next spot near a small parking lot by the football stadium where he had left a bag of clothes in the bushes. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. He left his clothes in the bushes, huh? I had my doubts but he was sure they would still be there and, low and behold, there they were, where he had left them a week ago. Have you ever left a bag of clothes in the bushes? I don't think so. My experience is so different from this man's.

Finally, we drove about 3 miles away to the home of his mentor who had graciously allowed our guest to use his address so that he could receive mail. Where is your mail sent to, your home, your PO Box, your office? Do you have to give a friend's address because you don't have one of your own? Such a small thing to be taken for granted.

All I can say is being homeless is not easy and ordinary day-to-day things that most of us take for granted are incredibly difficult to manage. What can we learn from these scattered pieces? We learn that we can all help in so many small ways in order to make a positive impact on each other. My guest was elated to come to Samaritan House. We help our guests recuperate in a peaceful environment and help them gather up their scattered pieces from all over the city, not just tangible belongings but spiritual threads as well. We help our guests reconnect with family and friends, with services and resources, and along the way we hope to help them to come step closer to freeing themselves from homelessness. Samaritan House is a one of a kind place that changes lives for our volunteers and especially for our guests forever, and I am so honored to be a part of this place, helping to pick up the scattered pieces.



Announcing!...come to our Open House on Sunday, October 2, 2011 to see the new home of Samaritan House, at 611 Fortune St.!(see back page for your official invitation and more details!)

Research Proves It!--A New Study Compares Hospitalization Costs for Homeless and Housed Patients

A study based out of Toronto, Canada, compared data from 93,426 admissions at an academic teaching hospital over 5 years. The study found that homeless patient admissions cost \$2,559 more than housed patient admissions. For patients admitted for medical or surgical services, much of the expense was associated with days spent in the hospital, during which patients did not require the level of services provided in an acute care facility. The study is comparable to a New York study by Salit et al. (1998) which found an excess cost of \$2,414 per admission for homeless patients. The study makes clear that, even with universal health care, people who are experiencing homelessness continue to have higher health care costs in part due to lack of alternative sites for recuperation. Medical respite programs are described as a potential avenue for reducing overall health care costs for homeless individuals.

Hwang, S.W., Weaver, J., Aubry, T., and Hoch, J.S. (April 2011). Hospital Costs and Length of Stay Among Homeless Patients Admitted to Medical, Surgical, and Psychiatric Services. *Medical Care*, 49(4): 350-354.

Salit, S.A., Kuhn, E.M., Hartz, A.J., Vu, J.M., Mosso, A.L.. (1998). Hospitalization Costs Associated with Homelessness in New York City. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 338(24): 1734-40.

(This comes as no surprise to us at Samaritan House! In 6 years at Samaritan House, we've provided recuperative care for 664 guests, with a total of 10866 guest nights. We've seen 515 (that's 80%) of those guests NOT return to the shelter or the streets after staying with us. We estimate that we have saved the community \$21,732,000 in hospital bed days since we started out. If Samaritan House prevented one ER return visit per guest, we saved at least \$1.6 million in indigent emergency room care.)

Did You Know?: Homeless Female Veterans on the rise

A recent article in the Charlotte Observer ("More homeless female veterans in NC, SC," AP, Sunday, August 14) stated that "women account for 3 to 4 percent of the national population of homeless vets, which numbers about 200,000 nightly." Women are making up a larger percentage of the military force, so the number of homeless female veterans is likely to rise. The Department of Labor recently released a guide, "The Trauma-Informed Care for Women Veterans Experiencing Homelessness: A Guide for Service Providers." According to the guide, women veterans are more likely to be younger, unemployed, self-identified as a racial minority, and have lower incomes than male veterans.

According to the Department of Labor guide, women veterans may be oddly reluctant to seek help from the VA. Female veterans interviewed for the guide said things like, "I thought veteran meant you had been in combat. If in church, on Veteran's Day, I don't want to stand up. I don't

want to raise my hand. It just doesn't seem right to me," and, "I never thought of myself as a veteran even though I served. I didn't think those words applied to me."

In 2009, the Department of Veterans Affairs initiated a plan to improve the response to homelessness among veterans, with more money for health care (including mental health and substance abuse issues) as well as increased funding for housing. The need for addressing the increased number of women veterans was acknowledged, particularly those with children.

We estimate that 25% of the guests that we serve at Samaritan House are veterans. One good thing about guests in this category is that there are services and resources available to them through the VA so successful outcomes are easier to achieve than for some of our other guests. We are able to work with the VA hospital in Salisbury and even get referrals from them for patients who need our help.

From the National Coalition for the Homeless, September, 2009:

Far too many veterans are homeless in America--between 130,000 and 200,000 on any given night--representing between 1/4 and 1/5 of all homeless people. Three times that many veterans are struggling with excessive rent burdens and thus at increased risk of homelessness. Further, there is concern about the future. Women veterans and those with disabilities including post traumatic stress disorder and traumatic

brain injury are more likely to become homeless, and a higher percentage of veterans returning from the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have these characteristics.

About 40% of homeless men are veterans, although veterans comprise only 34% of the general adult male population. Conservatively, one out of every three homeless men who is sleeping in a doorway, alley or box in our cities and rural communities has put on a uniform and served this country.

Christmas Shopping? How about a Samaritan House Honor Card!



The holidays are just around the corner. It is time to begin thinking about what to get for the people on your list who seem to have everything. Please consider honoring your friend or loved one with a gift to Samaritan House this year. A donation to Samaritan House will help your neighbors who are homeless and recovering from illness to have a safe place to recuperate. Those you wish to honor will receive a lovely holiday card telling them of your gift in their name. We can send you the cards to distribute yourself, or we can send the cards directly from Samaritan House. No need for you to worry about size, kind of wine or type of chocolates. We promise that your gift will not end up in a closet and unused!

For more information about honor cards, call us at 704-333-0110, or contact us by e-mail at bgoforth@thesamaritanhouse.org.

'I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger, and you welcomed me. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you took care of me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'.... Truly I tell you just as you did it for one of the least who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Matthew 25: 35,36,40



A message from our Executive Director:

Since moving into our new facility in June, Samaritan House has been in a great transformation. Our new house is so much better for our guests than where we were. There is more room and the bedrooms are nicer. Each bedroom holds three beds and each room has its own bathroom. There are several sitting areas including a shaded deck, and a much larger dining room and kitchen! All of this has made our house much more pleasant and very hospitable.

But more has been happening than a new home. Since the facility is all on one level we are now accepting people in wheelchairs, on crutches and using walkers. Since June we have brought in 14 people who have orthopedic injuries requiring these devices. They seem to have little problem moving around the house and are healing nicely.

More importantly, since we can now take 12 instead of 8 our census has dramatically increased. Where in May we averaged 6 at one time, now we average 10. Our bed days have also jumped. In May we provided 160 bed days. In August that has jumped to over 230.

This means we are providing much more care and serving more people than ever before.

We thank all of our supporters for helping us make this happen and invite all of you to our open house in October so you can see the great things you have helped us do.



Special Note:

In our last newsletter we asked for your help with a donation. Due to a problem with the Post Office we only received a handful of donations from that mailing. If you sent a gift to us and it has not cleared the bank, it means your gift is forever lost in the vastness of the postal system. Thank you for trying to help.

Please send any gifts to:

Samaritan House
611 Fortune Street
Charlotte, NC 28205

Would you like to help us save money to pay for guests' needs rather than paper, ink, and postage? Contact us at bgoforth@thesamaritanhouse.org so we can update your contact information including e-mail address and we'll start sending your newsletter electronically and! Put "Save Trees!" in the subject line.



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*You are invited to our Open House...
Sunday, October 2, 2011, 2:00 pm to 5:00pm
...as we open our NEW HOME to all of our friends,
neighbors, and supporters.*

**Special Event:
Unveiling of our new
Levine Foundation
Dining Room
&
Carolinas Healthcare
Foundation
Sunroom!**



**Location:
611 Fortune St.
Charlotte, NC 28205
704-333-0110**

**Parking along
Fortune St. and
Washburn Ave.**
